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ABSTRACT

This report examines the participation of teacher unions in the education reform process. It analyzes the many roles that these organizations are playing at the national, state, and local levels through collective bargaining and political action. The focus is upon three major issues: (1) the extent to which teacher unions have attained more professional teaching conditions through collective bargaining; (2) the political response of teacher organizations to national, state, and local reform initiatives; and (3) the way in which the interests and activities of teacher organizations are likely to shape successive generations of educational reform, particularly efforts to restructure the teaching profession. The report is addressed to policymakers, teacher union leaders, education researchers, and others interested in enhancing the professional status of teachers. (JD)

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# Teacher Unions and Educational Reform

Lorraine M. McDonnell,  
Anthony Pascal

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*40 Years*  
1948-1988

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The Center for the Study of the Teaching Profession was launched by RAND in 1985 as a research institute focused on teaching policy and practice. The Center conducts research on policies that affect teachers and teaching, and helps design, implement, and evaluate reform efforts. The Center has received its major support from the James S. McDonnell Foundation, the Metropolitan Life Foundation, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Aetna Life and Casualty Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education.

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JRE-02

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Lorraine M. McDonnell,  
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April 1988

*40 Years*  
1948-1988

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**CPRE**  
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Center for the Study of  
the Teaching Profession

## PREFACE

As part of a continuing investigation of trends in educational reform, the Center for Policy Research in Education examined the participation of teacher unions in the reform process. This report analyzes the myriad roles that these organizations are playing at the national, state, and local levels through collective bargaining and political action. It also suggests how the interests and activities of teacher organizations are likely to influence future reforms, particularly efforts to reshape the teaching profession.

The report is addressed to policymakers, teacher union leaders, education researchers, and others interested in enhancing the professional status of teachers.

## SUMMARY

Organizations representing the nation's classroom teachers play a prominent role in shaping policies that affect public schools. Through both the collective bargaining process and political action at the national, state, and local levels, teacher unions seek to improve their members' salaries and working conditions. In doing so, they also influence the way in which public education is funded and governed.

The educational reform policies of the past four years have focused on teacher training, certification, and compensation, making the positions and activities of teacher unions an even more critical factor in determining the direction American public education will take over the next decade. This report examines the role of organized teachers in educational reform efforts, focusing on three primary issues:

- The extent to which teacher unions have attained more professional teaching conditions for their members through collective bargaining.
- The political response of teacher organizations to national, state, and local reform initiatives.
- The way in which the interests and activities of teacher organizations are likely to shape successive generations of educational reform, particularly efforts to restructure the teaching profession.

This research is based on data from a representative sample of 151 collective bargaining contracts coded for four time periods between 1970 and 1985, and from interviews with more than 600 policymakers and educators in 52 schools, 22 local districts, and 6 states

### TRENDS IN TEACHER COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: 1970-1985

During the 1970s, organized teachers made impressive strides in the attainment of noncompensation items. By 1980, a majority of bargaining units had included in their contracts provisions regulating the length of the school day, allowing teachers to respond formally to administrators' evaluations, permitting teachers to exclude disruptive students from their classrooms, and outlining clear procedures for districts to follow if they must reduce the size of their teacher force.

However, less than a third of the teacher unions in our contract sample had attained strong limits on class size, curbs on requirements for teachers to teach outside their field, or the establishment of an instructional policy committee at each school. Furthermore, teacher unions have made little progress in obtaining new contractual provisions since 1975: With relatively few exceptions, the improvements in working conditions unions had attained by 1975 were not enhanced in the 1980 and 1985 contracts.

### **ATTAINING PROFESSIONAL TEACHING CONDITIONS THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

Teacher unions have always argued that a strong contract is a route to greater professionalism. To test this assertion, we constructed a professional-teaching-conditions score based on fifteen contract provisions that give teachers greater autonomy to exercise their professional judgment (e.g., curbs on administrator intervention in student grades, assurances of academic freedom), meaningful participation in instructional policy decisions (e.g., equal or majority representation of teachers on instructional policy committees), and resources that are considered to be enabling conditions of professional teaching (e.g., class-size maximums, limits on classroom interruptions and paperwork). On average, the bargaining units in our sample had attained only a third of these items by 1985, and no union had attained more than twelve items.

Of the demographic and bargaining-situation variables that we were able to measure, the early attainment of six key contract provisions was the most significant factor influencing the likelihood that a bargaining unit would attain a high professional-teaching-conditions score. Those unions that had obtained provisions such as limits on the length of the school day, guaranteed preparation periods, and well-specified reduction-in-force (RIF) procedures by 1975 were significantly more likely to have also gained professional items for their members. This finding suggests, as unions have argued, that attaining key bread-and-butter items that regulate basic working conditions is a precondition for securing contract provisions that enhance teacher professionalism.

### **THE POLITICAL ROLE OF TEACHER UNIONS IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM**

The political response of teacher unions to the educational reform movement that has swept the country over the past four years is

largely explained by the two very distinct roles that teacher unions must play: First, they operate as political interest groups, working to obtain benefits from the external environment. And second, they also function as voluntary organizations that must meet members' demands in the type and level of benefits they obtain and the services they provide. The challenge for the unions is to obtain sufficient benefits to maintain their membership, while also operating effectively in a world of political bargaining and compromise.

Maintaining that balance has been particularly difficult in the face of educational reform initiatives. Policymakers have made it very clear that they want to grant additional benefits to teachers only in exchange for the creation of a more performance-based profession. At the same time, rank-and-file teachers have become accustomed to a system that allocates benefits uniformly on the basis of seniority and educational attainment; they expect unions to preserve that system, while working to obtain the concrete welfare benefits typically associated with collective bargaining. Consequently, if a teacher union decides to play an active leadership role in efforts to enhance teacher professionalism, it may please some policymakers but lose the support of its own members. Conversely, if a union opposes moves to base teacher compensation on performance or to differentiate tasks within teaching, it may satisfy its own members but run the risk of further diminishing support for public education. Given the costs inherent in either active reform leadership or opposition, a third option for teacher unions is to accommodate the reform proposals advanced by others.

Our interview data indicate that national, state, and local teacher organizations have responded to educational reform in quite different ways. Not only did the national-level American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA) choose different strategies, their respective positions have not always been reflected in the activities of their state and local affiliates. While the AFT quickly moved toward a position of leadership in shaping new approaches to teacher professionalism, the NEA shifted from initial opposition to some reform proposals, on to accommodation, and finally, to a position where it now supports and encourages local affiliates to experiment with new approaches to professionalism. The differences in responses can be explained largely by the differences in the two organizations' size and structure.

Unlike the national-level organizations, which have actively worked to shape some bold approaches to teacher professionalism, the state organizations in each of the six states in our sample moved from initially opposing some key reform proposals to accommodating new policy directions. The level of opposition varied across states and teacher



organizations, but in no case did the organizations wage an all-out campaign to block reform proposals they viewed to be against their interests. At the same time, state teacher organizations were not active shapers of new approaches to teacher policy between 1983 and 1986. They were reactors and accommodaters, rather than innovators.

Despite striking similarities in the manner in which teacher organizations responded across the six states, there were some significant differences in their stance on key issues. In some states, such as Florida and Pennsylvania, the AFT and NEA affiliates took divergent positions on certain issues. But these differences also occurred across states within the same organization. For example, the NEA affiliate in Arizona accepted the principle of peer evaluation, while the California affiliate rejected it.

With only a few exceptions, local teacher organizations in the six sample states responded to reform initiatives in an accommodating manner. However, unlike the state affiliates, their accommodation resulted not from a calculation that opposition was unlikely to produce a significant payoff, but from a belief that reform policies were quite peripheral to their mission and interests. Consequently, opposition was unnecessary. At the same time, they perceived little need to advocate approaches that represented a significant departure from the assumptions embodied in a traditional collective bargaining model. The rank-and-file teachers in our fieldwork sample hold expectations about unions that relate primarily to their ability to obtain material benefits. To the extent that the teachers view their local unions as working toward the goals of greater professionalism, the overwhelming majority conceive of that role entirely in terms of material benefits (i.e., higher salaries, restrictions on class size, etc.). We also found that in those few districts where the union leadership decided to pursue strategies aimed at enhancing teacher professionalism (e.g., performance-based compensation, increased teacher participation in school-site decisionmaking), many rank-and-file teachers reacted with skepticism and even hostility. They also expressed fear that in pursuing reform initiatives, union leaders were being less vigilant in their efforts to gain higher salaries and smaller class sizes.

The most significant factor explaining the different responses of teacher organizations is the way in which they calculate the balance of risk between their internal function as a membership organization and their external role as an interest group. From the perspective of many national union leaders, the greatest risk lies in failing to respond to dramatically changed conditions in the external environment. Most of the local union leaders in the fieldwork sample made a different calculation. Many lack the resources for more than muted opposition, but

they also view the costs of active reform leadership as prohibitively high. The expectations of rank-and-file teachers, built up over the past two decades, have required the unions to provide a set of well-defined material benefits on a uniform basis. Active reform leadership in the face of these expectations is possible, but in the short term, it is very risky. Hence, accommodation has been the usual response of state and local affiliates.

## TEACHER UNIONS AND THE NEXT GENERATION OF REFORM

The national media have recently highlighted several school districts where labor and management have worked collaboratively to restructure teachers' work lives and enhance their professional responsibilities. The obvious question is whether these are isolated examples or the beginning of a broad-based trend.

Our findings suggest that whether or not these developments signal the beginning of a national trend depends on the extent to which teachers are resocialized in their expectations about their own role and that of the unions. The challenge for teacher organizations is to frame the issue in such a way that the policy community views its demands for higher-quality teachers as being met, while teachers regard the payoff from greater professionalism more positively.

We argue that such a strategy depends on meeting three conditions:

- *Reform policies cannot be substituted for traditional bread-and-butter items that regulate teachers' basic working conditions (e.g., length of the teaching day, class size). In fact, our findings suggest that these items are enabling conditions that unions must attain before they can move on to questions of professional autonomy and full participation. Some policymakers have viewed career ladders and other forms of performance-based compensation as a substitute for these other, and often more costly, items. But if past experience is any indicator, rank-and-file teachers will not support such tradeoffs: The attainment of basic bread-and-butter items is a necessary condition for their active endorsement of items to enhance professionalism.*
- *Policymakers should accept the fact that not all teachers want to assume the new roles envisioned in an environment of greater professionalism, but they do not want to be treated as second-class citizens either. Reform proponents must consider how older values of uniform treatment and similar tasks for all*

teachers can coexist on an equal basis with values of greater professionalism, at least for the current cohort of teachers.

- *Policymakers and reform advocates should consider how the tradeoffs that must inevitably occur in bargaining for greater professionalism can be packaged to make them more acceptable to both local union leaders and rank-and-file members.* The collective bargaining process and resulting contract can either serve as one of the most effective vehicles for promoting and implementing educational reform or as a major obstacle to change. If policymakers, school managers, union leaders, and rank-and-file teachers can identify areas of mutual interest within a bargaining agenda focused on teacher professionalism, the process will be a constructive one. Union leaders and teachers are more likely to be convinced that a bargaining agenda focused on professionalism is in their mutual interest if they can see how such a strategy actually operates in practice. Consequently, systematic data are needed on the experience of those unions that have chosen to pursue a strategy of active reform leadership—how they sold the strategy to their members and its effects on teachers' work lives, on school and district governance, on instructional activities, and on the collective bargaining process itself.

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Janet DeLand sharpened our prose, thus easing the reader's burden considerably. Shirley Cromb, Deborah Lang, and Jeanne Shultz handled the often laborious secretarial tasks associated with a complex project skillfully and with good humor.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, organizations representing the nation's classroom teachers have played a major role in shaping educational policy and practice. More than 80 percent of public elementary and secondary teachers belong to either the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) or the National Education Association (NEA), and more than 60 percent are covered by formal collective bargaining agreements. Using a dual strategy of collective bargaining and political action, organized teachers have significantly improved their salaries and working conditions. Their ascendancy in states and local school districts has dramatically changed the way in which educational resources are allocated and, ultimately, the way schools are run. Teachers bargain not only over working conditions such as class size and length of the school day, but also over items of policy such as textbook selection and curriculum development. In addition, teacher organizations reinforce and expand their collective bargaining gains by supporting political candidates and by lobbying at the national, state, and local levels. In the 1986 election, the AFT and the NEA together spent over \$4 million supporting several hundred Congressional candidates (Crawford, 1986).

The past four years have witnessed significant changes in the politics of education, as the banner of reform has unfurled across the country. The locus of decisionmaking has shifted away from the federal and local levels to state governments, while fundamental questions about who should teach and what they should teach have been joined with more traditional issues of educational finance and governance. This shift in policymaking has prompted our reexamination of teacher organizations, both as bargaining agents and as political interest groups.

As state and local officials turn their attention from reform policies aimed at students to reforms dealing with teachers, the nation's teacher organizations have become an even more critical element in the educational reform movement. At the national level, groups such as the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy have recommended changes in the organization of the teaching profession (Carnegie Forum, 1986); and at the state level, policymakers are considering new approaches to teacher training, certification, and compensation. Local districts are experimenting with new strategies for teacher evaluation and the organization of teaching duties.

The direction these policies take and the extent to which they are supported in their enactment and implementation depend largely on the actions of organized teachers. Yet teacher organizations are not monolithic in their articulation of their interests and their assessments of new policies. Not only do the AFT and the NEA differ in their perspective on some of these issues, but within each organization, state and local affiliates often disagree on the best ways to improve teaching conditions. Therefore, policymakers considering the feasibility of various proposals cannot assume that the support or opposition of teacher organization leaders at one level will necessarily translate into the same sentiment at other levels.

In addition to differences across organizations and levels of the policy system, the roles of teacher unions in the educational reform movement vary in other important ways. For example, in some instances, these organizations act to advance their own agendas, while at other times, they respond to initiatives championed by others. Similarly, just as teacher unions have relied on a dual strategy of collective bargaining and political action to pursue their interests in the past, they can be expected to use a combination of strategies in furthering their own reform initiatives and in responding to those advocated by others. The complex and multiple roles of organized teachers—across organizations, levels of the policy system, and strategies—must be understood if policymakers are to have valid information about the alternatives that can be successfully enacted and subsequently translated into practice.

## STUDY PURPOSE AND METHODS

This study analyzes the diverse roles that organized teachers are playing in educational reform, focusing on three issues:

- The extent to which teacher unions have been able to attain more professional teaching conditions for their members through collective bargaining.
- The political response of teacher organizations to national, state, and local reform initiatives.
- The ways in which the interests and activities of teacher organizations are likely to shape successive generations of educational reform, particularly efforts to restructure the teaching profession.

The research is based on two data sources. The first source is a set of teacher contracts for two time periods (1980 and 1985), coded for a representative sample of 151 school districts. This sample replicates



the one used in an earlier study of collective bargaining (McDonnell and Pascal, 1979). By adding additional time periods to those used in the earlier study (which examined contracts for 1970 and 1975), we were able to analyze trends in noncompensation provisions over time and across types of districts.

The second source consists of field interview data collected in 52 schools, 22 local districts, and 6 states by the research staff of the Center for Policy Research in Education (CPRE).<sup>1</sup> The sample states were selected because they vary in the comprehensiveness of education reforms each has enacted over the past four years, and because they are regionally diverse; districts and schools were selected to provide a range of sizes, amount of change required by the reforms, and ability to respond to new policies.<sup>2</sup> The data were obtained in more than 600 interviews with state policymakers, interest-group representatives, local district officials, principals, and classroom teachers. Structured interviews explored the role of teacher organizations in education policy generally and in shaping and implementing specific reform policies.<sup>3</sup> Together, the national contract sample and the in-depth interview data provide a comprehensive look at teacher organizations as they explore new approaches to improving their members' work lives.

As a context for understanding the current activities of organized teachers, we also updated our earlier analysis of teacher collective bargaining trends.<sup>4</sup> During the 1970s, organized teachers made impressive strides in the attainment of noncompensation items. By 1980, a majority of bargaining units had included in their contracts provisions that regulate the length of the school day, allow teachers to respond formally to administrators' evaluations, permit teachers to exclude disruptive students from their classrooms, and outline clear procedures for

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<sup>1</sup>These data were collected by researchers at RAND, Rutgers University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison over the past two years as part of a comprehensive study of the implementation and effects of a variety of educational reform policies. Other projects based on the core data focus on student standards, teacher policy, educational technology, and efforts to monitor educational progress.

<sup>2</sup>Because the major focus of this research was the implementation and effects of educational reform policies, the sample was selected to maximize variation on criteria related to educational reform, not to teacher collective bargaining. However, the sample was appropriate for examining the response of teacher unions to different reform policies, and it complements the larger contract sample that was selected to study collective bargaining trends.

<sup>3</sup>This information has been organized in a computerized database that allows analysts to access and configure interview responses by state, district, school, respondent category, topic, or any combination of these. Responses can be further categorized by the use of a keyword system. This has enabled us to conduct a much more extensive and systematic analysis than is typically possible with qualitative data.

<sup>4</sup>This analysis is detailed in the Appendix.

districts to follow if they have to reduce the size of their teacher force. However, less than a third of the teacher unions in our contract sample had attained strong limits on class size, curbs on requirements for teachers to teach out of their fields, or the establishment of an instructional policy committee at each school. Furthermore, teacher unions have made little progress in obtaining new contractual provisions after 1975: With relatively few exceptions, the improvements in working conditions teacher unions had attained by 1975 were not enhanced in the 1980 and 1985 contracts. This, then, is the environment in which teacher unions have responded to the reform policies advocated by others and advanced their own reform agenda through both collective bargaining and the political process.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Section II examines the extent to which teachers have been able to achieve more professional teaching conditions through contractual gains. Section III discusses the political choices that organized teachers have confronted over the past four years. And Section IV discusses the implications of organized teachers' past behavior for the role they are likely to play in the future.

## II. ATTAINING PROFESSIONAL STATUS THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining by teacher organizations is typically associated with the attainment of concrete welfare benefits such as higher salaries, better fringe benefits, and improved working conditions (e.g., class size limits and well-defined working hours). However, teacher unions have always argued that a strong contract is also a route to greater professionalism for their members (e.g., AFT Task Force on the Future of Education, 1986). They maintain that economic security and the protection of teacher rights not only improve teachers' status, but also ensure that teachers exert greater control over the way schools are organized and the kind of instruction delivered to students.

The link between collective bargaining and greater professionalism for teachers is particularly salient now, as the latter issue has moved to the top of the educational reform agenda. Although recent initiatives to improve the professional status of teachers have assumed that such gains will be made largely through the political process, collective bargaining can also serve to further that objective. This section focuses on those contract provisions that are likely to contribute to more professional teaching conditions. We examine the success of teacher unions in obtaining these items for their members, and the factors that explain differences in that attainment. The analysis is based on a representative sample of teacher collective bargaining contracts for 1980 and 1985. (See the Appendix for a description of the sample.)

In Section IV, we shall examine the quest for greater professionalism as it is being pursued through the political process.

### THE PROFESSIONAL-TEACHING-CONDITIONS SCORE

Professionalism assumes that members of an occupation possess a specialized body of knowledge and that, because their work poses complex and nonroutine problems, their behavior in applying that expert knowledge should be regulated by an internal code of ethics and by the voluntary groups representing them (Barber, 1965). Because judgment must be used in applying professional knowledge to individual clients' needs, that knowledge cannot be reduced to rules or prescriptions for practice; thus professionals as a group require autonomy from administrative control in determining tasks and functions (Boreham, 1983).

Professional values argue that teachers should be held accountable through standards and procedures collectively specified and enforced by peers, not by externally defined and enforced criteria. Although they assume that professionals will work in the community's interest rather than solely in their own self-interest, these norms also stress notions of self-governance and collective autonomy.

This general definition of professionalism suggests three criteria that should be included in a score representing contract items that establish professional teaching conditions:

1. Teachers must have sufficient autonomy to exercise their best judgment about how to instruct students effectively (Carnegie Forum, 1986).
2. Teachers must participate in making the decisions that affect the way in which instruction is organized.
3. Teachers must be guaranteed a work environment that includes reasonable class sizes, availability of materials, and sufficient time to teach (AFT, 1986; NEA, 1986b). Several researchers (Sykes, 1985; Kerchner and Mitchell, 1986) have described these resources as enabling conditions: They do not guarantee professionalism, but they create the circumstances that are necessary for more fundamental teaching reforms to occur.

Using these criteria, we selected fifteen items that together constitute a core set of necessary conditions for professional teaching. They do not exhaust the entire range of contract provisions related to teacher professionalism, but they do represent major dimensions that unions are likely to seek through the collective bargaining process. Table 2.1 lists the provisions and shows the proportion of sample districts that had achieved each item in the 1980 and 1985 contracts. The first ten items relate directly to professional teaching conditions in that they are aimed at creating greater autonomy, collective decisionmaking, and accountability. The final five items constitute enabling conditions that support a more professional teaching environment.

These items were combined to generate a professional-teaching conditions-score (PTCS) for each contract. The 1980 and 1985 contracts exhibit very few differences with respect to the professional score variable. The score could theoretically range from 0 to 15; although several districts registered scores of 0, none had scores higher than 12 in 1980 and 11 in 1985. The 1980 and 1985 contract samples had

**Table 2.1**  
**PROFESSIONAL TEACHING CONDITIONS AND ATTAINMENT**  
**OF THEM IN 1980 AND 1985 CONTRACTS**

| Professional Teaching Conditions   | % of Districts Attaining Items |      |
|--|--------------------------------|------|
|  | 1980                           | 1985 |
| 1. Assistance provided to teachers judged unsatisfactory                             | 59                             | 57   |
| 2. Provisional teachers to be evaluated  | 65                             | 63   |
| 3. Teachers can refuse assignment outside of grade or subject area                   | 10                             | 7    |
| 4. Administrators cannot intervene to change teachers' grades                        | 9                              | 10   |
| 5. Controls on administration of standardized tests to students                      | 2                              | 1    |
| 6. Limits on the number of subjects, grades, or ability groups teacher must teach    | 52                             | 50   |
| 7. Establishes academic freedom for teachers   | 49                             | 52   |
| 8. Teachers comprise half or more of instructional policy committee (IPC) membership | 39                             | 46   |
| 9. IPCs established in each school   | 31                             | 33   |
| 10. IPCs empowered to review curriculum  | 33                             | 38   |
| 11. Class size mandated  | 27                             | 28   |
| 12. Teacher can exclude & disrupt a student  | 54                             | 54   |
| 13. Limits on teachers' paperwork load   | 16                             | 18   |
| 14. Controls on numbers of classroom interruptions                                   | 31                             | 29   |
| 15. Salary paid during sabbatical leaves   | 77                             | 73   |

identical mean scores of 5.6 and standard deviations of 2.7. The correlation coefficient on the 1980 and 1985 scores for individual districts was in fact 0.91. These findings suggest that very little progress in the attainment of professional teaching conditions occurred between 1980 and 1985 in this national sample of teacher collective bargaining agreements. To some extent, this finding is not surprising. Although teacher unions have historically portrayed collective bargaining as a route to greater professionalism, the most recent drive to strengthen teacher professionalism did not begin until 1985.

## **FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ATTAINMENT OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING CONDITIONS**

We assumed that demographic, locational, and bargaining-situation factors determine how well a bargaining unit performs with respect to winning professional-teaching-conditions items in contracts. To test these assumptions, we ran multivariate regressions of the PTCS registered for each bargaining unit against a number of variables measuring such factors. Separate analyses were conducted for the 1980 and 1985 contract samples.

### **Explanatory Factors**

The demographic variables included district enrollment, per-pupil spending, and the proportion of the district student body composed of minority students—black, Hispanic, and Asian. We expected that larger districts would have attained more of the professional teaching conditions because large union locals, with their greater financial and membership bases, can typically mount tougher and more proficient bargaining campaigns. We also anticipated a positive association between per-pupil spending and the PTCS because wealthier districts would be more able to afford to grant the provisions. (However, school finance equalization may have compressed variation in per-pupil spending enough to reduce the independent influence of that variable.) We had no prior data on how enrollment composition would affect attainment, but we wanted to record any statistical associations. We also included a variable that reflected overall population growth in the city or county in which the district was located. Our fieldwork in the CPRE core districts suggested that growing districts with high demand for teachers may be more likely to focus on professional teaching items because they need to attract large numbers of new teachers.

For the locational variable, we employed a binary value indicating whether the district was in the Northeast and whether or not it was in a central city of an SMSA. (These characteristics are often assumed to indicate pace-setting bargaining units.)

We used several variables to reflect the bargaining situation of the district. The number of years of bargaining history, for example, was expected to be positively related to the attainment of high PTCS simply because mature contracts tend to have a broader scope.

We also expected that a conducive state legal environment would strengthen the hand of the bargaining unit and facilitate the winning of provisions. Therefore, we constructed a score based on whether the state in which the district was located had statutes or established legal

precedents that mandated bargaining on a series of five topics that were also included in the PTCS—class size, teacher evaluation, teacher assignment, student discipline, and instructional policy committees.<sup>1</sup> Information on state legal environments came from the literature<sup>2</sup> and from telephone interviews with the person responsible for the administration of public employee labor relations in each state. Districts were assigned legal environment scores on a 5-point scale.

To capture the separate effect attributable to districts that had many years of bargaining *and* a conducive state legal environment, we formed an interaction variable based on years of bargaining and the state legal environment score. We expected to find a positive association between this interaction variable and the contract PTCS.

Because our past research suggested that strong contracts get stronger over time, we needed a variable to reflect whether the sample contracts already contained a series of critical provisions in a period antedating the attainment of the PTCS. We assumed that unions able to obtain provisions related to improved working conditions early on would be in a better position to obtain a higher PTCS. Therefore, we selected the following six provisions and recorded the number attained in each district in its 1975 contract:

- Duration of school day is specified.
- Teachers are guaranteed preparation periods.
- Maximum class sizes are specified.
- Involuntary teacher transfers are permitted only under specific conditions.<sup>3</sup>
- Teachers can eject disruptive students.
- Reduction-in-force (RIF) procedures are specified.

A 6-point score reflecting early contract strength was calculated for each district.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that *mandating bargaining* on a topic is not the same as *requiring* that the provision be included in a contract. For example, in states where bargaining was mandated on the five topics, 56 percent of the contracts actually contained a provision specifying class size; 70 percent contained a provision specifying the evaluation of provisional teachers; 6 percent contained a provision allowing teachers to refuse assignments outside their grades or subject areas; 40 percent contained a provision allowing teachers to eject disruptive students; and 22 percent contained a provision calling for the inclusion of teachers on instructional policy committees.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, NEA (1986c) and Hadley (1984).

<sup>3</sup>Such conditions include declining enrollment, reductions in the teacher force, changes in federal or state programs, and achievement of faculty ethnic balance.

<sup>4</sup>Two of the items—maximum class size and the ability to exclude disruptive students—are also included in the PTCS. We thus altered the dependent variable in the regression results reported below to remove the class size and disruptive-student provisions from the PTCS, giving it a range of 0 to 13.

Agreements may contain provisions that prevent the assignment of the most appropriate teacher to a school—provisions that some people would view as antithetical to the attainment of professionalism. The contract, for example, may specify that only teachers with little seniority or who have lower qualifications<sup>5</sup> or who have received unfavorable evaluations may be subject to involuntary transfer. Such provisions seem to emphasize bureaucratic criteria and prevent the assignment of the most qualified or appropriate people to particular schools or classrooms. For 1980 and 1985, we constructed a binary variable with a value of 1 for those contracts in which *only* low seniority and/or low qualification and/or unfavorably evaluated teachers can be transferred involuntarily. We expected that variable to be negatively related to the contract's PTCS.

We were interested in the independent effect of affiliation on PTCS. Districts affiliated with the AFT were given a value of 1 and districts affiliated with the NEA or some other teacher union were given a value of 0.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, we were interested in the effects of salary level on the attainment of the professional conditions provisions. Two opposing kinds of expectations came to mind: First, salary trades off against the items in the PTCS score, so the association should be inverse, or negative. Second, high salaries contribute to greater professionalism, implying a direct or positive relation. The same expectations might be reasonable for the salary-change variable that we also included.

Table 2.2 summarizes the variable names, definitions, mean values, and expected signs.

### Multivariate Regression Results

Table 2.3 presents the results of the multivariate regression analysis, estimated by means of ordinary least squares.

The equations are significant in F-ratio terms at a confidence level of 0.05 or above. They explain about a quarter of the variation in the PTCS variables. However, few of the coefficients on the independent variables are significant at a confidence level of 0.10 or above.

For the 1980 sample, districts with relatively *high* proportions of minority students were more likely to attain high scores on professional conditions. The relationship with minority proportion holds also for the 1985 contract sample. Per-pupil spending is not sig-

<sup>5</sup>Including educational attainments and certification.

<sup>6</sup>Fewer than 3 percent of the districts in the sample were affiliated with neither the AFT nor the NEA.



nificantly associated with PTCS. A northeastern location conferred no significant advantage in 1980, and especially not by 1985. Whether a bargaining unit is located in a central city school district or not seems to have little effect on its ability to attain the professional-conditions provisions. Restricting our discussion to variable coefficients with  $t$ -values  $> 1$  (reflecting a level of confidence of about two-thirds), the following relationships seem to hold: Bargaining units in large districts

**Table 2.2**  
**DESCRIPTIONS OF VARIABLES**

| Variable Name                | Definition  | Sample Mean | Expected Sign |
|------------------------------|---|-------------|---------------|
| <i>Dependent Variables</i>   |   |             |               |
| PS80                         | Number prof. cond. items in 1980 contract (0-13)                            | 4.9         | na            |
| PS85                         | Number prof. cond. items in 1985 contract (0-13)                            | 4.9         | na            |
| <i>Explanatory Variables</i> |   |             |               |
| <i>Demographic</i>           |   |             |               |
| ENROLL                       | Number of students enrolled, 1980   | 42,086      | +             |
| WHITE                        | Percent of students who were white, 1980                                    | 76.6        | ?             |
| POPCH                        | Percent area population change: 1970-1980                                   | 6.6         | +             |
|                              | Percent area population change: 1980-1985                                   | 3.4         | +             |
| SPEND                        | Per pupil spending in school district: 1980                                 | \$2,550     | +             |
|                              | Per pupil spending in school district: 1985                                 | \$3,615     | +             |
| <i>Locational</i>            |   |             |               |
| NOREA                        | District in Northeast region, not Midwest, South or West (0,1)              | 0.28        | +             |
| CITY                         | District in central city of SMSA, not suburb or non-SMSA (0,1)              | 0.62        | +             |
| <i>Bargaining situation</i>  |   |             |               |
| YEARS                        | Years district had been bargaining: 1980                                    | 13.7        | +             |
|                              | Years district had been bargaining: 1985                                    | 18.7        | +             |
| LEGAL                        | No. items on which state mandates bargaining (0-5)                          | 1.32        | +             |
| INTER                        | Interaction of YEARS and LEGAL: 1980  | 17.0        | +             |
|                              | Interaction of YEARS and LEGAL: 1985  | 23.1        | +             |
| EARLY                        | No. critical items attained by 1975 (0-6)                                   | 2.8         | +             |
| NOPRO                        | Only low-qualification teachers subject to involuntary transfer (0,1): 1980 | 0.34        | -             |
|                              | Only low-qualification teachers subject to involuntary transfer (0,1): 1985 | 0.35        | -             |
| AFT                          | Affiliated with AFT, not NEA or other (0,1)                                 | 0.22        | ?             |
| SALARY                       | Starting teacher salary: 1980   | \$11,717    | -, +          |
|                              | Starting teacher salary: 1985   | \$16,339    | -, +          |
| SALCHG                       | Percent change in salary, 1980-85   | 39.4        | -, +          |

**Table 2.3**  
**EFFECTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC, LOCATIONAL, AND**  
**BARGAINING FACTORS ON PTCS IN 1980**  
**AND 1985: REGRESSION RESULTS**

| Variable |          | 1980                    | 1985                    |
|----------|----------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Const:   | coef.    | 4.707913                | 3.868574                |
|          | std.err. | 3.150628                | 3.180845                |
|          | t-val.   | 1.494                   | 1.216                   |
| ENROLL:  | coef.    | -0.000280               | -0.000359               |
|          | std.err. | 0.000236                | 0.000242                |
|          | t-val.   | -1.190                  | -1.483                  |
| WHITE:   | coef.    | -0.0201830 <sup>a</sup> | -0.0184485 <sup>a</sup> |
|          | std.err. | 0.0102553               | 0.0105141               |
|          | t-val.   | -1.968                  | -1.755                  |
| POPCH:   | coef.    | 0.013791                | 0.0143641               |
|          | std.err. | 0.0104554               | 0.0305097               |
|          | t-val.   | 1.319                   | 0.471                   |
| SPEND:   | coef.    | 0.0000114               | 0.0001119               |
|          | std.err. | 0.0001057               | 0.0003712               |
|          | t-val.   | 0.108                   | 0.301                   |
| NOREA:   | coef.    | 0.8281424               | 0.4484669               |
|          | std.err. | 0.5509334               | 0.5407255               |
|          | t-val.   | 1.503                   | 0.829                   |
| CITY:    | coef.    | 0.0868746               | -0.3127563              |
|          | std.err. | 0.233512                | 0.4780986               |
|          | t-val.   | 0.200                   | -0.654                  |
| YEARS:   | coef.    | 0.0479244               | 0.075294                |
|          | std.err. | 0.0554815               | 0.055698                |
|          | t-val.   | 0.864                   | 1.35 <sup>c</sup>       |
| LEGAL:   | coef.    | 0.024030                | -0.0130798              |
|          | std.err. | 0.1805603               | 0.1887429               |
|          | t-val.   | 0.133                   | -0.069                  |
| INTER:   | coef.    | -0.0014055              | -0.0008224              |
|          | std.err. | 0.0077987               | 0.0065182               |
|          | t-val.   | -0.180                  | -0.126                  |
| EARLY:   | coef.    | 0.7038821 <sup>b</sup>  | 0.6135655 <sup>b</sup>  |
|          | std.err. | 0.1505921               | 0.1579586               |
|          | t-val.   | 4.674                   | 3.884                   |
| NOPRO:   | coef.    | 0.5922113               | 0.4377587               |
|          | std.err. | 0.4144726               | 0.4163979               |
|          | t-val.   | 1.429                   | 1.051                   |
| AFT:     | coef.    | -0.1363935              | -0.1781348              |
|          | std.err. | 0.5371347               | 0.5229488               |
|          | t-val.   | -0.254                  | -0.341                  |

Table 2.3 (continued)

| Variable         | 1980             | 1985             |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| SALARY: coef.    | -0.0001123       | -0.0000566       |
| std.err.         | 0.0002595        | 0.0002352        |
| t-val.           | -0.433           | -0.241           |
| SALCHG: coef.    |                  | -0.2517544       |
| std.err.         |                  | 2.311255         |
| t-val.           |                  | -0.109           |
| Sample size      | 129 <sup>c</sup> | 122 <sup>c</sup> |
| R <sup>2</sup>   | .195             | 0.2262           |
| F ratio          | 1.34             | 2.23             |
| Equation signif. | (b)              | (d)              |

<sup>a</sup>Significant at a confidence level of 10 percent or more.

<sup>b</sup>Significant at a confidence level of 1 percent or more.

<sup>c</sup>Sample size reduced when values are missing for any observation.

<sup>d</sup>Significant at a confidence level of 5 percent or more.

appear to do worse on the professional-conditions items, and those in fast-growing districts do better, at least in the 1980 contracts.

For the bargaining-situation factors, the strongest relationship holds for the variable representing early strength in bargaining (EARLY)—in fact, this is the strongest relationship of all the explanatory variables analyzed. Years of bargaining has the expected sign and t-values > 1 for 1985, but neither the legal-environment variable nor the interaction variable meet even that standard. For both years, contracts that had provisions preventing the involuntary transfer of the most qualified teachers (NOPRO) had *positive* associations with the PTCS and t-values > 1. In neither year does affiliation have a significant relationship with PTCS. Neither starting salary nor its change over the inter-sample period appears associated with PTCS.

## CONCLUSIONS

Interest in teacher professionalism burgeoned beginning in the mid-1980s. Consequently, we did not expect to see substantial evidence of this new trend in teacher collective bargaining contracts for 1980-1985, but we did perceive a beginning in the sample of contracts we analyzed. After unions obtain items governing basic working conditions, their contracts seem to reflect an interest in establishing more professional conditions for teachers in America's public schools.

Our findings suggest that factors related to the collective bargaining process itself, such as early contract strength through attainment of key bread-and-butter provisions, have important effects on the winning of professional-teaching-conditions provisions. It also seems likely that relatively small district, fast-growing ones, districts with high proportions of minority students, and districts with long histories of collective bargaining generate contracts exhibiting greater concern for professionalism. On the other hand, per-pupil spending, affiliation, the state legal environment, location within a metropolitan area, and starting salary do not appear to be significantly related to the winning of contracts that are strong on professional-teaching-conditions provisions.

These conclusions must be tempered by a caveat about missing variables. Personal relationships, effective leadership, and rank-and-file preferences may very well have more to do with contract outcomes than any factor we were able to measure quantitatively (Johnson, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1981; McDonnell and Pascal, 1979). Our fieldwork evidence, discussed in the following section, emphasizes the importance of such considerations.

### III. THE POLITICAL ROLE OF TEACHER UNIONS IN EDUCATION REFORM

#### FACING A NEW SET OF CHOICES

A variety of forces converged in the early 1980s, creating a set of tough political choices that teacher organizations at the national, state, and local levels were forced to confront. This section summarizes those conditions, outlines the choices, and examines how teacher unions responded.

The year 1983 was a watershed in American public education: Six national reports, led by *A Nation at Risk*, were released, documenting the serious problems facing elementary and secondary education and recommending major policy changes.<sup>1</sup> These reports described with considerable alarm what people familiar with schools had known for some time. While achievement was improving at the elementary level and in basic skills, it was falling at the secondary level, especially in higher-order, analytical skills, and new entrants into teaching were scoring significantly lower on basic measures of academic ability than those in other occupations requiring a comparable educational level.

Although these problems were neither new nor previously unrecognized, a combination of factors came together to create a compelling set of incentives for policymakers to act, particularly at the state level (McDonnell and Fuhrman, 1985). First, national- and state-level public opinion polls signaled that while criticism of the schools was high, the public also believed that education could be improved and appeared willing to pay for the efforts required. Second, largely due to a growing concern about international competition and the need for a well-trained labor force, key segments of the business community were actively lobbying for educational reform. Finally, state governments were paying a greater share of the total cost of public education, by funding, on average, half the costs, which consumed a quarter of their budgets. The size of this expenditure, combined with public attention on the policy area, created a substantial incentive for policymakers to investigate whether they were receiving their money's worth. At the

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<sup>1</sup>These reports were *A Nation at Risk*, issued by the National Commission on Excellence; *Action for Excellence*, a report of an Education Commission of the States task force; *Academic Preparation for College*, released by the College Board; *Making the Grade*, a report of a Twentieth Century Fund task force; *America's Competitive Challenge*, by the Business-Higher Education Forum, and *Educating Americans for the 21st Century*, released by the National Science Board.

same time, an upturn in the national economy translated into an opportunity for a number of states to increase education funding significantly.

It is clear that policymakers were not only prepared to act, but they were ready to consider proposals that constituted a significant departure from past approaches. Of particular importance to teacher unions was the recommendation, included in *A Nation at Risk* and espoused by the business community, that teacher salaries be performance-based. From this general recommendation came specific proposals for merit pay plans, career ladders, and mentor and master teacher programs. To varying degrees, all of these proposals would move teacher compensation away from a system based almost solely on educational attainment and seniority to one that would differentiate on the basis of teachers' performance and the nature of their duties. Traditional distinctions between labor and management would also be blurred if these plans included peer review or expanded the teachers' role to include some functions currently performed by administrators.

As these and other reform proposals quickly gained currency, teacher unions were faced with a choice of responses. They could:

- Defend the status quo by opposing those proposals that challenged their traditional interests,
- Adapt to this new set of circumstances and accommodate various reform options espoused by others, or
- Play an active role in shaping new approaches to teacher policy.

Like all political strategies, no one of these options is clearly superior to the others, and each generates its own set of costs and benefits. Table 3.1 summarizes the risks and potential payoffs of the three options from the perspective of teacher union leaders.

**Table 3.1**  
**RESPONSE OPTIONS FOR TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS**

| Option                       | Risk     |             | Probability of Payoff | Level of Payoff                                 |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------------|---|
|                              | Internal | External    |                       |   |
| Defend status quo            | Low      | High        | Low                   | Low   |
| Accommodate reform proposals | Moderate | Moderate    | High                  | Uncertain to moderate                           |
| Shape new approaches         | High     | Low to high | Moderate to low       | Low to uncertain (short-term); high (long-term) |

Calculations may differ somewhat across the three levels of teacher organizations, but the basic assumptions remain essentially the same. They are premised on the fact that teacher unions, like most political interest groups, must act as lobby groups seeking benefits from the political system, but at the same time they are voluntary organizations whose survival depends on their ability to accommodate membership preferences (Truman, 1971; Wilson, 1973). A teacher organization's leadership must thus assess the cost or risk associated with a particular strategy, as it relates to the organization's standing both with its own membership and with the external environment from which it must obtain benefits. In the case of teacher unions, the internal risks are that members will defect to a competing organization or simply choose not to belong to any union, or that the current leadership will be turned out of office. Such membership displeasure could ensue if a union, in its attempt to be an effective lobbyist, advocates positions inconsistent with membership preferences. The external risk is that the organization will gain a negative public image that hurts its access to and effectiveness with policymakers. For example, external risk might increase if a union lobbies for teacher benefits that have little public support. The leadership must also calculate the probability that a particular strategy will produce a desired payoff and what the level of that payoff will be. Payoff is defined in terms of welfare or status benefits that accrue to the organization as a whole, to individual teachers by virtue of their membership status, or to all teachers working within a particular political jurisdiction. The ideal strategy would, of course, generate little risk yet have a high likelihood of substantial payoff.

However, none of the three options completely meets these criteria, and the strength of one is typically the weakness of another. The major advantage of the first option is that it would be unlikely to jeopardize a teacher organization's standing with its own members. The current system, based on collective bargaining and the firm principle of treating all teachers alike, is widely accepted by most teachers. Although they might want more from it, they accept both the overall system and seniority as the basic criterion on which benefits are allocated.

At the same time, this strategy poses a potentially very high risk to an organization's standing in the external environment. The national reports advocating educational reform have defined teachers as part of the "problem." Intransigence on their part might reinforce that image and diminish public support for them and for schools generally. The increased political activism of the business community has meant that in deciding educational policy, public officials must be responsive to

more than just the educational establishment. Consequently, even the strongest teacher organizations cannot assume that their level of influence will remain the same if they openly oppose reform proposals. Furthermore, in the climate of a growing national movement for vouchers and tuition tax credits, if the teacher unions appear unresponsive, they might end up not only with fewer resources, but also with policies that could seriously alter the nature of public education. Given the momentum and level of support for reform policy, then, teacher organizations would have little likelihood of prevailing in such a contest. Even if they did, their payoff would be only a continuation of the status quo, which teachers and their organizations recognize as less than optimal.

The second option, that of accommodating reform proposals advanced by others, has the highest probability of producing a payoff because it would be consistent with the policy directions being pursued in many states. However, it involves some risk because union leaders have to convince rank-and-file teachers that some changes are necessary (e.g., that performance measures would have to be used in awarding additional compensation). At the same time, the risk in the external environment is also moderate, since the teacher organization's leaders have to oppose those aspects of reform proposals that are most antithetical to their interests. If the reform policies work as intended, the level of payoff is likely to be a moderate improvement over the status quo, i.e., at least some teachers will be better off than they were. However, given that few of the proposals for such policies as career ladders have ever been attempted on a broad basis and little is known about what constitutes effective incentives for teachers at different points in their careers, the payoff might be very uncertain.

The third option is the most risky, but in the longer term, it holds the greatest potential payoff. This option requires that teacher unions "get out in front" on the reform bandwagon and shape policy proposals to strengthen teaching as a profession and improve the performance of their members. It would move organized teachers from the defensive or reactive posture of the first two strategies to a position of political leadership.

But such an approach is not without potentially high costs. Unions are the embodiment of the principle of collective action in pursuit of collective goods (Freenan and Medoff, 1984). At one level, active leadership in attaining greater professionalism might be pursued incrementally within the parameters established by the traditional collective bargaining relationship (e.g., along the lines of the professional teaching conditions discussed in Section II). However, more fundamental proposals for greater professionalism would not only require a



departure from the status quo, but could also significantly alter the basic model on which unions operate. Concrete welfare benefits (i.e., salary and working conditions), which are now based largely on a combination of uniform treatment and seniority, would probably be allocated partly on either performance or task differentiation. Some key collective goods, now accessible to all teachers, would become selective and would have limited availability (Olson, 1965; Moe, 1980). Many teachers would find this alternative unacceptable. The only basis on which such a drastic change could be sold to members would be if it were shown to be pareto optimal—no teacher would lose under the new system and some would be significantly better off. However, building teacher support even on this basis might be very difficult, particularly if some teachers were going to be significantly better off than others.

A movement toward greater professionalism would change not only how benefits are allocated to teachers, but also how those benefits are defined. Although both the AFT and the NEA have always stressed the notion of teaching as a profession, their major emphasis over the past fifteen years has been on material incentives—higher wages and benefits, better working conditions for teachers. Placing greater emphasis on professionalism means that the primary emphasis of the benefit structure of teacher organizations would move from material incentives to solidary incentives, i.e., benefits based on intangibles such as status and deference that accrue to a group, but which some members may not have access to or may receive in greater or lesser measure (Wilson, 1973). In the case of teachers, material and solidary incentives are linked, because greater status would probably lead to greater material benefits. However, organizational leaders would have to reorient membership preferences toward accepting the new definition of desired benefits and the way in which those benefits are allocated. Such a process can be tremendously destabilizing to an organization. Any factors that introduce additional heterogeneity may stimulate opposition from those who do not stand to benefit from the change (e.g., teachers whose individual status or salary may not increase under the new system), and subgroup leaders and rivals to the established leadership can then exploit these sentiments (Moe, 1980).

To pursue such a strategy, a leader or leaders must have substantial political resources and must be able to espouse a position that might initially be unpopular, without seriously diminishing their support base. A well-liked leader with long tenure in office is the most likely to be able to effect such reforms successfully. A skilled leader can use "reform-mongering" or elite-induced reform as a way to prevent more radical change (Hirschman, 1963; Huntington, 1968). If an organizational leader can show that a policy of supporting the status quo is

likely to upset the system far more drastically than a policy of change, the rest of the organization may be more willing to accept changes that initially appear to be counter to their interests.

In contrast to the high internal risk associated with actively espousing new approaches to teacher policy, the level of likely external risk is less predictable. If teacher organizations recommend approaches to greater teacher professionalism that truly move beyond the current system, they are likely to receive support, or at least positive recognition, from many in the outside environment. Given the strong demands for reform from the public, the business community, and policymakers, any active effort to shape new policy is likely to be viewed as "statesmanlike," especially if it appears to differ from the traditional union approach.

However, initiatives that strengthen teacher professionalism may threaten the interests of other groups. For example, proposals to grant teachers greater autonomy and a larger role in school decisionmaking, or to place accountability within the profession rather than with external political or administrative bodies, will face opposition on a number of fronts. Policymakers interested in holding teachers more accountable typically want representatives of the public, elected or appointed officials, educational administrators, and the like to participate in defining and enforcing performance standards. Some school principals have argued that granting greater authority and responsibility to teachers compromises administrators' prerogatives (Rodman, 1987a). The external risk to unions of advocating greater teacher involvement in school decisionmaking could potentially be increased by the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *National Labor Relations Board v. Yeshiva University* (1979), which held that faculty at a private university are managerial employees excluded from NLRB coverage because they determine the curriculum and are actively involved in hiring and tenure decisions. The implications of this decision for elementary and secondary teacher unions have not been tested, but it may exert a chilling effect on union interest in espousing expanded teacher participation in school decisionmaking or increased self-governance. Unions may fear that those opposed to greater professionalism for teachers may attempt to use the Yeshiva decision to curb active union reform leadership, thus significantly increasing their perception of high external risk. Hence, the perceived level of external risk will depend on the specific reform proposals being espoused and the targets of union lobbying.

Proposals to enhance teacher professionalism are also likely to involve a major departure from the status quo and may require either significant new resources (e.g., to pay high-performing teachers more)

or a redistribution of existing resources (e.g., away from administrators and toward teachers). Consequently, it may be difficult to effect such change, and the probability of a significant payoff will be moderate to low. Since many proposals are likely to be untried, the payoff may be low or uncertain in the short term. However, if assumptions about the benefits of greater professionalism are true, the benefits should be quite high in the long term, as new approaches are successfully implemented and modified where necessary.

The foregoing comparison of the three approaches suggests that the second option is clearly a compromise between the first and third. Whether an organization chooses the first or the third option depends largely on the importance it places on minimizing the risk of alienating its own members. If a teacher organization assumes that it can convince its own members of the advantages of playing an active role in redefining the teaching profession, the third option is preferable because of its likely long-term payoff. However, if taking a strong stand on something that appears to a majority of the membership to be against its interests undermines the position of organizational leaders, the third option is not advisable.

The two national teacher unions operate as federated organizations (Truman, 1971). Thus, although they are linked by a common set of bylaws, governance structure, and dues, state and local affiliates have considerable autonomy in their activities and in the positions they take. Responses to the reform movement of the past few years can be expected to differ across the three levels of the AFT and NEA. We next examine the role that organized teachers have played at each of these levels, and the strategies they have pursued in balancing members' interests and external political demands.

## THE NATIONAL LEVEL

In the months following the issuance of *A Nation at Risk*, the national media highlighted major differences between the AFT and the NEA on key reform issues. The AFT and its leader, Albert Shanker, were typically portrayed as either having "a more responsive approach to educational issues" (Williams and Howard, 1983: 53) or staking out "a position clearly to the political right of the once-conservative NEA" (Bernstein, 1983: Sec. IV, 1). The NEA was most often represented as "appearing to follow [Shanker's] lead" (Savage, 1983: Sec. I, 1) or as opposing "policies such as teacher testing and merit pay that are increasingly favored by the public" (Williams and Howard, 1983: 53). Like most media images, these portrayals were partially true, but they

did not convey the full complexity of each organization's position or how it was likely to evolve in the ensuing four years. While the AFT quickly moved toward a position of leadership in shaping new approaches to teacher professionalism, the NEA shifted from initial opposition to some reform proposals, then to accommodation, and finally to supporting and encouraging local affiliates to experiment with new approaches to professionalism. The differences between the approaches of the two organizations can be explained largely by the differences in the organizations' size and structure.

### **The National-Level AFT and Educational Reform**

The AFT leadership decided in 1983 not to oppose the reform proposals recommended by the National Commission on Excellence and by various national and state policymakers. Albert Shanker framed the case in favor of accommodation in terms of the potential risk to the AFT if policymakers were to use its opposition as an excuse not to support public education and to move toward vouchers or tuition tax credits:

We must show a willingness to move far in the direction of these reports, cooperatively and eagerly, because we stand a great chance that these powerful report sponsors will say yes, the nation is at risk, we were willing to spend a lot of money and we wanted to make a lot of changes, but you know, it is hopeless because we came up against inflexible unions, school boards, and administrators. If these leaders of government and industry after having invested time, effort and prestige on a program to rebuild American education find their efforts frustrated, there is no question as to where the tilt of public policy will go. We will lose the support that we now have. There will be a massive move to try something else, and it will all be over.

And so I am here to say that even on issues that we feel uncomfortable with, that we disagree with rather strongly, we have to ask ourselves what are the consequences if we win the fight. What is the price? Is it worthwhile?

In a period of great turmoil and sweeping changes, those individuals and organizations that are mired in what seems to the public to be petty interests are going to be swept away in the larger movements. Those organizations and individuals who are willing and able to participate, to compromise and to talk will not be swept away. On the contrary they will shape the directions of all the reforms and changes that are about to be made. That is what we in the AFT intend to do. We intend to be on board shaping the direction of every change in education. (Shanker, 1983)

With this perspective, the AFT continued to support the testing of new teachers and announced that it was willing to consider the question of performance-based compensation. Shanker acknowledged the potential internal risk to the organization but compared its new position to the AFT's "sticking its neck out" twenty years earlier in advocating collective bargaining at a time when rank-and-file teachers were skeptical of such a change.

True to Shanker's promise, over the next three years, the AFT moved beyond accommodation to active leadership on behalf of a variety of bold proposals for strengthening the teaching profession. By 1985, the AFT leadership was discussing ideas that would later be embodied in the Carnegie Forum report (1986), including a national teacher examination, a professional teacher board, new roles for teachers (e.g., an induction process for new teachers conducted by experienced teachers), and a restructuring of the delivery of educational services (e.g., through major changes in the school calendar) (Shanker, 1985). The union acknowledged that it could continue to make incremental changes in such areas as class size and salaries through collective bargaining. But it also acknowledged that if it did no more than that, "ever lower segments of the talent pool" would probably be drawn into teaching (Shanker, 1985: 24).

In keeping with its rhetoric, the national AFT singled out locals that were implementing parts of this strategy. Affiliates such as Toledo, Ohio, which had adopted a peer evaluation and assistance plan, and Hammond, Indiana, with school-site decisionmaking, were brought to the attention of the public and educational policymakers. A task force of AFT leaders from 16 states also prepared a detailed set of recommendations consistent with the broad vision Shanker had been articulating and outlined what the union's role should be in implementing that vision (AFT Task Force, 1986). This document was followed up with more specific suggestions to locals about how professionalization-of-teaching goals could be translated into policy and practice through the collective bargaining process. However, the emphasis was on adaptation to local needs and processes, and a variety of formal and informal approaches were suggested (contract provisions, separate memoranda of understanding, etc.).

At the national level, then, the AFT leadership played a classical reform-mongering role by arguing that maintaining the status quo would result in a far more radical upset to the public education system than responding positively to demands for reform. Consequently, they believed that it was in the AFT's interest to shape a major change strategy, even if doing so might appear to compromise the organization's traditional goals in the short term. At the same time, because of the

federated nature of the organization, the national position was not necessarily translated into specific actions by local affiliates. Some moved in a direction consistent with the national organization; others chose not to do so or to move more slowly. Thus, the national organization represented the AFT externally as a progressive shaper of new approaches, while internally, its function was to encourage and support these innovative directions but not to dictate them.

### The National-Level NEA and Educational Reform

During the same period, the NEA opposed key elements of the reform proposals under consideration by state and local policymakers. The following positions were stated in the *NEA Handbook, 1982-83*:

**Testing of new teachers:** The Association opposes any plan to rank teachers on the basis of competency. The Association also believes that examinations such as the National Teacher Examination must not be used as a condition of employment, evaluation, criterion for certification, placement, or promotion of teachers. The Association is convinced that no test in existence is satisfactory for such usage (p. 212).

**Use of student tests in evaluating teachers:** The Association further opposes the use of pupil progress and student achievement tests for purposes of teacher evaluation, advancement on the salary schedule, continuation of employment, granting of tenure, certification, or promotion (p. 212).

**Uniform accountability reporting systems:** The Association believes that there should be no single or statewide accountability system. It will resist any attempt to transform assessment results into a national or state testing program that would seek to measure all students, teachers, or school systems by a single standard and thereby impose upon them a single program, rather than providing opportunities for multiple programs and objectives (p. 223).

**Performance-based compensation:** The Association believes that instructional performance pay schedules, such as merit pay, are inappropriate because of the complexity of the teaching-learning process (p. 218).

These official policy positions have remained essentially unchanged to the present.

The NEA participated in the Carnegie Forum, and its president, Mary Futrell, endorsed the final report with some reservations. Her concerns centered around a belief that state standards boards should be created, her perception of the potential for abuse in the lead teacher

concept, and the report's emphasis on productivity measures that she considered inappropriate (Carnegie Forum, 1986). The question of a national vs. state standards boards for teachers is an issue that currently differentiates the AFT and the NEA. The NEA advocates the establishment in each state of a professional standards board controlled by teachers. Such a board would license teachers, approve teacher preparation programs, determine if and how a national professional certificate would be recognized, and suspend or revoke licenses. It would be directly responsible to the legislature, with no intervening authority. The NEA has advocated this policy since 1969, arguing that such a structure is desirable because licensing authority rests with the states. The AFT, on other hand, has not endorsed the state board concept and has focused all its attention on promoting a national board (Rodman, 1987b).

Despite her own reservations about the Carnegie Forum recommendations and the NEA's long-standing policy, Futrell convinced the organization's representative assembly in 1986 to support the concept of a national certification process which would be integrated with state-level certification/standards boards (NEA, 1986d). Futrell also agreed to serve on the new Carnegie board whose goal is to begin awarding national certificates within five years. In making this accommodating gesture, she argued:

I believe very strongly that we should be on the inside fighting these battles, rather than on the outside casting stones (Connell, 1987).

The evolution of the NEA's position on key reform issues is illustrated by its stand on the question of teacher evaluation and peer review. Because its status as a union depends on maintaining a clear demarcation between labor and management, the NEA has opposed any teacher participation in summative evaluations that affect other teachers' employment status. However, it recognizes the need to evaluate, assist, and if necessary, dismiss incompetent teachers, as long as due process guarantees are observed (NEA, 1985b). It has also grappled with the notion of formative evaluation and assistance conducted by peers and designed to enhance teachers' skills. The NEA has drawn heavily on existing research on teacher evaluation and has tried to articulate a position that is consistent both with that research and with long-standing organizational goals (NEA, 1985a, 1986a). Consequently, although its current position on teacher evaluation is quite similar to that of the AFT (e.g., see AFT, nd: 28), the NEA has moved more slowly and deliberately, and its implementation advice to locals has been more circumscribed.



The NEA's gradual shift on key reform issues can be partially attributed to external political pressure in the form of competition from the AFT and public criticism from national and state policymakers (e.g., see Olson, 1987b). But it can also be attributed to several internal factors: The NEA is a large, heterogeneous organization with three times the membership of the AFT and more than 12,000 local affiliates. Its leadership is dispersed across several different governing bodies, and its current governance structure reflects a reaction against past domination by a single, strong leader (McDonnell, 1975). Consequently, Mary Futrell, who was first elected in 1983, was not in a position to speak for her organization in the same way that Albert Shanker was, having some twenty years of visible leadership behind him. Similarly, many of the presidents of the major AFT locals have served in their positions for a decade or more, while most local NEA affiliates have a tradition of rotating leadership.

Further differentiating the two organizations is the NEA's more recent emergence as a militant labor union. Because most of its collective bargaining gains are more recently won, its leaders and followers alike have had to be convinced that new organizational directions would not compromise those gains. Consequently, in order for change to be acceptable to the broad membership base, a case must be built internally before the organization can espouse any dramatically new public position. Hence, the national-level NEA's role in educational reform has been quite different from that of the AFT. The case for change has been built gradually by the way leaders such as Futrell have framed the issues, by the dissemination of research findings, by conferences highlighting state and local affiliates that have implemented new approaches to teacher professionalization, and by NEA-sponsored projects such as the Mastery in Learning project, which is working with 27 schools to enhance teacher empowerment and more effective learning.

Given the organizational structure of the NEA, it is not clear that any other strategy could have been attempted. The advantage of the policy of gradual accommodation is that once the national organization moved in a particular direction, it was more likely that the change would be accepted by affiliates. The very real disadvantage is that the NEA has appeared reactive over the past four years and supportive of the status quo during its own internal change process. In minimizing its internal risk, the organization has risked jeopardizing its ability to obtain further benefits from the external environment.



## THE STATE LEVEL<sup>2</sup>

In our earlier study of organized teachers (McDonnell and Pascal, 1979) and in subsequent work on state education policy (McDonnell and McLaughlin, 1982), we concluded that teacher organizations were not only the most powerful educational lobby in most state capitals, but were also often among the most influential interest groups, regardless of policy area. At that time, organized teachers derived their influence from financial support of legislative and executive branch candidates and from their sophisticated lobbying operations.

By 1986, the picture had changed considerably. In all six of our sample states, teacher organizations exerted only limited influence in the period immediately prior to the passage of reform legislation. Their only significant influence was as veto groups, blocking legislation not in their interest; they were not initiators of new policies. Some of this loss of influence can be attributed to political miscalculations, such as opposing an incumbent governor in his successful bid for reelection. However, in three of the states (Florida, Minnesota, and Georgia), the decrease in teacher organization influence can also be attributed to the ascendancy of other groups, particularly those representing the business community.

The relative positions of AFT and NEA affiliates at the state level also differ. In all six states, the NEA affiliate is the larger of the two groups and spends more on political action. In California, the NEA affiliate is about four times larger than its AFT counterpart and is traditionally among the top ten campaign contributors in the state (Gillam, 1987). AFT membership strength is typically concentrated in several large urban districts within a given state (e.g., Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Miami, Minneapolis). This minority status gives the AFT somewhat more flexibility in its lobbying positions because the range of constituents to which it must respond is much narrower. For example, it usually does not have to respond to the potentially very different concerns of urban, suburban, and rural teachers. In addition, when the AFT espouses a new policy position or compromises with policymakers, state-level leaders need to persuade a more homogeneous and smaller group of rank-and-file teachers than NEA affiliates do. Their smaller size and greater homogeneity not only give them more flexibility, but state AFT affiliates can also typically formulate a speedier response

<sup>2</sup>This analysis is based on interviews conducted in six states in the spring of 1986. Research staff from RAND, Rutgers, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison interviewed approximately 180 people, including governors' education aides, state legislators and their staffs, state board of education members, state department of education officials, and interest-group representatives. In each state, representatives (i.e., president, executive director, or chief lobbyist) of the state-level AFT and NEA affiliates were interviewed.

than the NEA to policy proposals. This greater flexibility and ability to compromise on the part of the AFT was identified by policymakers in California, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania, where respondents noted that as the influence of the NEA affiliate had diminished, the AFT had stepped into the vacuum by taking positions that distinguished it from the NEA. These differing positions on key issues become particularly important in terms of the role state teacher organizations have played with regard to specific reform policies.

Unlike the national-level teacher organizations, which have actively worked to shape bold new approaches to teacher professionalism, the state organizations in the sample states moved from initially opposing some key reform proposals to accommodating new policy directions.<sup>3</sup> The level of opposition varied across states and teacher organizations, but in no case did teacher organizations wage an all-out campaign to block reform proposals viewed as against their interests. As we will see below in the detailed discussions of the six states, the decision to moderate opposition was partly based on a calculation that the risk was very high and the probability of payoff low. In addition, however, there was also a realization that teachers stood to gain from some reform proposals, particularly in those states that significantly increased their funding.

Despite these similarities across teacher organizations in the six states, there are significant differences in the context in which each operates. For example, 1985 student enrollment ranged from 593,783 in Arizona to over 4 million in California, and per-pupil expenditure ranged from \$2,821 in Arizona to \$4,350 in Pennsylvania.<sup>4</sup> Particularly

<sup>3</sup>In the six sample states, teacher organizations tended to focus on only a few aspects of reform policy. For example, they were relatively unconcerned about increased graduation requirements because this would affect different members in very different ways, depending on the subjects they teach. Consequently, organizationwide support or opposition was neither possible nor desirable. The teacher organizations in five states focused most of their attention on policies related to teacher training, compensation, and evaluation. In Minnesota, the major focus of the teacher organizations was the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (PEO), which allows eleventh- and twelfth-grade students to take courses at postsecondary institutions tuition-free.

<sup>4</sup>1985-86 student enrollment and average per-pupil expenditures for the six states were:

| State        | Enrollment | Per-Pupil Expense (\$) |
|--------------|------------|------------------------|
| Arizona      | 593,783    | 2,821                  |
| California   | 4,255,554  | 3,608                  |
| Florida      | 1,559,507  | 3,774                  |
| Georgia      | 1,064,600  | 2,980                  |
| Minnesota    | 705,242    | 4,008                  |
| Pennsylvania | 1,683,221  | 4,350                  |

SOURCE: NEA *Estimates of School Statistics, 1986-87.*

important for teacher unions are differences in state statutes governing collective bargaining. Four states—California, Florida, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania—require school districts to bargain with local teacher unions and mandate or permit bargaining on a broad range of topics. Arizona permits meet-and-confer negotiations only at the discretion of local school boards, and case law in Georgia makes collective bargaining contracts illegal. These contextual variables have helped shape the role teacher unions have played in the reform policy process.

**Arizona.** In Arizona, the Arizona Education Association (AEA) moved from mild opposition to support of and accommodation with a reform policy. Approximately 80 percent of the teachers in Arizona belong to the AEA, and another 5 percent belong to the AFT affiliate. The AEA's influence has traditionally been limited by the conservative political culture of Arizona and the organization's decision to support only Democratic candidates. However, in the 1986 election, it switched its strategy and supported some Republican candidates.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this change and what was viewed as a more conciliatory lobbying position, policymakers view the AEA as becoming more effective over time.

A major example of this more accommodating approach is the organization's position on the state's demonstration career ladder plan. The AEA initially opposed the career ladder program, arguing that it would be impossible to obtain objective teacher evaluations, especially since the legislation required teacher performance to be evaluated in relation to student academic progress. According to an AEA representative:

The AEA opposed the concept of merit pay when it was first discussed. The AEA changed its position when it looked at where it wanted to go. The Association wanted teacher salaries increased. It knew that the only way that would happen would be if a performance basis were included. It then identified what AEA members could live with, and the career ladder became acceptable.

Once it decided to support the plan, the AEA was able to reach an important accommodation with the legislature: The legislature agreed to expand by five the number of districts that could participate in the demonstration program; these five districts will use an evaluation system developed by the AEA, with assistance from NEA research staff.

In its support of the career ladder, the AEA accepted a performance-based compensation system that, in some districts,

<sup>5</sup>The AEA's initial foray into bipartisan endorsements was not successful. The organization supported the Republican candidate for superintendent of public instruction, who had been chair of the state senate education committee and was the moving force behind the state's career ladder; however, she narrowly lost to her Democratic opponent, a high school teacher and AEA member.

included peer evaluation for salary increases and the use of students' standardized achievement scores. Because of its relative influence, the AEA decided that it had little to gain from opposition to the career ladder and at least some movement toward its goal of increased teacher salaries through support of it. The risk lay in the possibility of rank-and-file teachers not accepting the new approach to compensation.

**California.** The teacher organizations in California have used the opposition-accommodation strategy somewhat differently. Senate Bill SB 813, the state's educational reform legislation, represented a compromise among those who saw the legislation as a way to increase school funding, those who wanted to make student standards more rigorous, and Republican legislators who wanted to strengthen the prerogatives of school management. The two teacher organizations had to respond to legislative proposals they played no role in developing—proposals that provided significant new funding for schools, but that also included provisions making it easier for school management to fire probationary teachers and to reassign and lay off tenured ones. The strategy of the teacher organizations was to oppose the personnel provisions<sup>6</sup> in informal negotiations with legislative sponsors but to take no public position on the bill.<sup>7</sup> Although it did not officially endorse or oppose SB 813, the CTA threatened to test the interpretation of the personnel provisions in the courts (Fairbanks and Boeck, 1983). The CTA actually did file several suits, in which state courts upheld the SB 813 provisions governing the dismissal of probationary teachers. However, because there is currently a teacher shortage in California, very few school districts have taken advantage of these provisions, so the issue is temporarily moot.

Another provision of SB 813 established a mentor teacher program that pays approximately 5 percent of the state's teachers an additional \$4,000 a year to assist other teachers and to engage in activities such as curriculum development and service learning. Again, the teacher organizations did not actively support or oppose this program. However, respondents noted that the mentor program represented a way to

<sup>6</sup>The personnel provisions in SB 813 included requirements that teachers be evaluated every two years (more frequently for those whose evaluation is negative); that the probation period for new teachers be reduced from three to two years but districts be allowed to dismiss probationary teachers on the basis of local board criteria, with only thirty days notice; that districts be allowed to lay off and rehire teachers for additional reasons and with more flexible criteria (e.g., coursework, subject matter tests, junior teachers with superior skills and experience); and that the time required for dismissal for unprofessional conduct be reduced from ninety to thirty days.

<sup>7</sup>During the legislative process, the California Teachers Association (CTA) and the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) had access to the chief legislative sponsors of SB 813, but not to either the Governor or the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

show movement on teacher policy, while avoiding the controversial issue of merit pay. In other words, policymakers had anticipated the opposition of teacher unions and based the program on a "more pay for more work model," rather than on "more pay for better or different work." The SB 813 law also required that details of local mentor program implementation be included within the scope of negotiations between school boards and teacher organizations. Despite their indifference to the program, the teacher organizations encouraged their locals to assist in its implementation and were able to demonstrate widespread participation in the face of gubernatorial accusations to the contrary (Savage, 1984).

In retrospect, the CFT representative felt that organized teachers in California had become too wrapped up in local bargaining issues and had lost track of broader educational and professional issues. As a result, the teacher groups ended up in a fairly reactive mode on SB 813, having no agenda of problems or solutions to offer. They engaged in damage control on the personnel management and mentor teacher provisions but did not regard them as their agenda.

In the years since the passage of SB 813, some policymakers have tried to change state teacher policy in more significant ways (California Commission on the Teaching Profession, 1985). For a variety of reasons (e.g., more pressing issues such as serious school facility shortages, the state's constitutional spending limit), these proposals have not been translated into policy. There are also serious differences between the CTA and the CFT on some key issues. For example, the CTA has actively opposed new policies that include peer evaluation of teachers, while the CFT endorses them.<sup>8</sup> In California, the teacher organizations have alternated between muted opposition and accommodation, depending on the issue and the level of risk and payoff involved.

**Florida.** Florida has followed a pattern of selective opposition and later accommodation. As part of its 1983 reform legislation, the state enacted a master teacher program that provided an annual award of \$3,000 to the state's most highly qualified teachers. Selection decisions were to be based on subject-matter test scores or possession of a master's degree and superior achievement on a performance evaluation. During the first year of the program, funds were available to award master teacher status to 3 percent of the state's teachers. The impetus

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<sup>8</sup>The CTA and the CFT have also taken different positions on a variety of other policies. For example, the CTA opposed a provision in SB 813 that requires practicing teachers to participate in some type of professional growth activities as a condition for renewing their credentials every five years. It argued that, as professionals, teachers should be free to decide whether or not to engage in such activities. The CFT, on the other hand, supported the requiremen

for this program and others included in the reform legislation came from the Governor, several key legislators, and members of the business community; the teacher organizations were not represented on the commission that developed the initial proposals.

Both the AFT and NEA affiliates in the state opposed the program. However, they were not in a position to block its passage because of strong countervailing support from state politicians and the business community. In the view of the AFT representative:

The master teacher plan was too rapidly put together; it was not adequately funded; it had no support from the people who have to make it work. It was mandated from the top down, and was full of problems. The sole criterion was to get it implemented.

Similar sentiments were expressed by the NEA representative:

We reached major points of disagreement: (1) the selection of the master teachers would be dependent on standardized test scores of students—their exit and entry scores. We didn't feel that was possible, given the organization of the system, and (2) they could afford [only] so much merit pay, so they had to set the standards based on the amount of money they had. We thought all teachers who could meet the criteria should get the money. . . . Also, there was no teacher test available. The master teacher bill was passed with all these negative factors. Then it became a comedy of errors—every mistake was made.

The master teacher program encountered serious implementation problems. To begin with, the performance measurement system that was selected had been designed to test beginning teachers, not veteran teachers. There were also serious logistical problems during the first year: large numbers of applications were lost; tests were scored incorrectly; and test administrations were scheduled without notifying teacher applicants. In 1985, a move was made to abolish the program, but it continued for two more years, largely because of the Governor's strong support.

The NEA affiliate continued to oppose the master teacher program, while the AFT sought alternatives to it. The AFT participated in drafting a locally designed merit schools program that would award additional funding to schools on the basis of students' test scores and a variety of other criteria. The AFT viewed this as a partial replacement for the master teacher program. At the same time, the teacher organizations also participated in a working group of education and business representatives. The group proposed a statewide career ladder in which individual districts would design their own program within broad guidelines. Although the career ladder program was enacted, no funds

were appropriated for it. The enabling legislation will remain in force through fiscal year 1988-89, after which it will automatically expire unless it receives at least \$90 million in funding. State policymakers attribute the legislature's unwillingness to appropriate funds for the career ladder to a backlash from the master teacher program and a lack of support for the program from rank-and-file teachers. The NEA affiliate remains concerned about a performance-based compensation system that lacks sufficient funds to reward all qualified teachers and continues to insist that the program should not be implemented unless the \$90 million trigger is met. The AFT state president, on the other hand, has vowed not to let the career ladder program die and is considering ways in which it might be implemented even without state funding (Olson, 1987a).

In summary, the teacher organizations in Florida opposed a policy that was developed without their participation or input. At the same time, they tried to reach an accommodation with the business and political interests that were demanding some form of performance-based compensation. The result has been the development of two alternatives that retain the basic principle of differential pay based on performance, but that eliminate those components of the master teacher program that were most antithetical to organized teachers (the use of a standardized test for evaluating practicing teachers and a low funding level).

**Georgia.** The major state teacher organization in Georgia also opted for a policy of selective opposition and accommodation. About 60 percent of the state's teachers are members of the Georgia Education Association (GAE), and another 5 percent, primarily in the Atlanta area, belong to the AFT affiliate. Georgia also has a third teacher organization, the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), whose membership includes about 15 percent of the state's teachers. PAGE is a conservative organization that has received considerable support from school managers and from some state policymakers, including the Governor, because of its strong anti-union position. Although the GAE has a political action committee and supports sympathetic legislators, its influence has diminished as other groups such as PAGE have gained ascendancy.

The group with the greatest influence during the passage of Georgia's reform legislation—Quality Basic Education (QBE)—was the business community. Their representatives strongly supported both teacher testing and performance-based compensation. Consequently, the GAE was in a very difficult position. It lacked the influence to block QBE provisions with which it disagreed, and QBE contained some important changes that it supported (e.g., a weighted funding



formula, significant increases in total state funding, and market sensitive teacher salaries). At the same time, it opposed the testing of practicing teachers, viewing the test as a "slap in the face" to those who had already gone through college programs approved by the state. It was also very concerned that the tests were racially and sexually biased. Nevertheless, the GAE supported the concept of uniform evaluation of teachers statewide. Although it believed evaluation should be a local matter, the GAE felt that many local districts were incapable of designing a fair system on their own. It also supported the concept of a career ladder, but opposed the use of the state teacher test to determine salary levels.<sup>9</sup>

The tactic the GAE chose was to monitor committee hearings when the legislation was being considered and to voice its opposition to those parts with which it disagreed. It was able to do this successfully for several merit-pay proposals the committee considered. Once QBE was enacted, the GAE assumed a largely supportive position and has tried to sound positive in its public statements. At the same time, it also filed suit in federal court charging that the teacher examinations are racially biased. While the case was pending, the testing program continued to be implemented (Press, 1987). In early 1988, however, the GAE and the state of Georgia reached an out-of-court settlement that allows the state to continue to use its teacher competency tests for initial certification and for the recertification of practicing teachers. In return, the state has agreed to revise all its subject-matter tests by September 1991; provide a free study course for teachers who still have to pass the tests; and pay "study grants" of \$6,000 to the approximately 325 teachers who lost their certification in the fall of 1987, and thus their jobs, because they failed the examination (Rodman, 1988).

**Minnesota.** Unlike the other sample states, Minnesota has focused its attention on the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (PEO), a policy only indirectly related to teachers.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the teacher organizations were vocal in their opposition, making no attempts at accommodation. As in the other states, however, organized teachers had little input into the framing of the policy. Somewhat ironically, the Minnesota Education Association (MEA) and the Minnesota

<sup>9</sup>The career ladder was not part of the original QBE legislation. A task force was appointed at the time of QBE's passage to make recommendations to the Governor, but no funding has been appropriated, and the future of the career ladder remains uncertain.

<sup>10</sup>The PEO not only allows eleventh- and twelfth-grade students to take courses at postsecondary institutions tuition-free, it also creates a mechanism by which funds for these students are reallocated from local school districts to postsecondary institutions. The state aid allotment, which would normally go to the secondary school a student is attending, moves with the student to the postsecondary institution in an amount proportionate to the student's percentage of full-time attendance there.



Federation of Teachers (MFT) concentrated all their attention on opposing an open enrollment proposal which would have let students attend any high school they wished. Legislative passage of the open enrollment plan was successfully blocked. But proponents of greater choice in schooling were able to move quickly in the wake of this defeat and enact PEO, a policy that was even more antithetical to organized teachers because it allows funds to be reallocated from secondary education to the postsecondary system. Both teacher organizations complained that they were shut out of the policy development process, as business interests and other proponents of choice took the lead.

In opposing PEO, the MEA and the MFT made a variety of arguments. They contended that PEO would lead to chaos because schools would not be able to predict how many students would be in attendance, and that it might not be possible to honor all choices if large numbers of students opted for the most desirable institutions. In the teacher organizations' view, PEO, like tax credits and deductions, was just another subsidy for the middle class who would be most likely to take advantage of such a program. They felt that choice could also lead teachers into competition against each other, that it would be divisive. But the teacher organizations were unable to stop PEO once it enjoyed the active support of a coalition that included the Democratic Governor and the Republican majority leader of the Minnesota House of Representatives. After PEO was enacted, the teacher organizations tried to have the legislation killed or weakened, but they were largely unsuccessful.<sup>11</sup> During the first two years of the program, less than 2 percent of the state's eleventh and twelfth graders participated, and less than 1 percent of K-12 foundation revenue was reallocated to the postsecondary system. However, an important precedent had been set, and the state teacher organizations were able neither to stop it nor to shape it to be more consistent with their interests.

**Pennsylvania.** The major reform policy issue in Pennsylvania revolved around a State Board of Education mandate that required six course credits (or equivalent inservice) every five years for renewal of teachers' permanent certificates. Both the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) and the Pennsylvania Federation of Teachers (PFT) strongly opposed this policy, arguing that it was unfair to practicing teachers who had already met state certification requirements.

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<sup>11</sup>The only amendment of any significance was one that required students to decide whether they wanted high school or college credit for any PEO courses they take. State reimbursement would be made only for those courses selected for high school credit. However, this provision did not unduly constrain students because if they chose high school credit, they could later have the credit transferred to their college transcripts.

The organizations' response was to take their grievances to the General Assembly (the state legislature). However, at this point, the organizations split. The PFT supported legislation (which subsequently passed) that allowed teachers with master's degrees to be exempted from the continuing professional development (CPD) requirement. The PSEA opposed all types of CPD requirements and threatened to take the issue to court.

On other teacher issues, however, the two organizations have been very supportive of state policy. Both organizations endorsed the testing of new teachers and a requirement that local districts establish an induction program for beginning teachers. According to the PFT representative:

Testing eliminates some people, but raises the esteem of the profession. . . . *Newsweek* had a cover picture of a teacher with a dunce cap—this image damaged the profession. Testing legitimizes the profession . . . no one should have to believe simple statements by teachers that they are "good teachers."

The teacher organizations have also worked to accommodate state policy in other areas. For example, the State Board originally planned to frame high school graduation requirements in terms of twelve skill-based goals. The teacher organizations opposed this approach, believing that if specific curriculum subjects were not identified in the requirements, some teachers' jobs might be in jeopardy. They were successful in getting the Board to adopt more traditional subject-matter requirements. However, this accommodation was made at some risk to the organizations' standing with their own members. Some rank-and-file teachers, particularly in vocational-technical fields, saw increased academic course requirements as a threat to their job security. The teacher organizations sought further accommodations (e.g., an option to substitute some vocational courses for academic courses in meeting the state requirements) but continued to support the policy.

### Commonalities Across the Six States

Several consistent patterns emerge from this analysis of the role of state teacher organizations in the six sample states. First, in no state were teacher organizations a major obstacle to the enactment of reform legislation. The organizations had limited influence, particularly in the face of strong countervailing pressure from key politicians and members of the business community. But more important, in most of the states, the teacher organizations made a conscious decision to mute their opposition and to accommodate the policies espoused by others.

They did not want to be viewed as intransigent or "anti-reform." Also, in all the states, organized teachers were quite peripheral to the process through which post-*Nation at Risk* reforms were developed. Like other elements of the educational establishment, such as local school boards, they were often purposely excluded from the process and left to play a largely reactive role. Consequently, between 1983 and 1986, state teacher organizations were not active shapers of new approaches to teacher policy, but were reactors and accommodaters. Finally, despite striking similarities in the manner in which teacher organizations responded across the six states, there were some significant differences in their stance on key issues. Within some states, e.g., Florida and Pennsylvania, the AFT and NEA affiliates took divergent positions on some issues. But these differences also occurred across states within the same organization. For example, the NEA affiliate in Arizona accepted the principle of peer evaluation, while the California affiliate rejected it.

Similarly, the state organizations diverged to some extent from the positions and strategies of the national organizations. For example, in supporting the demonstration career ladder, the Arizona Education Association accepted the use of students' standardized achievement tests as a partial basis for determining teacher compensation, counter to the official position of the NEA. Although the situation is now changing, the state AFT organizations during this period were not as outspoken in their support of new approaches to teacher professionalism as the national leaders. The reasons for these differences may lie in the way organizational leaders assessed the preferences of rank-and-file teachers and their ability to alter those preferences.

## THE LOCAL LEVEL

With few exceptions, local teacher organizations in the six sample states responded to reform initiatives in an accommodating manner.<sup>12</sup> However, unlike the state affiliates, their accommodation resulted not from a calculation that opposition was unlikely to produce a significant

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<sup>12</sup>This analysis is based on data collected in February-March and May-June 1987. Interviews were conducted with local superintendents, school board members, district personnel administrators, principals, and teachers in 22 local districts and 52 schools. The core database includes interviews with 150 classroom teachers. In each district, the president or executive director of the local teacher organization was also interviewed.

Fifteen of the 22 districts have collective bargaining contracts with their teachers. These contracts resemble quite closely the larger contract sample reported on in Section II and the Appendix. On the 15-item professional-teaching-conditions index, for example, the fieldwork sample had a mean of 5.21 and a range of 0-11, as compared with a mean of 5.6 for the contract sample and the same range.

payoff, but from a belief that reform policies were quite peripheral to their mission and interests. Consequently, opposition was unnecessary. At the same time, there was little perceived need to advocate approaches that represented a significant departure from the assumptions embodied in a traditional collective bargaining model.

### The Effects of Collective Bargaining

The fifteen districts with teacher contracts exhibit characteristics typical of those with mature collective bargaining relationships. Only one district has had an inordinate number of grievances going to arbitration, and even in this district, the number is declining. With the exception of a one-day work stoppage and some intermittent picketing, none of these districts has experienced a teacher strike since 1981. As in the larger contract sample, the strength of the contracts in these fifteen districts varies. For example, one district in the fieldwork sample had attained none of the eight key provisions discussed in the Appendix by 1985, while two had attained seven of the provisions (the mean attainment score for this group was 3.6).

Despite these differences, rank-and-file teachers are generally satisfied with the performance of the organizations representing them. Teachers commented positively on what they considered to be their most important accomplishments: salary gains, restrictions on class size, guaranteed preparation periods, and the availability of sufficient instructional materials. A majority of respondents believe, in varying degrees, that the local teacher union and the school administration are working together to improve student achievement.<sup>13</sup>

At the same time, rank-and-file teachers hold expectations about unions that relate primarily to their ability to obtain material benefits. Respondents were asked to characterize the role of the local teacher organization in efforts to strengthen the teaching profession in their districts. To the extent that they viewed the organization as working toward that goal, the overwhelming majority conceived of its role entirely in terms of the material benefits it could obtain. For example:

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<sup>13</sup>We asked teachers to respond to 10 items from the High School and Beyond (HSB) teacher questionnaire. One item asked them to rate the following statement on a 6-point scale, ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (6): *The teachers' union (or education association) and the school administration work together to improve the achievement of students in this school.*

There were 150 responses, distributed as follows: (1) 14 percent; (2) 22 percent; (3) 19 percent; (4) 16 percent; (5) 18 percent; (6) 11 percent.

The union is very important in pushing teachers to be more professional. To be successful, teachers must have higher salaries. At present, it is hard for students from college to go into teaching because of the salaries. The union's work in improving working conditions is also important to professionalizing teaching (California elementary school teacher).

The [teacher organization] doesn't do a whole lot to professionalize teaching. It is primarily concerned with fringe benefits, salary, and class size (Arizona high school teacher and union building representative).

The union has strengthened the profession by boosting teacher morale through salary negotiations. The union is also trying to reduce class size (California high school teacher).

The union has done nothing to strengthen the teaching profession—it's not their job. The union's interests lie in protecting the rights of teachers (California high school teacher).

It is a labor union, not a professional union. The main purpose of the [union] is wages, hours, and working conditions (Pennsylvania elementary school teacher).

Those respondents who argued that teacher organizations are doing little or nothing to help professionalize teaching cited the unions' protection of weak or incompetent teachers as the major reason for this judgment:

The union encourages mediocrity by protecting poor teachers and tenure rights (California high school teacher).

The union has done more to hurt teachers than . . . to help them. I'm very anti-union. In the last school where I worked, they defended a teacher who didn't show up to teach for 100 days during the school year (Florida high school teacher).

The assessment of the effects of collective bargaining by school administrators in the fieldwork sample was quite consistent with our earlier study and the research of others (Johnson, 1983, 1984; Finch and Nagei, 1984). Most superintendents view the teacher union as a major actor in their districts, but they also see it as dealing with bread-and-butter issues (i.e., those related to wages and working conditions), not with educational policy. Although negotiations may still engender some bitterness on both sides, union and district officials typically maintain a continuing dialogue outside the bargaining process. The extent to which the union can influence district policy or maintain a collaborative relationship with school officials most often depends on a combination of factors, including the length of the bargaining

relationship, the strength of the contract, and the personal relationships between key union leaders and their counterparts in the district administration.

At the school sites, principals accept collective bargaining as one of the conditions under which they operate and view it as a source of minor constraints. Most often mentioned as restrictions imposed by the teachers' contract were transfer policies that favor more senior and less competent teachers; scheduling problems that arise because of limits on the number of different class preparations teachers may be assigned; class size provisions; and limits on the number and length of faculty meetings. However, as in our earlier study, we found that the most effective principals accept collective bargaining and use the contract to manage their schools more systematically and to structure teacher participation in school decisionmaking.

In sum, collective bargaining is well-institutionalized in the fifteen districts. Contract strength varies considerably and the teacher organizations differ in the degree of influence they exert over district policy, but the bargaining process is operating smoothly, and rank-and-file teachers are largely satisfied with the organizations that represent them. Both teachers and administrators view teacher organizations as primarily concerned with obtaining material benefits for their members. In fact, teacher expectations about what unions should accomplish are framed almost entirely in terms of salaries and working conditions. Rank-and-file teachers also view union efforts to strengthen teaching as a profession in this way, rather than in broader terms that include decisions about what is taught or how schools are organized for instruction.

During the implementation of state reform policies, the relationship between teacher organizations and school officials looked considerably different in the seven Arizona and Georgia districts that do not have collective bargaining. The only leverage these organizations can exert is through political action; support of school board candidates does tend to give them access to board members, but no real measure of influence over their decisions. In some of these districts, classroom teachers are heavily involved in designing curricula, selecting textbooks, and organizing inservice, but they are selected for participation as individuals, rather than as organizational representatives. There is extensive collaboration between school officials and teachers in a few of these districts, but in most, the relationship is either quite paternalistic or hierarchical.

## Local Teacher Organizations and Reform Policies

It is in these two very different contexts that state reform policies have been introduced. In a few cases, they were implemented simultaneously with locally designed initiatives, but they were generally regarded by the local teacher organization as quite peripheral to its central mission. Hence, the new policies were incorporated into an organization's ongoing routine but did little to change its goals and strategies. We next examine what happened in local districts in each of the six states; we then focus on two very different kinds of districts where the teacher organization chose to exert active leadership in support of major changes in teachers' work life and the organization of schooling.

We focus on those policies directly related to teacher evaluation and compensation and, in Minnesota, on PEO. It was clear in interviews with teachers that they viewed other issues, such as increased course requirements and standardized testing, as state policies over which the district administration and the local teacher organization could exert little or no influence. Hence, rank-and-file teachers did not expect the local teacher organization to play any role in their implementation.

**Arizona.** The response of local teacher organizations in Arizona was quite different from that in the other five states. Largely because of the absence of a state collective bargaining statute, the teacher organizations' influence is limited. Yet three of the four in our sample actively supported the demonstration career ladder in the face of members' strong skepticism, and even opposition. As with the state affiliate, their support stemmed primarily from a desire to obtain higher salaries, not from a belief that the career ladder would necessarily professionalize teaching. This strategy cannot be equated with playing an active leadership role in shaping new approaches, but in taking such a large risk with their membership, these organizations did more than just accommodate the new policy. As we will see in the discussion of two case studies below, the costs to the organization's leadership were very high— including even their possible ouster from office.

The limited influence of local teacher organizations in Arizona was reflected in the experience of two of the four districts. The state legislation required that districts applying to participate in the demonstration career ladder program show evidence that their plan had been developed in consultation with teachers. In two districts, the teacher organization and individual teachers played a major role in designing the plan. In a third district, classroom teachers participated actively in the early stages, but once the state funded the district's program, the



administration made major changes without consulting the teachers. In the fourth district, teachers participated as individuals in developing a career ladder plan, but the teacher association was not permitted to play any organizational role.

**California.** Given the legislative origins of California's mentor teacher program (it was created as a way to postpone dealing with questions of performance-based compensation), it is not surprising that the program was implemented in most districts as a classic pork barrel, with benefits allocated as broadly as possible and on criteria other than strict merit. Bird (1986) found in his study of the mentor program in ten districts that local teacher organizations often sought arrangements for the program that reflected their organizational interests. These included "short terms for the mentors (allowing rotation of more teachers through the mentorships), mentors' proposing independent projects, and mentors' confidential service upon individual teachers' request" (Bird, 1986: 24-25). Our findings for three of the four California sample districts are similar. Mentors serve short terms; they apply by proposing independent projects which are sometimes quite peripheral to district or school needs (e.g., developing a paleontology curriculum); and no explicit selection criteria are used.

In one district where mentors are chosen on the basis of only a written proposal, the dominant role of union representatives on the selection committee has led to a widespread perception among the rank-and-file teachers that the program is biased toward union "favorites":

Union involvement in the mentor teacher program has skewed the selection toward teachers who are heavily involved in the union or who are related to someone who is heavily involved in the union. For example, the mentor teacher at this school served on the union board. He had his proposal finished before anyone else even knew about the program, and when he was turned down at the school level, his application was re-routed through the district office.

The selection process stinks—the program is being used to reward the friends and relatives of the selection committee which is under strong union control. An art major was selected to be a science mentor and at this school, the mentor teacher is the worst math teacher on the staff.

The mentor program has been implemented in this way in the three districts not only because of teacher organization preferences, but because most district and school administrators have not viewed the program as central enough to their own goals and interests to try to shape it differently.

The exception is one large urban district in our sample that has a chronic teacher shortage, particularly a lack of experienced teachers—



more than a third of its teachers have taught for three years or less. This district chose to use its mentor program as part of an induction system for new teachers. All mentors work with beginning teachers, and they must be willing to be transferred to schools with the greatest need for such assistance. Given the district's initiative, some teachers viewed the union as playing a reactive role:

I get the feeling that the union is not that supportive of the mentor program. I think they feel it sets up another class of teachers. Once it was clear that the program would be implemented, the union got involved because they did not want to seem powerless.

While accepting this district's decision about how to structure the program, the union has played a traditional collective bargaining role in seeking to protect mentors. It has obtained guidelines that limit the number of new teachers mentors may work with and the number of different schools to which they can be assigned for mentoring responsibilities.

Despite this "business as usual" approach to the mentor program, two of the teacher organizations are working with district officials to implement a peer evaluation system for new teachers. In doing so, they will draw on the model used by teacher organizations in other cities such as Toledo (Wise et al., 1984; Waters and Wyatt, 1985), and on recommendations of the California Commission on the Teaching Profession (1985). It is too early to tell how risky this more innovative strategy will be for the local organizations. However, by implementing it on an experimental basis and focusing only on new teachers, they will probably be able to avert any rank-and-file opposition.

**Florida.** Teacher organization response to educational reform in Florida presents a mixed picture. One of the three sample districts is not participating in the merit schools program because the teacher organization refused to approve involvement (based on the vote of a small group of members who turned out for the ballot). At the same time, in another district, the teacher organization has spearheaded a joint effort with district administrators to decentralize more decisions to the school level and to make decisionmaking there more collegial among principals and teachers. This initiative (discussed in greater detail below) is noteworthy because it requires that the teacher union leadership move beyond the traditional collective bargaining model and grant contract waivers to implement the experimental plan. In this district, the union leadership views both the merit schools program and the proposed career ladder as consistent with the local initiative and a forerunner to greater shared decisionmaking for teachers. Consequently, the union has strongly supported implementation of the merit

schools program and is a vocal advocate of state funding of the career ladder.

In all three districts, rank-and-file teachers understood that the teacher organizations were opposed to the master teacher program, and they knew the reasons for this position. Some teacher organization leaders were concerned that the public would blame them for the program's failure, but their opposition was consistent with members' concerns about its design and funding. The local teacher organizations in Florida, then, approached reform policies in more varied ways than in the other states; their responses ranged from widespread opposition to the master teacher program to limited opposition to merit schools to selective efforts to shape more far-reaching policies for restructuring schools.

**Georgia.** The absence of collective bargaining in Georgia has meant that local teacher organizations exert little influence beyond what they can accomplish through support of school board candidates. This lack of influence has extended to the implementation of QBE. Like rank-and-file teachers, organizational leaders complain about the unfairness of testing practicing teachers for recertification, but they are in no position to do much about it. In only one district in the field-work sample is the local teacher organization even involved in assisting teachers to pass the test through joint sponsorship of workshops with the district administration.

**Minnesota.** Despite strong opposition at the state level, PEO is not an issue that local teacher organizations have had to deal with in Minnesota. Like their state counterparts, local union leaders opposed PEO and viewed it as a potential threat to the viability of the K-12 public school system. However, the legislation was implemented so rapidly (it was enacted in June and made effective in August) that local teacher organizations did not have an opportunity to take any compensating action (e.g., through the collective bargaining process). Once the policy was implemented, however, it was clear that PEO would have little effect in most districts and would not adversely impact teacher interests. No teacher in the state has lost his or her job as a result of PEO, and even in the very few districts with a community college located adjacent to a high school, the average teacher has lost no more than two or three students. Because of the nature of reform policies at the state level in Minnesota, then, local teacher organizations have not found it necessary to play an active role during their implementation. To the extent that the teacher unions are interested in strengthening teaching as a profession, they have used the traditional collective bargaining process (e.g., by negotiating contracts that require teacher par-

ticipation on committees to revise student standards, select textbooks, and allocate funds).

**Pennsylvania.** In the four Pennsylvania districts in our sample, the teacher organizations are accommodating the state requirement for an induction program through the collective bargaining process and joint union-district committees. With varying degrees of success, the teacher organizations are seeking to obtain additional salary and release time for the experienced teachers who will work with new teachers. Although rank-and-file teachers complain about the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements, the teacher organizations feel that everything possible was done when the state affiliate successfully obtained an exemption for those teachers with master's degrees. Consequently, implementation of CPD is not currently on either their local bargaining or political action agendas.

Although the scope of state-level educational reform policies in Pennsylvania has been quite limited, some local districts have initiated significant changes on their own. For example, one of the fieldwork districts has implemented a standardized curriculum as a way of ensuring that all students have equal access to academic content. Although it has not opposed the concept, the teacher union has worked to mitigate what it perceives to be negative effects on teachers. The organization has resisted district demands to lengthen the school day and year and to establish limits on how teachers use their preparation periods. Through a joint union-district committee, it is also seeking to modify guidelines that currently shape how teachers use about 85 percent of available instructional time. The district administration views these union efforts as obstacles to needed reform, while the union sees them as guarantees against unprofessional working conditions for teachers.

In this case, as in most of the other districts we have been discussing, the teacher organization and school officials have accommodated state and local reform policies within a framework of traditional interests and bargaining processes. The teacher organizations have not considered it to their advantage to break out of this mold and play a leadership role in shaping new approaches to teaching.

We next examine two fieldwork districts where the teacher organizations chose a different route. These two organizations differ significantly from each other, as do the districts in which they operate, but they are quite similar in the calculations made by organizational leaders and in the response of rank-and-file teachers.

### Moving Beyond Accommodation: Two Case Studies

Our first case study is a growing suburban district in Arizona with about 700 teachers, about 60 percent of whom belong to the Classroom Teachers' Association (CTA), an NEA affiliate. The CTA participates in a meet-and-confer process with the district that covers salaries and fringe benefits, but it has no written contract. By all accounts, this district has strong leadership and a solid instructional program, and it has enjoyed a constructive, open relationship with classroom teachers.

This district is now participating in the state's demonstration career ladder program. Several characteristics of its approach to career ladders are notable. The first concerns the role the CTA played in the design and development of the demonstration program. Several years ago, the superintendent expressed interest in exploring the possibility of a merit pay plan. The CTA was interested in a career ladder. A 40-member committee was formed; 30 of the members were classroom teachers, and the leadership of the CTA was also represented. The career ladder is now administered by the immediate past-president of the CTA, and most of the current officers are career ladder candidates. Although the district leadership supports the program, it is clear that this is the CTA's program, and the risk associated with its implementation rests with that organization.

The second notable characteristic of the district's approach is the extent to which some key elements of the career ladder diverge from national NEA policy. Career ladder candidates are subjected to a series of classroom evaluations conducted by their building administrators and by two peers. Although the two teacher evaluators are on one-year leaves from their classrooms, they are participating in decisions that affect the compensation levels of their peers. Student achievement on standardized tests is also considered in evaluating career ladder candidates; the results count for between 35 and 50 percent of teachers' final scores. Student demographics are also taken into consideration, and teachers may provide documentation about their own objectives for the class and any other diagnostic measures they are using. However, student scores on the state's and the district's standardized tests must be factored into a teacher's evaluation.<sup>14</sup>

A third striking characteristic has been the response of rank-and-file teachers to the program. Only about 30 percent of the eligible teachers

<sup>14</sup>Although the CTA strongly supports peer evaluation as a component of the career ladder, it sees the use of student test scores as highly questionable. However, this emphasis was demanded by the administration, and the CTA accepted it rather than jeopardize the career ladder.

applied to participate, and only half of those decided to continue through the evaluation process. Although participants have been frustrated by the high transaction costs (in developing appropriate documentation, etc.), they generally view the experience positively. All those we interviewed reported that as a result of the evaluation process, their teaching had become more focused; they also appreciated receiving so much feedback on their teaching.

For the 90 percent of the district's teachers who are not currently participating in the program, the response has ranged from skepticism to outright animosity. Resistance is much higher among high school teachers than among those in the lower grades. However, across all levels, nonparticipants talked of the divisiveness that the program was generating. They felt that it created a potential for interpersonal conflict, and that participants were already less willing to share ideas with colleagues or to engage in school-related activities that did not count toward their career ladder score. For example:

I see absolutely nothing good coming out of the career ladder in this district. Things that are supposed to be positive are just the opposite. For example, the career ladder is supposed to encourage creativity, but it does just the opposite because colleagues won't share with one another. It causes teachers to withdraw and to hide their ideas. When they are asked to serve on a school committee, their excuse for saying no is "I'm on the career ladder." Career ladder responsibilities (viz., the paperwork) take away from a teacher's professional day. My personal philosophy is that a teacher should spend 100 percent of the day teaching.

The former CTA president saw the career ladder as the only way to make significant gains in teacher salaries, but it was a very risky way. The fact that he is now the head of the career ladder program is a sore point. Some believe that he saw the career ladder as a vehicle for his own advancement.

The CTA leadership recognizes the risk that it has taken. The current CTA president (who is a career ladder candidate) admitted that a majority of teachers in the district probably do not favor a career ladder (the CTA has been afraid to conduct a poll to find out), and that the teacher organization leadership could be replaced for their outspoken support of it. Still, the CTA continues to support the program, primarily as a way to break out of a lockstep salary schedule, and secondarily, as a way to expand the range of responsibilities available to classroom teachers. The CTA leadership hopes that if the state continues to fund the program, current implementation problems can be worked out over the next few years and more teachers will buy into the plan.

This district's experience suggests several implications for other local teacher organizations. First, it is possible for local leadership with a vision to get out in front on teacher policy reform, even without a strong collective bargaining contract. But the costs are very high, and the payoff is uncertain. Rank-and-file teachers have very clear expectations about how teacher organizations should behave. When the organizations deviate from that image, skepticism and opposition are likely to mount. For example, in this district, some teachers believe that the CTA has traded off some of its toughness in traditional salary negotiations with the district for the career ladder. Also, reform leadership by local teacher organizations can be a very fragile enterprise, particularly in the absence of a collective bargaining contract to institutionalize its gains. In this case, the enterprise is doubly fragile because continuation of the career ladder depends on state funding; the district administration has already indicated that while it supports the CTA's efforts, it will not pay for the career ladder out of its own funds. Finally, reform leadership is no quick fix. In addition to predictable implementation problems, the payoff in terms of the quality of teacher working conditions and student achievement is at least five years away (if not longer). And throughout that period, the success or failure of the effort depends on the teacher organization's ability to change deeply ingrained rank-and-file attitudes about teachers' work life and their role in improving it.

The second case study concerns an urban district in Florida that has more than 5,000 teachers and a very strong collective bargaining contract. The teacher union is an AFT affiliate, and the district has the highest score on the professional-teaching-conditions index discussed in Section II, 11 out of a possible 15 points. The union had attained four of the six key contract provisions by 1975. Both the district and the union have been characterized by stability of leadership over the past two decades, and a collaborative working relationship has resulted.

Using the collective bargaining process as a vehicle, the union and the district agreed to establish a joint task force to pursue a variety of initiatives to strengthen teaching as a profession, including peer evaluation, shared school-site decisionmaking, and a career ladder. All these programs are consistent with both the AFT's national and state agendas.

As a first step in the process, about 15 percent of the district's schools are participating in a pilot program giving classroom teachers shared decisionmaking with principals. Teachers are operationalizing this role in different ways. For example, at one school the number and length of class periods have been restructured to reduce class size. At another, the curriculum has been modified to place greater emphasis on

language and writing skills in the early grades. In these and the other pilot schools, participants have been exempted from some of the district's policies and also from some contract restrictions.

At first glance, the situation in this district looks quite different from that in the first case study. Reform initiatives have been shaped within the framework of a strong contract; those policies are consistent with national and state union policy; and the initiatives are less dependent on state funding for their survival. But in one very important way, it is similar. The teacher organization leadership has decided to get out in front on policies for which rank-and-file teachers express some skepticism. In fact, teacher response has been quite similar in the two districts. Elementary and middle school teachers seem to be more supportive than high school teachers, and there is some concern that in pursuing reform policies, the teacher union has become less vigilant about traditional concerns such as class size and salary. For example:

I don't feel that the union is working toward the professionalization of teachers. Limits on class size is one thing that needs to be done. The union leader has a good relationship with the school board. School-based management is a step in the right direction, but they are ignoring some other, very important things.

They're all in cahoots with the school board. I don't agree with the concept of school-based management which is being pushed by the union. Your peers control, but some teachers are favored with their priorities not necessarily being the best for the overall school. They may be biased towards certain departments. I don't believe teachers will actually have a say, especially in discipline matters.

I really question the whole school-based management idea. I'm not sure if teachers are well-versed enough in managing schools to do it well. I can't help but wonder if the principal would use us to get rid of his duties.

In both these cases, then, the message is clear. Deciding to shape the contours of teacher reform policy requires leadership on two fronts: externally, to convince district officials to collaborate on and support new initiatives, and internally, to shift teacher expectations away from concentration solely on the material benefits typically associated with unions. These two very different cases illustrate that membership resocialization is probably a much more difficult leadership task than obtaining assurances from the external environment that reform will be permitted and even encouraged.

The experiences of the twenty-two local teacher organizations in our fieldwork sample indicate that their different responses to reform



initiatives can be partially explained by the nature of the policies involved. Some of the policies were very narrow in their focus (e.g., Georgia's teacher testing, Pennsylvania's induction requirements) or ill-conceived in their design (e.g., Florida's master teacher program). Hence, accommodation and muted opposition were probably the preferred alternatives. Part of the explanation also lies in the limited influence some organizations have to shape policies in their members' interests (e.g., those in Arizona and Georgia). However, when confronted with a policy that could have been used as a vehicle for greater professionalism, even strong organizations chose to respond in a "business as usual" manner. With the exception of the one Florida organization, local organizations accommodated policies such as the mentor teacher program in California and merit schools in Florida within the traditional parameters of collective bargaining, and in the process, diluted their potential impact. Perhaps more important than their response to state and local policies initiated by others is these organizations' reluctance to take the lead in proposing new policies and strategies on their own. With very few exceptions, teacher unions are not risk-takers or innovators.

## CONCLUSIONS

As would be expected in federated organizations, organized teachers have not behaved in a monolithic way. Not only have the national-level AFT and NEA chosen different strategies, their respective positions have not always been reflected in the activities of their state and local affiliates. Although their behavior has generally been consistent with the national organization's stance, AFT state and local affiliates are more cautious than the national organization, typically choosing accommodation over active reform leadership. With the exception of the Arizona affiliates, NEA state and local organizations responded to the reform movement in much the same way as their national organization, but even among these groups, there has been some variation.

A teacher union's choice of strategy depends largely on how it calculates the balance of risk between its internal function as a membership organization and its external role as an interest group. From Albert Shanker's perspective as a national union leader, the greatest risk would have been incurred by not responding to dramatically changed conditions in the external environment. Because of the nature of his organization and his own considerable political resources, Shanker decided that he could afford the internal risk associated with active reform leadership. Most of the local union leaders in our fieldwork



sample made a different calculation. Many lacked the resources for more than muted opposition, but they also viewed the costs of active reform leadership as prohibitively high. On the one hand, they were farther in political distance from the rhetoric of vouchers and tuition tax credits (with the exception of the Minnesota organizations) than the national union leaders. On the other, they were much closer to the status quo expectations of rank-and-file teachers. Those expectations, built up over the past two decades, demanded that unions provide a set of well-defined material benefits on a uniform basis. As the case studies illustrate, active reform leadership in the face of these expectations is possible, but in the short term, very risky. Hence, accommodation has been the most common response for state and local affiliates of both unions.

Finally, despite charges to the contrary, teacher unions have not been a major obstacle to educational reform. Their modal response has been accommodation, even in those instances where a specific reform initiative has run counter to their organizational interests or has been at odds with the professional judgment of their members. In some cases, accommodation occurred by default because state and local organizations lacked the resources to oppose reform policies. However, in most instances, teacher unions decided that more could be gained from accommodation and compromise than from opposition and defense of the status quo. Although accommodation by teacher unions was probably not key to the enactment of most state reform policies, that accommodation and acceptance was critical to their smooth local implementation. In fact, if teacher unions had wanted to block reform policies, they could probably have done so quite successfully in many local districts. Not only did they choose not to, but in many cases organizational leaders were active participants in the implementation process, even in the face of skepticism on the part of the rank-and-file.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>These findings are consistent with those of Susan Moore Johnson and her colleagues in their study of the role of teacher unions in implementing policies to reform local staffing practices in five districts. Johnson et al. (1985: iii) concluded that "although no union included in [the] study initiated staffing reforms, teachers and union leaders did assume constructive roles in the consideration, development and implementation of such change."

#### IV. LOOKING AHEAD: TEACHER UNIONS AND THE NEXT GENERATION OF REFORM

The national media have recently highlighted a number of innovative developments in the relationship between school districts and teacher unions (e.g., Tasini, 1987; Putka, 1987; Rodman, 1987c; Baker, 1987). Rochester, New York, Dade County, Florida, and Jefferson County, Kentucky, among others, have been featured as examples of a new era in collective bargaining. In these districts, labor and management have worked collaboratively to restructure teachers' work lives and to enhance their professional responsibilities. In each case, the union has chosen a strategy of active reform leadership.

The obvious question is whether these are isolated examples or the beginning of a national trend. Similarly, is the rhetoric of reform, echoed by national groups such as the Carnegie Forum, likely to be accepted and acted upon by state and local teacher unions? The findings of this study lead us to answer a qualified "yes." In this final section, we explore the implications of our findings for the next generation of teacher reforms and suggest the necessary conditions for more widespread reform leadership by teacher unions.

We have several reasons for optimism. First, the analysis of trends in key contract items shows quite conclusively that there are real limits on what teachers can obtain through the traditional collective bargaining process. Not only did the rate of gain for our sample slow in the 1980s as compared with the previous decade, but a majority of unions still cannot obtain key provisions such as strong class size limits, curbs on teachers having to teach outside their fields, and clear criteria for involuntary transfers. These trends suggest that teacher unions will need to move beyond their current strategies if they are to obtain the status and working conditions their members desire. The move toward greater professionalism and performance-based compensation presents such an opportunity.

Second, our earlier study showed that there are "flagship" teacher organizations that attain key provisions early. However, over time, other organizations begin to catch up with the early attainers. The late-attainers may never gain as many benefits for their members as their early counterparts, but their pattern of attainment is consistent. Consequently, if past experience is a valid indicator, we cannot expect all districts to look like a Rochester or a Dade County within the next ten years, but we can expect them to move in a similar direction.

Finally, the national leadership, coming from the unions themselves and from other groups interested in teacher reform, is important for setting a tone and outlining a set of options. The national organizations cannot mandate change among their affiliates, but they can encourage and support it. Both the AFT and the NEA are now committed to a change-agent role, and over time, they can influence at least the range of choices that state and local affiliates consider.

Despite these reasons for expecting unions to move in the direction of greater professionalism for their members, we must qualify our prediction, primarily for the reason that we have been stressing throughout this report: Teacher organizations play two distinct roles. They operate as political interest groups, working to obtain benefits for their members from the external environment; and at the same time, they function as voluntary organizations that must meet members' demands for benefits and services. The challenge is to obtain sufficient benefits (in type and level) to maintain membership, but still operate effectively in a world of political bargaining and compromise.

The tension that currently exists between these two roles largely explains why state and local affiliates have not acted as reform leaders. The outside political environment wants to grant additional benefits to teachers only in exchange for their creation of a more performance-based profession, but rank-and-file teachers define their expected benefits quite differently. As the teachers in our fieldwork sample indicate, they view the union's role as obtaining the material benefits traditionally associated with collective bargaining—higher salaries, better fringe benefits, and smaller class size. Union efforts to obtain status benefits such as increased participation in school-site decisionmaking often engender teacher suspicion and a feeling that the union is “falling down on the job.” Rank-and-file teachers also believe strongly in benefits uniformly distributed, and the argument that some teachers will be better off and none worse off (pareto optimality) is not a credible substitute when a union has not yet obtained key bread-and-butter items for all teachers. In fact, our analysis of the determinants of professional working conditions suggests that until a union obtains these bread-and-butter items, movement toward greater professionalism is not likely. It is very difficult to convince union members that no one will be worse off and some will be better off, when a majority of members feel that basic benefits still have not been obtained through collective bargaining. In these cases, movement toward greater professionalism is not seen as an alternative route to greater benefits for all, but as an attempt to reward some teachers at the expense of others.

Resocializing membership expectations is a task that must be accomplished before state and local teacher organizations can move

toward active reform leadership in the outside environment. Before state and local union leaders can act as "reform mongers," they must make the level of internal risk acceptable; otherwise, they run the danger of either jeopardizing their own leadership position or losing significant numbers of members. The resocialization task is not an impossible one, but it will require time and considerable skill. The expectations that rank-and-file teachers currently hold for teacher unions and the collective bargaining process were built up over two decades of struggle and hard times for teachers. They will not be easily changed.

Before active reform leadership is likely on a widespread basis, more is needed than just a restructuring of the formal collective bargaining process that some have recommended (Kerchner and Mitchell, 1986). Union leaders sometimes argue that they are constrained in seeking more professional teaching conditions because such items are outside the legally permitted scope of bargaining. Certainly, laws governing the scope of bargaining can hinder the movement toward greater professionalism (Currence, 1985). However, as our analysis indicates, a broader scope of bargaining does not necessarily ensure that school districts and unions will move beyond narrow bread-and-butter issues in their negotiations. Similarly, some state and local policymakers view the collective bargaining process as a major obstacle to educational reform, arguing that it creates an unproductive and adversarial relationship between teachers and school managers. Yet our research and that of others (e.g., Johnson et al., 1985) clearly indicate that the collective bargaining process and the resulting contract can serve either as an efficient vehicle for shaping and implementing new approaches to teacher professionalism (e.g., through joint district-union committees, contract waivers, or simply the compromises inherent in an effective collective bargaining process) or as a major hindrance to reform. The collective bargaining process shapes, but does not determine, contractual outcomes. Rather, they depend on factors such as the degree of perceived mutual interest between union and district leaders, the nature of their relationship in implementing past contracts, and membership preferences. Our analysis also suggests that the internal relationship between teacher organization leaders and members may be very significant in predicting whether reform is likely to occur through the collective bargaining process or other union activities.

In their hesitancy to move toward more active reform leadership, state and local union officials have recognized a fact that national leaders have not always kept in mind: To be successful, reform of the teaching profession has to be actively endorsed by reform targets (i.e., classroom teachers), as well as by those who authorize and fund

education policy. Consequently, the challenge is to frame the issue in such a way that the policy community views its interests as being met, while teachers regard the payoff from greater professionalism more positively.

At the most superficial level, such a strategy requires more effective communication with rank-and-file teachers. This is no simple task, because teachers constitute a large, heterogeneous group whose members typically work in isolation from one another and from knowledge of recent policy currents. Most teachers are not actively involved in union activities, and they receive their information about policy developments from the media, from the school district, and in casual conversation. Consequently, a person such as the union building representative becomes a critical link in changing teachers' expectations, yet the building representatives in our fieldwork sample were often no better informed or supportive of the union playing an active role in reform initiatives than the average classroom teacher. Clearly, efforts to reach the teachers need to be increased.

However, the task extends far beyond improving communication strategies, and it involves some very critical substantive issues. First, one important implication of our contract analysis is that reform policies cannot be substituted for additional bread-and-butter items such as limitations on class size. In fact, our findings suggest that unions need to attain these basic items *before* they can move on to questions of professional autonomy and full participation. Some policy elites have viewed career ladders and other forms of performance-based compensation as a substitute for these other, and often more costly, items; but if past experience is any indicator, rank-and-file teachers will not support such tradeoffs. The attainment of basic bread-and-butter items is a necessary condition for the teachers' active endorsement of reforms to increase professionalism.<sup>1</sup>

A second condition that policy elites must deal with is the fact that not all teachers want to participate in the new roles and responsibilities envisioned in current notions of greater professionalism. Only a bare majority of teachers (52 percent) support the notion of specialty certification boards, as compared with 70 percent of teacher union leaders (Metropolitan Life, 1986). Although 97 percent of classroom teachers believe that teachers should be involved in the selection of texts, less than half believe that teachers should be involved in peer

<sup>1</sup>Not only are provisions such as those regulating class size regarded by teacher unions as basic bread-and-butter items that need to be attained before the unions seek provisions establishing more professional teaching conditions, some of these bread-and-butter items also constitute the enabling conditions that support a more professional teaching environment.

review (31 percent), the selection of new principals (42 percent), or decisions about school-level budget allocations (39 percent) (Metropolitan Life, 1986). Some of these attitudes may shift over time as the socialization process for teachers changes, and the teachers observe how these innovations actually operate in practice. However, it is important to remember that 27 percent of the teacher force was over 45 years of age in 1984, and this group is now approaching retirement (National Center for Education Statistics, 1985). Many of these teachers may not want to assume new roles and responsibilities, but at the same time, they do not want to be treated like second-class citizens because of their preferences. Those who argue that uniform treatment and an undifferentiated task structure have diminished the professional status of teaching may be entirely correct, but the fact remains that these values are both well-established and often functional for individual teachers. Reformers such as those associated with the Carnegie Forum need to consider how these two sets of values might coexist on an equal basis, at least for the current cohort of teachers.

A third condition that must be considered is the need to package the tradeoffs that must inevitably occur in bargaining for greater professionalism so that they are more acceptable to both local union leaders and rank-and-file members. In her book, *Democratic Education* (1987), Gutmann argues the philosophical case for why these tradeoffs must be made:

If the democratic ideal of professionalism suggests that school boards and principals treat teachers as partners in determining school policy, then it also suggests that unions demand fewer fixed policies regarding curriculum, discipline, and work schedules, and more participatory structures within which teachers can join administrators and members of school boards in shaping these policies (pp. 83-84).

The recent Rochester contract illustrates this tradeoff. Under the terms of the agreement, teachers gained an extraordinary salary increase (average salaries will rise by 40 percent over three years), the lead teacher concept espoused by the Carnegie Forum, and extensive teacher involvement in school-site decisions. At the same time, the union agreed to eliminate seniority as the most significant criterion in voluntary transfers and to allow school-planning committees made up of teachers and administrators to make such decisions (Rodman, 1987c). As we know from our contract analysis, eliminating seniority as a primary criterion in transfer policy would be considered a major concession by most union leaders. However, the leadership in Rochester viewed the tradeoff as worthwhile, in light of its other gains. The challenge is selling that kind of tradeoff to the majority of

organizational leaders and rank-and-file teachers across the country. As our analysis suggests, most of them still view the equation as imposing higher costs than benefits. But then, few have actually been confronted with making that choice in light of a 40 percent salary increase.

The philosophical and logical case for active reform leadership has been made by policymakers, national union leaders, and educational researchers. What is needed now is the compelling data of experience. Union leaders and rank-and-file teachers are more likely to be convinced that a bargaining agenda focused on professionalism is in their mutual interest if they can see how such a strategy actually operates in practice. The next step, then, in the study of teacher unions and educational reform should be a systematic examination of those unions that have chosen to pursue a strategy of active reform leadership. We need to know:

- How such a strategy was sold to the membership.
- How a contract such as the one negotiated in Rochester actually affects teacher work lives once it is implemented.
- The effect that a change in the negotiated roles of teachers has on educational governance, the roles and responsibilities of other actors such as school principals, the teaching and learning process, and the collective bargaining relationship itself.

Data on these issues will provide union leaders and members with a basis for calculating the overall feasibility of new professionalism strategies and their relative costs and benefits. Without such information, the rhetoric of greater professionalism is unlikely to be translated into practice on a broad scale.

This report has documented the status of teacher unions as they approach a critical juncture in their history. Through collective bargaining they have made impressive gains over the past fifteen years, yet they now face the prospect of severely diminished marginal returns from that process. They continue to be the most influential political interest group within the educational establishment, yet their pre-eminence is seriously threatened by the demands of political elites outside education and by heightened criticism of the public schools. National union leaders have assumed a mantle of active reform leadership; yet the majority of their state and local counterparts have chosen not to follow. Rank-and-file teachers view many reform initiatives with skepticism and see union professionalism initiatives as diverting them from the pursuit of traditional bread-and-butter items. We cannot predict with certainty how teacher unions will resolve these

dilemmas. However, their record over the past two decades suggests that they possess the motivation and capacity to adapt successfully to new circumstances, while continuing to pursue their members' interests vigorously. The question that remains is how those interests will be defined by classroom teachers themselves.



## Appendix

### TRENDS IN TEACHER COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, 1970-1985

Over the past fifteen years, the collective bargaining contract has been the major vehicle through which teacher unions have sought to obtain higher economic benefits and better working conditions for their members. This appendix describes trends in teacher collective bargaining in a nationally representative sample of approximately 150 school districts for the years 1970, 1975, 1980, and 1985.<sup>1</sup> It discusses how attainment of certain key items varied for the sample as a whole and examines the characteristics of districts that were particularly successful or unsuccessful in achieving these key items. The key items are those examined in our earlier report (McDonnell and Pascal, 1979), minus several for which no data were collected for 1980 and 1985.<sup>2</sup>

A series of critical domains that affect teacher working conditions, job security, and the delivery of educational services were identified through consultation with school district and teacher union officials, and by a review of the relevant literature. For those bargaining domains that were represented by more than a single contract provision, we selected a "key" provision, i.e., the one that seemed strongest and was highly correlated<sup>3</sup> with the appearance of other member

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<sup>1</sup>This sample included all school districts that have collective bargaining and had a student population of more than 50,000 in 1970, as well as a random sample of all districts with collective bargaining and more than 12,000 students in 1970. In our earlier research, information was extracted from the teacher collective bargaining contracts for two time periods, 1970 and 1975; the current study added data for 1980 and 1985. Because we wanted to include contract data for all the districts in the CPRE core sample, four districts that were not included in the original contract sample were added to the 1985 analysis; some had enrollments of less than 12,000. Our reliability analysis indicated an 85 percent level of agreement across coders for 1970 and 1975, and 88 percent for 1980 and 1985.

<sup>2</sup>Of the eleven key items included in McDonnell and Pascal (1979), those relating to grievance procedures, determinants of promotion, and classroom aides were not coded in the 1980 and 1985 contracts. The grievance item had been attained by 83 percent of the sample by 1975, so there would have been little movement to document. Resource constraints and our interest in focusing more attention on contract items related to teacher professionalism required that we streamline the contract coding instrument. The promotion-criteria and classroom-aides provisions were considered of lesser importance and therefore were deleted.

<sup>3</sup>Based on the probability that a contract containing the key provision also included the other provisions in the domain, standardized by the probability that a contract that

provisions in a given domain. We again focused on the attainment of these eight key provisions to provide continuity with our earlier report.

The implicit assumption behind our analysis is that local bargainiers across the nation consistently press for a standard set of provisions. To the extent that some provisions appear in contracts only as a result of the recognition of a local problem—stemming, e.g., from past history, current fiscal conditions, changes in teacher supply and demand—and to the extent that these priorities shift over time, this underlying assumption is not fully valid. However, it seems unlikely that teacher collective bargaining results are entirely dependent on parochial and short-term factors. Not only do national and state teacher organizations have bargaining agendas that they recommend to local affiliates, but most local unions seek a basic set of provisions regulating their members' working conditions. These provisions—which concern such items as hours, class size, and transfer policy—are important to the teachers, regardless of other local concerns and preferences. Thus, by focusing on eight key provisions, we can present a national picture of teacher collective bargaining over a fifteen-year period.

## ACHIEVEMENT OF KEY CONTRACT ITEMS

Table A.1 shows the fraction of our sample districts that attained each of eight key provisions for each of the four years.

We can compare attainment with a quantitative measure of the results for only two of these topics. For provision 2, specification of day length, we took the mean day length set in elementary and secondary schools and found that for both the 1980 and 1985 contract samples it averaged 7 hours, with a range of 5.5 to 8 hours. For provision 5, class-size specifications, we analyzed the results for sixth grade class size—assuming that the standard for that grade was correlated with class size attainments up and down the K-12 grade spectrum—and found that for both the 1980 and 1985 contract samples it averaged 31 students, with a range of 25 to 36. Of course it is not possible to contrast day-length and class-size attainment against districts where they were not bargained for, because we have no information on items that do not appear in the contract.

The most striking finding in Table A.1 is the apparent absence of major gains after 1975, except in provision 8 (RIF procedures) and

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did not contain the key provision did, in fact, contain the other provisions in the domain and evaluated by a statistical test for the difference between proportions. (See McDonnell and Pascal, 1979.)

**Table A.1**  
**PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICTS ATTAINING KEY PROVISIONS:**  
**1970, 1975, 1980, 1985**

| Provision   | 1970 <sup>a</sup><br>(N = 151 <sup>b</sup> ) | 1975 <sup>a</sup><br>(N = 151) | 1980<br>(N = 151) | 1985<br>(N = 155) |
|---|--|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Teacher can respond formally to administrator's evaluation       | 42   | 64 <sup>c</sup>                | 77 <sup>c</sup>   | 76                |
| 2. Duration of school day is specified                              | 44   | 70 <sup>c</sup>                | 68                | 73                |
| 3. Teacher can exclude disruptive student                           | 28   | 50 <sup>c</sup>                | 54                | 55                |
| 4. Teacher can refuse assignment outside of normal grade or subject | 21   | 14                             | 10                | 7                 |
| 5. Maximum class size is specified                                  | 21   | 28                             | 27                | 28                |
| 6. Involuntary transferees are selected on specific criteria        | 22   | 36 <sup>c</sup>                | 40                | 40                |
| 7. Instructional policy committee (IPC) established in each school  | 16   | 29 <sup>c</sup>                | 31                | 34                |
| 8. Reduction-in-force (RIF) procedures are spelled out              | 11   | 44 <sup>c</sup>                | 70 <sup>c</sup>   | 77                |

<sup>a</sup>These percentages differ slightly from the data in McDonnell and Pascal (1979), particularly for 1975. However, substantive interpretations of the trends in the earlier period are not different from those reported, except in the case of provision 4, which registered a decline in 1975 instead of the small increase that was reported earlier.

<sup>b</sup>In 1970, 18 of these districts had not yet begun collective bargaining and thus would necessarily have scored 0 for attainment of the provisions listed.

<sup>c</sup>Indicates a proportion significantly different from the proportion for the immediately preceding year at a confidence level of 5 percent or better.

provision 4 (assignment refusal), where a steady *decline* actually occurred.<sup>4</sup> Even though about three-quarters of the districts were able to attain the response-to-evaluation, school-day duration, and RIF-procedures provisions, only about half attained the exclude-disruptive-student provision, and 40 percent or less attained the involuntary-transfer, school-level-IPC, and maximum-class-size provisions.<sup>5</sup> For most of these key provisions, the gains were achieved by 1975. The decade of the 1980s exhibits almost no progress for the sample as a whole.

The decline in attainment of the assignment-refusal provision may reflect an accommodation with management in the face of changing

<sup>4</sup>Although the proportions for provision 4 do not differ significantly from those for the immediately preceding years, the values for 1980 and 1985 do differ significantly from that for 1970.

<sup>5</sup>For provision 5 (maximum class size), the 1985 proportion does not differ significantly from the 1970 proportion.

conditions of teacher supply and demand. During the teacher surplus of the late 1970s and early 1980s, RIFs were the real concern, and teachers may have traded their rights to refuse assignments for more secure layoff standards. The only way many could retain a job was to teach out of their fields. When the educational labor market shifted from a state of teacher surplus to one of teacher shortage, management may have begun to feel that teachers' rights to refuse assignments outside of their normal subjects and grades were simply too constraining. To complicate matters, a management expectation that RIFs were not on the horizon, given the looming teacher shortage, may have caused them to be accommodating on this item, i.e., they may well have decided that it would cost them little to concede in specifying formal procedures that were unlikely to ever be invoked.

The very limited attainments in assignment refusal and maximum class size may reflect a hardening in management's position as the collective bargaining process matures. These are perhaps the toughest provisions; they truly constrain management options and may significantly raise operating costs. Whatever the reason, it seems remarkable that so few unions were able to attain these provisions.

## FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTAINMENT OF KEY PROVISIONS

We attempted to analyze the factors associated with the attainment or nonattainment of the key provisions in the 1985 sample of contracts by running maximum likelihood logit estimates on a binary variable (1 for attainment, 0 for nonattainment) for each provision against the following explanatory variables:

- District enrollment
- Minority proportion in enrollment
- Whether the district is located in a central city (rather than a suburb or a nonmetropolitan community)
- Region of the country
- Per-pupil spending in the district
- Teacher salary level in 1985 and percent salary change between 1980 and 1985.
- Whether the bargaining unit is affiliated with the AFT, the NEA, or some other organization
- A measure of the state legal environment with respect to teacher collective bargaining<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>The state in which the district was located received a score of 1 to 5, depending on whether state law or established legal precedent mandated bargaining on five items. (See Section II for a fuller explanation of the state legal-environment variable.)

- The number of years the district has engaged in collective bargaining.

We also constructed an 8-point score for attainment of the key provisions and attempted to estimate by means of ordinary least squares whether the above factors were statistically, and independently, associated with the score the bargaining unit registered.

Certain considerations influenced our choice of the explanatory variables and our expectations of how they would influence attainment of individual provisions and the 8-point combined score. We assumed, for example, that larger districts would have stronger unions and thus would gain provisions of all types. Central-city districts and those in the northeastern region of the country are often thought to be "flagships" (i.e., early attainers) in collective bargaining. Salary level and growth might, we thought, be "traded off" against other contract attainments, but we also thought that holding salary constant, higher-spending districts ought to have the wherewithal to grant more provisions. We expected that locals in states with conducive environments and those that had been bargaining for a longer time would do better in gaining provisions. We had no prior assumptions about student enrollment composition and the national affiliation of the local, but we thought it important to assess the association between high minority enrollment and affiliation on the one hand and achievement of contract provisions on the other.

Table A.2 presents the results of our attempt to identify the factors associated with winning the eight key provisions, separately and combined, based on the 1985 sample of contracts. (See Table 2.2 for a description of the explanatory variables in Table A.2.)

The results are weak and inconsistent. Five out of the eight logit equations registered chi-square goodness-of-fit statistics indicating no significant relationships between attainment of the key provision and the group of potential explanatory variables. In those equations that passed the chi-square test, few of the variables exhibited significant coefficients, and only one had a significant coefficient in more than one of the significant equations.<sup>7</sup> The ordinary least-squares estimate for the 8-point key provision score yielded an adjusted R-square of about 0.15. The minority proportion and per-pupil spending were positively related to the score, and location in the northeastern part of the country was negatively related at a confidence level of 10 percent or better.

<sup>7</sup>Only two explanatory variables had significant coefficients in two of the logit equations (none appeared in as many as three): per-pupil spending and locations outside the northeastern region.

**Table A.2**  
**FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ATTAINMENT OF KEY PROVISIONS IN 1985**

|         |                  | Provision             |                   |                         |                  |                        |                  |                   |                        |                         |
|---------|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Factor  | 1.<br>Evaluation | 2.<br>School Day      | 3.<br>Excl. Stud. | 4<br>Assignment         | 5.<br>Class Size | 6.<br>Invol. Tran.     | 7.<br>School IPC | 8.<br>RIF Proced. | All 8<br>Combined      |                         |
| Cons:   | coef.            | 4.428956              | 1.189084          | 6.618902 <sup>a</sup>   | 3.410562         | -9.545732 <sup>b</sup> | 1.142579         | -2.959664         | 3.531139               | 5.069547 <sup>c</sup>   |
|         | std.err.         | 3.753022              | 3.242296          | 3.40534                 | 5.720773         | 3.872608               | 2.802547         | 3.084364          | 3.513548               | 1.861977                |
|         | t-val.           | 1.180                 | 0.367             | 1.944                   | 0.596            | -2.465                 | 0.408            | -0.960            | 1.005                  | 2.723                   |
| ENROLL: | coef.            | -3.46e-06             | 5.54e-06          | 4.24e-06                | -2.92e-07        | 3.89e-06               | -8.45e-07        | 7.91e-07          | 3.19e-06               | 1.58e-06                |
|         | std.err.         | 3.96e-06              | 7.19e-06          | 5.24e-06                | 3.06e-06         | 3.57e-06               | 2.35e-06         | 2.19e-06          | 2.89e-06               | 1.45e-06                |
|         | t-val.           | -0.875                | 0.770             | 0.809                   | -0.095           | 1.089                  | -0.360           | 0.361             | 1.103                  | 1.090                   |
| WHITE:  | coef.            | -0.014922             | -0.0112209        | -0.0389169 <sup>a</sup> | -0.0162458       | -0.0153024             | -0.0024401       | -0.0006286        | 0.0147936              | -0.0133921 <sup>b</sup> |
|         | std.err.         | 0.013373              | 0.0121724         | 0.0130663               | 0.0183283        | 0.0108582              | 0.0093955        | 0.0100798         | 0.0113178              | 0.0062394               |
|         | t-val.           | -1.116                | -0.922            | -2.978                  | -0.886           | -1.409                 | -0.260           | -0.062            | 1.307                  | -2.146                  |
| CITY:   | coef.            | 0.537186              | 0.1041738         | -0.7777507              | -0.0014946       | 0.2978062              | -0.1008021       | -0.0520008        | 0.8457405              | 0.1244646               |
|         | std.err.         | 0.522916              | 0.4805493         | 0.5016361               | 1.005008         | 0.5607766              | 0.4264361        | 0.4582411         | 0.5758348              | 0.2845067               |
|         | t-val.           | 1.027                 | 0.217             | -1.550                  | -C.001           | 0.531                  | -0.236           | -0.113            | 1.469                  | 0.437                   |
| NOREA:  | coef.            | 0.467396              | -0.0416513        | -1.552973 <sup>b</sup>  | 1.275491         | -0.7549892             | -0.0701997       | -0.3581752        | -1.263065 <sup>b</sup> | -0.6039037 <sup>a</sup> |
|         | std.err.         | 0.688492              | 0.555023          | 0.5989654               | 0.9966701        | 0.6269082              | 0.4977394        | 0.5523623         | 0.5933531              | 0.3307505               |
|         | t-val.           | 0.679                 | -0.075            | -2.593                  | 1.280            | -1.204                 | -0.141           | -0.648            | -2.129                 | -1.826                  |
| SPEND:  | coef.            | 0.001133 <sup>b</sup> | 0.0000908         | 0.0000214               | -0.0007743       | 0.0007687 <sup>a</sup> | 0.0003579        | 0.0003611         | 0.0002252              | 0.0004597 <sup>b</sup>  |
|         | std.err.         | 0.000496              | 0.000392          | 0.0003841               | 0.000866         | 0.0004169              | 0.0003427        | 0.0003631         | 0.0004471              | 0.0002267               |
|         | t-val.           | 2.283                 | 0.232             | 0.056                   | -0.894           | 1.844                  | 1.045            | 0.994             | 0.504                  | 2.027                   |
| SALARY: | coef.            | -0.000365             | 0.0000413         | -0.0001664              | -0.0002322       | 0.0003987              | -0.0001783       | 0.0000754         | -0.0002665             | -0.0001133              |
|         | std.err.         | 0.000282              | 0.0002493         | 0.0002562               | 0.0004112        | 0.0002887              | 0.0002161        | 0.0002349         | 0.0002661              | 0.0001426               |
|         | t-val.           | -1.295                | 0.166             | -0.649                  | -0.565           | 1.381                  | -0.825           | 0.321             | -1.002                 | -0.795                  |

Table A.2 (continued)

|              |                  | Provision        |                  |                   |                  |                        |                    |                 |                    |                   |
|--------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Factor       |                  | 1.<br>Evaluation | 2.<br>School Day | 3.<br>Excl. Stud. | 4.<br>Assignment | 5.<br>Class Size       | 6.<br>Invol. Tran. | 7<br>School IPC | 8.<br>RIF Proceed. | All 8<br>Combined |
| SALCHG:      | coef             | -2.72414         | -0.3864017       | 1.385423          | 0.7338183        | -5.131335              | 0.385481           | -0.3847935      | 2.295661           | -0.5673701        |
|              | std.err.         | 2.614278         | 2.467359         | 2.630352          | 4.409809         | 3.119852               | 2.135776           | 2.3215020       | 2.768731           | 1.411886          |
|              | t-val.           | -1.042           | -0.157           | 0.527             | 0.166            | -1.645                 | 0.180              | -0.166          | 0.829              | -0.402            |
| AFT:         | coef.            | -0.582793        | -0.3173919       | -0.9895586*       | 0.854159C        | 0.6080122              | -0.0476422         | 0.3586963       | -0.5602618         | -0.2676741        |
|              | std.err          | 0.598248         | 0.5499591        | 0.5910695         | 0.9289889        | 0.603338               | 0.450267           | 0.5110561       | 0.6042621          | 0.3250943         |
|              | t-val.           | -1.141           | -0.577           | -1.675            | 0.919            | 1.008                  | -0.097             | 0.702           | -0.927             | -0.823            |
| LEGAL:       | coef.            | 0.403469         | -0.0457713       | -0.1538952        | -0.3131307       | 0.4969962 <sup>b</sup> | -0.008148          | -0.1624195      | 0.1453731          | 0.0753469         |
|              | std.err.         | 0.243592         | 0.1992968        | 0.2051891         | 0.365618         | 0.2215301              | 0.1736408          | 0.1925727       | 0.2203456          | 0.1155938         |
|              | t-val.           | 1.656            | -0.230           | -0.799            | 0.856            | 2.243                  | -0.047             | -0.343          | 0.660              | 0.652             |
| YEARS:       | coef.            | 0.01968          | -0.0115792       | -0.0097535        | 0.0508607        | 0.0677969              | 0.0196169          | 0.0019237       | -0.0463539         | 0.0150276         |
|              | std.err.         | 0.067125         | 0.0335706        | 0.062626          | 0.0809089        | 0.0592613              | 0.0493098          | 0.0526368       | 0.0571785          | 0.0330938         |
|              | t-val.           | 0.293            | -0.216           | -0.156            | 0.629            | 1.144                  | 0.393              | 0.037           | -0.811             | 0.454             |
| Fit:         | Chi <sup>2</sup> | 21.24            | 4.53             | 33.96             | 9.38             | 35.12                  | 2.19               | 4.85            | 12.22              |                   |
|              | R <sup>2</sup>   |                  |                  |                   |                  |                        |                    |                 |                    | 0.1461            |
| Eqn. signif. |                  | (b)              |                  | (c)               |                  | (c)                    |                    |                 |                    | (b)               |

\*Significant at 10 percent confidence level or better.

<sup>b</sup>Significant at 5 percent confidence level or better.

<sup>c</sup>Significant at 1 percent confidence level or better.

We conclude that conventional wisdom about the attainment of key provisions—the achievement of strong collective bargaining agreements by teachers—was not borne out by our analysis. Large, big-city bargaining units in the northeast, with supportive state legal environments and long years of experience, do not necessarily attain strong contracts. Neither does the type of affiliation seem to make a difference in the attainment of these key provisions. There is, on the other hand, some fragmentary evidence that high-spending districts, those with high proportions of minority students, and those outside the northeast are more likely to include the key provisions in their contracts.

Based on our earlier research, we also believe that the explanation for strong contracts lies in variables necessarily missing from our current analysis. The nature of the relationship between union leadership and school district management; a teacher organization's history with respect to strikes, grievances, and arbitration; and the preferences of rank-and-file members play a strong role in determining who gets what. Only the demographic, locational, and quantifiable aspects of the bargaining situation could be captured in the analysis reported here.



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