DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 342 EA 022 999

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Boles, Katherine C. |
| TITLE | School Restructuring: A Case Study in Teacher Empowerment. NCEL Occasional Paper No. 4. |
| INSTITUTION | National Center for Educational Leadership, Nashville, TN. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | Sep 90 |
| CONTRACT | RI17C80005 |
| NOTE | 63p. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Publication Sales, National Center for Educational Leadership, Harvard Graduate School of Education, 443 Gutman Library, 6 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138 ($4.00). |
| PUB TYPE | Information Analyses (070) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC03 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Change Strategies; College School Cooperation; *Collegiality; Educational Cooperation; Elementary Education; Noninstructional Responsibility; Private Schools; Remedial Instruction; Rotation Plans; *School Restructuring; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Morale; Teacher Response; *Teacher Role; Team Teaching |
| IDENTIFIERS | *Teacher Empowerment |

ABSTRACT

The Teaching Project at the Edward Devotion School (Massachusetts) is made up of four components: team teaching; school/university collaboration; inclass remediation; and alternative roles for teachers. Four third- and fourth-grade teachers' experiences during the first year of program implementation are examined to highlight potential complexities faced in altering teachers' job responsibilities. Data were collected through interviews and observations, framing the study in a theme of teachers' reactions to shared work. The experience of working together in a restructured environment emerged as the most worthwhile aspect of the project, while problems included restraints on creativity and loss of autonomy. (36 references) (EJS)

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The National Center for Educational Leadership

# School Restructuring: A Case Study In Teacher Empowerment

by

Katherine C. Boles
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Occasional Paper No. 4

September 1990

NCEL

The National Center for Educational Leadership

The National Center for Educational Leadership is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., Grant No. R117C80005. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the funding agency.

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4. *The Teaching Project at the Edward Devotion School: A Case Study of a Teacher-Initiated Restructuring Project* by Katherine C. Boles; Harvard University (September 1990)

   School districts around the country are in the process of initiating projects to restructure their schools. A small but growing number of these restructuring projects have been initiated by teachers, but as yet little has been written documenting the experience of classroom practitioners involved in such efforts. The purpose of this study is to add teachers' voices to the literature on restructuring. This project restructured a portion of a school and altered the work of a group of third and fourth grade teachers.

5. *Educational Reform in the 1980s: Explaining Some Surprising Success* by Joseph Murphy; Vanderbilt University (September 1990)

In this paper issues of success and failure of reform initiatives are discussed from both sides of the aisle. The paper begins with a review of the financial, political, and organizational factors which normally support the position that reform measures are likely to result in few substantive improvements. Next the argument is made that educational reform recommendations have been surprisingly successful, and some speculations as to the reasons for this unexpected outcome are presented.

6. *New Settings and Changing Norms for Principal Development* by Philip Hallinger; Vanderbilt University and Robert Wimpelberg; University of New Orleans (January 1991)

Recently analysts have identified a variety of features that distinguish emerging administrative training programs from traditional ones. The rapid, but non-systematic growth in organizations providing administrative development services during the 1980's led to considerable natural variation in programmatic content as well as in organizational processes. In particular, significant variations emerged in the operation of state sponsored leadership academies and local principals' centers. The purpose of this paper is to analyze variations in current approaches to educational leadership development. The paper addresses three questions: (1) What is the range of variation among emerging staff development programs for school leaders on dimensions of program content and organizational process? (2) What can we learn from the naturally occurring variations in administrative development? (3) What are the most likely and promising directions for administrative development programs in the next decade?

7. *Images of Leadership* by Lee G. Bolman; Harvard University and Terrence E. Deal; Vanderbilt University (January 1991)

This project has undertaken a major study of the "frames", or orientations that leaders use to guide their understanding of their work. The investigators have developed a set of survey instruments to measure four leadership orientations (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic), and collected data from leaders approach their task constituents in both education and the private sector. Their research results show that the four leadership orientations do capture significant elements of how leaders approach their task, and that those leadership variables are significantly associated with effectiveness. The results further show that the variables which predict effectiveness as a *manager* are different from those that predict effectiveness as a *leader*. In particular, structural and rational orientations are primarily predictive of manager effectiveness. This research was reported at the AERA meeting in April, 1990.

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# SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING: A CASE STUDY IN TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

by
Katherine C. Boles

## Introduction

Calls for restructuring fill the current literature on school reform and school districts around the country are in the process of initiating projects to restructure their schools. A small but growing number of these restructuring projects have been initiated by teachers, but, as yet, little has been written documenting the experience of classroom practitioners involved in such efforts. The purpose of this study is to add teachers' voices to the literature on restructuring.

The Teaching Project at the Edward Devotion School is a restructuring effort initiated by Vivian Troen and me at our public elementary school in Brookline, Massachusetts. The project restructured a portion of the school and altered the work of a group of third and fourth grade teachers. It resulted from a dissatisfaction with the isolating nature of classroom teaching and a belief that educators needed to work together in teams to eliminate that isolation. We believed that special needs children should receive all remedial services within the regular classrooms, that more of the education of pre-service teachers should take place in schools with experienced teachers assuming a larger role in the training of novice teachers, and that the work of classroom teachers would be enhanced if alternative professional options in research, curriculum development, and pre-service teacher education were available to them during the school day.

We received the approval and support of our principal for the project, arranged a collaborative agreement with Wheelock College which provided full-time graduate student interns for the school site, and secured funding for the project from the Massachusetts Department of Education, Wheelock College, and the Town of Brookline.

The Teaching Project, which began in September 1987, had four components:

1) Team Teaching: Teachers, functioning as a team, shared curriculum and children. Team meetings were scheduled during the school day and one full Saturday a month. Team decisions were made by consensus.

2) School/University Collaboration: Full-time graduate student interns from Wheelock College worked in the team for the entire school year. One team member supervised these students and co-taught their graduate seminar with a Wheelock faculty member.

3) In-Class Remediation: All special needs children were fully mainstreamed in the team; they were taught by the classroom teachers and a half-time remediation specialist who was a member of the team.

4) Alternative Roles for Teachers: Each classroom teacher was provided with a minimum of one day a week (six hours) away from teaching duties to assume an alternative role--curriculum writer, researcher, or student-teacher supervisor/college teacher. This "Alternative Professional Teaching" (APT) Time was facilitated by the full-time presence of teaching interns.

This case study documents the experience of the four teachers involved in the first year of this restructuring effort. By analyzing the experiences of teachers in a successful restructuring project, I intend to highlight both the opportunities and the difficulties encountered in such efforts and will provide policymakers, school officials, and teachers with insights into the potential complexity of altering teachers' job responsibilities. This paper, then, will attempt to answer the following research question: How did veteran teachers at the Edward Devotion School respond to significant alterations in their work?

A paper thoroughly analyzing the four components of the Teaching Project and the consequent changes for teachers will be completed in November, 1990. An initial analysis of data collected through interviews and observations indicates that concentrating on a central theme, which cuts across the four project components and profoundly affects the project teachers, provides a suitable frame to this study. That theme--teachers' responses to shared work--reveals many of the complexities, the problems, and the possibilities inherent in school restructuring.

## Working Together: From Isolation to Interdependence

The prevailing pattern of teacher interaction in the majority of American schools is one of independent workers interacting infrequently in the school setting. The four teachers who participated in the Teaching Project were, like their counterparts across the country, accustomed to working independently and autonomously. They taught only the twenty-five children assigned to them. They never observed the lessons that other teachers taught and rarely collaborated with other teachers in developing curricula. They handled the myriad of management and disciplinary problems that inevitably arise in classrooms with little or no assistance from colleagues.

The teachers' norms of interaction changed dramatically when they joined the Teaching Project. Three of the four components of the Teaching Project required teachers to work together. Foremost among these was team teaching. But both the remediation component, which brought the special needs teacher into

the classroom during whole class and small group lessons, and the pre-service component, which included the graduate student intern in classroom teaching for the full school year, forced the teachers to interact with colleagues in new ways and to move quickly from independence to interdependence.

*The Teaching Project: Setting and Context*

When school opened in September 1987, the three large classrooms (two third grade and one fourth grade class) in the second floor primary wing of the Edward Devotion School looked much the same as they had looked in June when school closed. Traffic from other parts of the building still flowed through the wide corridor which abutted the classrooms in this wing that also contained an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, a kitchen area and a small project room. Children arrived at classrooms assigned the previous May when all Devotion teachers created classes that were heterogeneous in ability, race, and gender. What had changed, however, was that these three classroom teachers and the half-time special needs teacher who joined them had become part of The Teaching Project. All had agreed to work as a team and to alter significantly the way they conducted the business of teaching. (I had taken a leave of absence from Brookline to attend Harvard and document the development of the Teaching Project.)

Each of the teachers involved in the project had earned undergraduate degrees from liberal arts colleges and had more than fifteen years teaching experience. Two were men and two were women. One of the men had worked in public alternative schools before coming to Devotion. The other had worked

in a private school and a forward-thinking middle class district in another state. The third had previously been an ESL teacher at Devotion. The remediation specialist had spent a number of years as a district-level language arts specialist, but had been working only part-time since the birth of her children. All, except the remediation specialist, had been at the Devotion School for at least ten years. Team members agreed in the Spring of 1987 that all would assume equal status and that decisions would be made by consensus.

To support the project, Gerald S. Kaplan, the school's principal, had reworked the master schedule to provide three common planning periods during the week. He also arranged for the remediation specialist to join the project and had assigned a part-time aide to the team.

*A Week of Meetings Before the Opening of School*

The teachers met the week prior to the school's opening in September to determine how the project would function. Troen and Boles had devised the four basic components of the teaching project. The team members then determined how those components would be implemented.

During that week the teachers agreed on the following:

1) Project participants would team teach in science and reading.

2) Science would be taught twice a week in ninety minute time blocks. Various configurations of teachers and interns would teach science to four mixed groups of children. These groups would change four times during the year.

3) Reading would be taught three times a week in forty-five minute blocks. Seven reading groups would occur simultaneously during that reading time. The reading groups would change five times during the school year.

4) Interns would begin to teach reading groups as soon as school began and would gradually be included in teaching science (science instruction was

to begin in late October). Interns would have increasing responsibilities in all other areas throughout the year.

5) The remediation specialist would teach a reading group and a science group. She would be in classroom during writing and math periods to assist children with identified special needs. She would also be available for consultation with team members at other times during the school day. The remediation specialist would be considered a full member and would attend all team meetings even though she was working only half-time.

6) Every effort would be made to provide all services for remedial, non-English speaking, and gifted children within the structure of the project. The team decided to discourage pull-out programs of any kind.

7) The aide would instruct small groups of children and would perform clerical duties for the team.

8) The time when teachers assumed the new roles of researcher, teacher/trainer, and curriculum writer was given an official name. The teachers had already noticed that other members of the school community had begun to refer to this time as "free" or "release" time. The team was concerned that such connotations would make that work seem less important. They chose the name "APT Time" to designate the time to perform their alternative roles.

The teachers recognized that there would be many other decisions to be made during the year. The decisions they had made that week before school opened were tentative. The teachers realized that all aspects of the project would evolve as the year went on. By the end of the week, however, they were satisfied that they had prepared well for the coming year. They were excited to be starting something so new and different.

It is important to note the number of substantive issues addressed by the group during the preparatory week. The group altered long-established curricular, pedagogical, and managerial norms and made decisions which were within the traditional domain of curriculum specialists and principals. They had begun developing strategies and making decisions which went beyond the domain of the classroom and which would ultimately affect others in the larger school community.

*The Teacher's Previous Experiences: Independence and Autonomy*

The Teaching Project proved to be a unique working experience for these veteran teachers. Though the three classroom teachers had for many years been friendly and their classrooms were contiguous, they had had little experience sharing curricula or doing collaborative work. Indeed, little shared work and professional discussion went on in the school.

The Edward Devotion School includes 700 students in kindergarten through grade eight with a staff of seventy-five full- and part-time faculty members. There are four classrooms at each grade level. Grade level meetings occur sporadically during the school year, but are always scheduled in May to arrange class assignments for the following year. Curriculum sharing and collaborative work occur infrequently at most grade levels. Among third and fourth grade teachers this sharing is minimal: the occasional exchange of a dittoed worksheet or the arrangement of field trips for several classes. As one project member stated, the classroom was his "castle." In that castle he felt independent and free to function in his own personal style with little outside interference.

Such independence is encouraged in Brookline. Recognized nationwide for the fine quality of its schools, Brookline prides itself on selecting excellent teachers and giving them a great deal of autonomy. Flexible curriculum guidelines in all areas--except math--encourage the individual teacher's creativity. Curriculum innovation is approved; experimentation and new ideas are welcomed by school administrators. All project members agreed that they had felt great latitude within

their classrooms. One remarked that he had "never been afraid [in Brookline] to try new things." Another stated, "I think teachers in Brookline have a lot of control over curriculum." A third felt he had "many options regarding curriculum."

Along with this highly-prized independence and autonomy came another phenomenon: teacher isolation. The school district does not make collaborative work a high priority, nor does it make collaboration a focus of staff development efforts. It does, however, highlight the excellent work of individual teachers, and this, as one project teacher noted, maintains the teachers in "competitive isolation."

As in most American schools, the individual Brookline teacher is the only adult in the classroom and, except for lunch breaks and preparation periods, spends his or her working days predominantly in the company of children. Studies substantiate the lack of professional contact and discussion which occurs among teachers during the school day.[1] The experience that Teaching Project participants had in Brookline was no different.

Teachers are accustomed to this situation. It has been central to the culture of schools for generations. Teachers value some aspects of it: the autonomy and individual freedom. As one project member stated during our first interview, when asked if anything worried him about the project:

> I find it tremendously stimulating to do new things in the classroom--to read what a researcher has suggested, then just do it, hone it to my needs. I sometimes find it a distraction to involve other adults.

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[1]Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller, *Teachers, Their World and Their Work*, (Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1984); Judith Warren Little, "Teachers as Colleagues," in *Educator's Handbook: A Research Perspective*, ed. V. Koehler (New York: Longman, 1987); Dan Lortie, *Schoolteacher*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

In previous years, the strengths of these teachers had been individual strengths. In 1986-87 one of the teachers devoted three intense weeks to a reenactment of the 1787 U. S. Constitutional Convention. Another spent months with his class constructing a papier-mache globe eight feet in diameter onto which the children painted the continents and added geographical features done to scale. A third teacher spent an hour per day on children's writing using a method called The Writing Process. Children wrote, held editing conferences with the teacher, met with peers, edited each other's work, and bound the many books they wrote during the school year.

Given the established norms of independence and the prevailing culture of schools which discourages group work,[2] the teachers' responses to a question asked in August 1987 are not surprising. When asked if they had any specific fears about joining the Teaching Project, one teacher remarked, noting that the group nature of the work was daunting:

> I fear that I'll lose that sense of experimentation and freedom and the courage to fail. I fear that I'll be diminished by elements of the co-teaching ... [and] I'll want to retreat back to the sanctity of my own room with my own kids. I fear I'll compromise my own integrity for the good of the group.

Another project member voiced similar sentiments and also worried that the project might compromise an aspect of teaching about which he felt strongly:

> One of my strengths is being able to think on my feet. I'm an improviser and I'm afraid I'll lose some of the spontaneity.

A third shared her fears about the team nature of the project:

> I'm worried about the team versus the individual. I'm worried about the

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[2]Seymour Sarason, et. al, *Psychology in Community Settings* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), pp. 74-97; Lieberman and Miller, *Teachers, Their World and Their Work*, p. 11.

> responsibility of the group versus the individual. Group responsibility is not something teachers know how to do.

Why, given these fears, did the teachers choose to join the project? The answer emerged in interviews conducted after the school year had begun. Each participant was asked, "Why did you choose to become involved in this project?" One teacher explained that he was "always stimulated by new things" and the project provided a way for him to "rethink our definition of things, and that's exciting." Although he found satisfaction from his individual work, he also felt that life in his classroom was too insular:

> Sharing in this project is an adjustment I need to make to be able to communicate what I'm thinking to my fellow teachers. It's an attractive part of the model for me.

Another teacher detailed the history of his unsuccessful efforts to find support among colleagues in the school. Joining the project was another "attempt to find support." The remediation specialist, who had been solicited to participate in the team, said she was glad to accept the job when it was offered because she thought that joining the Teaching Project "would get me back in the classroom."

None of the teachers referred to any worries about changes they would experience in the way remediation and pre-service training would be accomplished within the project. Nor did they seem worried about assuming the new roles of researcher, curriculum writer, and teacher/trainer. It was the group nature of the endeavor that most frightened them.

*A Day in the Life of the Teaching Project*

Interaction among the teachers was daily and sustained. On Mondays, a

common planning period from 9:40 to 10:20 was immediately followed by a forty-five minute team reading period (called Critical Reading). At this time, children from the three classrooms were divided into seven reading groups taught by the three classroom teachers, the three interns, and the remediation specialist. Reading groups rotated five times during the year. Tuesday's schedule included a common thirty minute planning period, followed by Critical Reading again, and then later in the afternoon by science from 12:30 to 1:50. Four units were taught simultaneously and each child studied four units in science during the school year. Only on Fridays did teachers have an entire day with their own classes with no team meetings or team teaching activities.

Group interactions within the team were intense. Teachers, whose only conversations with colleagues had been during brief encounters at the photocopier, in the hallways as their classes passed each other en route to gym, art, or music, or over a hurried lunch in the teachers' room, were now teaching each other's children, teaching together, meeting three times a week and one Saturday a month. In addition, they had increased responsibility for interns and special needs students. Full-time graduate student interns were in their classes all day every day. Children in their classes with identified special needs, some of whom might have been out of the classroom up to three hours a day, never left the room. In combination, all these changes vastly complicated the lives of the teachers.

*Teacher's Responses to the Project*

The teachers' responses to the changes the Teaching Project had made in

their work were overwhelmingly positive. They enjoyed teaming. They found the presence of full-time interns to be stimulating and challenging. They felt that in-house remediation was "the way to go" for special needs children.

A second set of interviews, conducted in February, 1988, asked participants how the first year in the project differed from other teaching years. Every participant indicated that the most important differences were the elimination of isolation and the new experience of working closely with other adults.

As one third grade teacher stated:

> It's different in that there's not the isolation .... It's different in the sense that there's a common language when talking about something--there are some common problems ... there's a belongingness, a being part of something, as opposed to the fragmentation of trying to figure out what exactly you're part of.

By the final interview of the year, three of the four teachers stated that the elimination of isolation, working together, and team teaching had been the most valuable parts of the project. One teacher noted,

> I don't feel as isolated. It's simply not you in your castle anymore .... My initial concern was that I loved my castle--but you can share your castle--and be much better for it.

Another described his experience in a similar way:

> The greatest reward is being in contact with other people doing the same job .... This can be such an isolating job. [When] you're working with other people, you see what's hassling them, you see that they're having trouble--you see the kind of real process teaching is and you're involved in that. It makes it real.

These responses provide striking contrast to the fears expressed at the start of the project. In September, what the teachers feared most had been working with the group. By June, what they most valued was working with the group.

Working in the project meant carefully organizing time schedules, setting up

team teaching curricula, planning and teaching classes together, conferring with the remediation specialist, and supervising a full-time student intern. Life became more complicated. As one teacher stated:

> Working by myself, without commitment to other people is a lot easier .... I have felt overloaded, one more thing to deal with. There have been times when I felt like I wish I were doing my own thing, and I wasn't accountable or responsible to other people.

Organizing time to do all they wanted to do became a major issue. The scheduling latitude they had enjoyed in the past had disappeared. As one teacher remarked at the end of the year:

> Time was always an issue for me this year. It was a question of balancing what you needed to do in your own classroom with what you needed to do for the model, and sometimes those pressures were complementary and sometimes they were antagonistic, and it just gave a frenetic pace to the life of the model ....

They felt responsible to each other in a new way:

> ... there have been times when the spontaneity and the desire to stay working at a particular task has to be short-circuited because the structure and the plan for working with the whole group takes over; there have been times when that has been frustrating.

Still, they repeated how important they felt the model was for them. One suggested that his status as an individual had been enhanced in the process:

> I can't imagine going back to the old self-contained classroom .... I was tremendously worried that I would lose my autonomy by being in the model, that the model would consume me. I feel more an individual actually. I feel like my ideas, my thoughts, my arguments can be heard and honored. I think that's a tribute to the other teachers and all the interns and just how well we work together.

Another stated, "I was autonomous, but very isolated. I'm no longer that at all, which is very good." A third noted that for the first time in his career he understood what the process of teaching was like for other teachers:

> The greatest reward this year has been the contact with other people doing the same job ... to be working with other people in a closer way. It breaks the isolation and also--you're doing the same thing, you're grappling with the same

thing, you're in the same boat.

*The Decrease in Autonomy and Individual Control*

Although the group had control over curriculum and scheduling, teachers realized that they had less control of their individual work and schedules than they had before they agreed to join the Teaching Project. The school day was fragmented differently than before, but it was still fragmented. Although no longer caused by "pull-out programs", fragmentation resulted from the demands and constraints imposed by team teaching science and reading. In those subjects, teachers felt they had less control over what they did and when they did it. As one teacher described the situation:

> ... there have been times when the spontaneity and a desire to stay working at a particular task has to be short-circuited because the structure and the plan for working with the whole group takes over; there have been times when that has been frustrating .... I felt I lost some control over my ability to take my group where I want to when I want to.

Another teacher lamented the loss of whole class time she had always devoted to class meetings:

> I have less control over my whole schedule. And that affects me terribly. I've had fewer class meetings in my class than I ever had in my life--class meetings that I'm passionate about. So sometimes meetings have to give way. Everything has to give way to the team, because when reading happens, it has to happen. I think it's worth it, but I do have less control over my schedule.

Curricular and pedagogical decisions, once made by the individual teachers, had become matters for group discussion and decision. Once again, though it was apparent that the team made more decisions about program, the individual teacher made fewer. Notably, team members were willing to accept the decrease in individual control to work with the larger group. While admitting that he has lost

some control over scheduling and curriculum, one of the project teachers stated:

> I think I have more control over my job in general. I view the model as an oasis. It's much more a bedrock secure environment for me and I take refuge there, and there's power in that.

*Isolation from Other Faculty Members*

Though the teachers recognized the power of the camaraderie and the interdependence that was developing within their group, they were aware that they no longer communicated as easily with other faculty members in the school. One teacher described the tradeoff: "I feel more isolated from the rest of the school. As more energy goes in here, less energy goes to the rest of the school. I feel less in touch."

The teachers no longer spent their lunch periods in the faculty lounge; instead they ate in the kitchen area near their classrooms. They had much to discuss during lunchtime. They were teaching the same children and sharing curricula. For them, the team had become the most important part of the school. One teacher noted the sense of "belongingness." But another worried that the intense participation in the team

> .... excluded me from other contacts. I would say that it's almost to the exclusion of other teachers. But I would say that contact with other teachers didn't happen easily anyway before. I think that because my energies have been consumed by [the team], that I don't have room for anybody else.

Another of the teachers accounted for this phenomenon by saying:

> I think Devotion is so huge, so big, that it's the only way to go [to set up models like the Teaching Project]. What people at Devotion tend to do is retreat into their classrooms and make contact now and again, but it's only on a social level. Rarely do you see people making educational professional contact. It might happen, but not very often.

Though members of the Teaching Project no longer felt isolated individually,

they sensed a growing group isolation. This phenomenon was noted early in the year by the principal, who worried in an October 1987 interview:

> I think there are some dangers. One of the dangers is isolation--that this project will isolate itself from the rest of the school because of the needs of its membership to meet together regularly.

Recognizing a certain irony here, he continued: "But you can have that kind of isolation with a single teacher, too. That's one of the characteristics of teaching."

Though individual teacher isolation had been virtually eliminated by the Teaching Project, the solution brought with it a new set of problems. The fact remained, however, that these previously independent teachers had become a team of interdependent workers, who were, for the most part, satisfied with their work together.

## Working Together: Team Teaching

Project teachers experienced team teaching in four different ways:

1) Reading Instruction: Mixed Group/Individual Teacher

   Individual teachers taught reading to mixed groups of children from the three team classrooms.

2) Science Instruction: Co-Teaching

   Two teachers worked together in the same room teaching science to groups of sixteen children.

3) Classroom Teacher and Remediation Specialist

   Two teachers taught math and writing in the same room at the same time.

4) Classroom Teacher and Intern

   Two teachers taught in the same room at the same time.

Each configuration deserves analysis and will be treated separately in the following sections.

*Team Teaching: An Overview*

Generally, Teaching Project participants responded positively to team teaching. Some aspects of team teaching made the teachers' work more complicated, though, or did not mesh well with their individual teaching styles.

Team teaching meant that teachers, once free to determine their own schedules, were now constrained by the team schedule. As one teacher stated:

> Everything has to give way to the team. When reading happens, it has to happen. You can't suddenly cancel reading. When science happens, it has to happen. I think it's worth it. The reading has been very nice. The science has been wonderful. The kids love science ... I think it's definitely worth it, but I do have less control over my schedule.

The project teachers were able to list the many drawbacks of team teaching. They cited the fragmentation of the school day caused by fitting team reading, team science, and team meetings into an already filled weekly schedule. They remarked that they frequently had to cut other lessons short because team subjects were about to begin. The teachers described feeling overwhelmed by work. They had decided as a team to write new science curricula and to implement established science and reading curricula more frequently and for longer periods of time. Typically, in the third and fourth grades at the Devotion School, science was taught twice a week for forty-five minutes. The team, in contrast, taught science twice a week for ninety minutes. Reading groups rarely met longer than thirty minutes at Devotion, and not all children were placed in reading groups simultaneously. The team taught reading to all children three times a week in forty-five minute sessions. Moreover, instead of having more time to prepare for additional lessons,

teachers had less time since they had given up three of their five weekly preparation periods for team meetings.

Because they were not teaching all their children all subjects, teachers feared that a few children might be "falling through the cracks." They expressed the concern that they spent too much time at meetings strategizing about politics and worrying about the project's continuation beyond the first year and not enough time dealing with the problems of individual children. They missed having the control of time that they had always enjoyed. They missed having the liberty to take long leisurely days to work on particularly interesting projects in their own classes.

On the other hand, the teachers said they were more excited about their work: they were stimulated by writing new curricula; the children in their classes were being exposed to more and richer science and reading units; the presence of full-time interns and the half-time remediation specialist had significantly lowered the student-teacher ratio; children and parents expressed excitement and satisfaction with the Teaching Project. One teacher remarked:

> I like everything about teaming. I like thinking about ideas, working with colleagues. I have to say it's been very stimulating for me. I come to school energized.

The teachers spoke about feeling responsible and accountable to other adults. Describing his fifteen years' experience as a classroom teacher, one teacher stated:

> You fall into habits. You don't have anybody to bounce things off of. You fall into a regime, a routine that is sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious.

He compared this with his experience in the Teaching Project:

> But when you have other people to watch, and other people to teach with, and

> other people to sometimes challenge you, it can be tremendously stimulating. I was very excited about this new concept of process reading and still am. I read a lot of books about it. I'm not sure I would have done that if I'd been in my own autonomous little womb. Nor would I have developed anything like Bubbles [the science unit].

Unlike previous years, the teachers taught at least one subject to each of the children in their wing of the school, and they knew each child by name. They also felt more comfortable calling on team colleagues for assistance when they needed it. One team member remarked that, if one of her own children became ill during the school day, she would not feel guilty about going home early because a team member would be able to integrate their two classes. Her absence would not disrupt the whole school while the principal frantically searched for a substitute teacher to cover the class. The interconnectedness of teaming gave teachers a sense of security.



Reading Instruction: MixedGroup/Individual Teacher. In most American classrooms, reading is taught to small groups of children while the rest of the class does seatwork. The Teaching Project, altered this pattern. Children were divided into mixed-grade groups of eight to ten students. All children met in their groups at the same time and were taught by the three classroom teachers, the three interns, and the remediation specialist. Reading groups met three times a week in forty-five minute periods. The children were regrouped and assigned to different instructors five times during the school year.

During the first three reading cycles of the school year, the team proceeded

with a reading format commonly used in Brookline. Children were grouped by performance level, with all the children in a group reading the same book, usually a carefully-chosen piece of children's literature. Although the team's reading structure changed from the traditional reading group and seatwork pattern, it was not perceived as a major shift by the project teachers. In describing this method early in the year, one teacher stated:

> It's teaming in spirit in reading--we bounce ideas off each other .... We are essentially trying to look at reading in the same way, so that it's a team approach even though the groups are taught individually.

The teachers enjoyed this form of team teaching. But during the first two interviews, none described it as a significantly different aspect of the project.

Beginning in the fourth cycle, team members started to experiment with a new method of reading instruction. Interestingly, it was the Wheelock interns who brought the information about this new method to the teachers' attention. The team decided to try it. The new method, which the teachers called "genre reading," had been developed by Jane Hansen of the University of New Hampshire.[3] The teachers found Hansen's ideas intriguing. They did not, however, totally agree with her suggestions for reading instruction. Hansen believes that children should read any books they choose and then meet in small groups to discuss them. The teachers thought the Hansen method was "a little too loose for our style."

The teachers spent several meetings discussing the method and devised "genre reading" as a way to tighten up Hansen's idea to meet their own needs.

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[3]Jane Hansen, *When Writers Read*, (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1987).

Children selected a reading genre that appealed to them (i.e., mysteries, adventure stories, science fiction, biography, non-fiction, animal stories, realistic fiction) and teachers organized the children into groups by interest. Each child read his or her own selections from the genre. The interest groups met to discuss elements of the genre as well as the authors' writing styles. Each child read many books within the genre during the course of the cycle.

One teacher remarked:

> Children feel enormously empowered about reading using this method. It's reading for its own sake. The children relate what they've read to their own lives, and it's quite powerful.

Another acknowledged that this method enabled children to read far more books than ever before in reading groups. However, she expressed some ambivalence about "genre reading:"

> The kids in the final evaluation overwhelmingly loved the new approach to reading. Child after child said this is a much better way to do it. And yet I feel for the remediation kids it's not the way to go .... I don't think those kids perform particularly well in those kinds of groups.

Another teacher also expressed his dissatisfaction with aspects of "genre reading." When all the children in a reading group read the same book, he said, he could design projects around the particular book. In "genre reading" this was impossible. He felt that when each child read a different book, "it was harder to have the kids feel they were part of something together, which is something I like as part of a reading group."

Although teachers in the team were not in full agreement about the benefits of "genre reading," they had made the commitment to experiment with this new method and adapted the method to meet their needs. One teacher commented

that without the group's support he would never have explored this new methodology on his own. All expressed the belief that this new method of reading instruction had stimulated the children to read more and better books.

Science Curriculum: Co-Teaching. Project members co-taught science twice a week in ninety minute segments. Each child studied four units in science during the school year--two established units and two units that had been created by the project teachers. The units were taught by various configurations of instructors:

1) two classroom teachers co-taught a unit they had co-authored on Bubbles and Surface Tension four times;

2) various combinations of interns co-taught Ants[4], Colored Solutions[5] and Clay Boats once or twice during the year;

3) the remediation specialist taught a unit on Ice Cubes twice;

4) one classroom teacher created and taught a unit on Photography. He co-taught it twice with an intern and twice with the remediation specialist.

Each third grade student studied Colored Solutions and Ants (science units used district-wide for third grade) and also studied Bubbles and Photography (the units authored by the project teachers). Each fourth grade student studied Clay Boats and Ice Cubes (science units used district-wide for fourth grade) and also studied Bubbles and Photography.

The units co-taught by teachers or interns were the most satisfying to the teachers involved. The experience of the veteran teachers who co-authored and

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[4]*Ants* is a curriculum unit created by classroom teachers and the science department of the Brookline Public Schools.

[5]*Colored Solutions, Clay Boats, Sink or Float* and *Ice Cubes* are science units created by the Elementary Science Study, and published by Webster Division, McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., New York, 1969.

co-taught the unit on Bubbles provided the most striking example of the positive effects of co-teaching. The Bubbles unit, which involved a series of progressively complex experiments using soapy water and a drinking straw, gave children an understanding of the concept of surface tension. The unit was conceived during the week-long summer workshop, written during the Saturday planning days in September and October, and then completed after a number of additional weekday team meetings. The teachers co-taught the unit four times during the school year.

The co-authoring and co-teaching experience affected the teachers on several levels. They stated that co-teaching in science had enriched them, had allowed them to attempt things they would never have tried as individuals, and had made each accountable to one another for the work done. As one teacher stated:

> If you're teaming with another teacher, there's an element of wanting to make sure that you've got it covered--that you're doing a competent job--that you're developing it the way it ought to be developed. And you don't kind of let it slip so much.

Asked how this co-teaching experience was different from teaching a unit individually, her partner added:

> It's only different in that I know that my science teaching partner is counting on my piece of work. And whereas I might have avoided it and procrastinated in a self-contained setting, I don't now, and I feel the pressure not to procrastinate. I want to be accountable.

Co-teaching the unit enabled the teachers to risk trying something they might well not have attempted alone:

> I was intrigued by Bubbles, but was afraid I couldn't figure it out by myself, and was afraid that I wouldn't be able to finish a whole unit. But being able to team with another teacher gave me the confidence that we could work together and create a unit and so we are doing that--and I love it--and I have never been a great science teacher.

They learned from each other:

> Initially, I was worried about our contrasting styles and our different expectations of kids, but I think my teammate and I have complemented each other, and that we listen to each other and take cues from each other during the actual teaching process, and it's made it much more effective. I don't think I could have done anywhere near as good a science unit without my partner.

The interns, who co-taught Ants and Clay Boats, remarked that working together was stimulating and challenging. One of the interns remarked:

> Co-teaching in science was absolutely wonderful! It was less threatening because there were two people creating the units. It was stimulating to bounce ideas off each other. In [Clay Boats] we incorporated a lot of writing. The two of us were coming at the unit from slightly different angles. I was taking a course on science. The other intern was taking a course on reading. So we did a lot of cross curriculum kinds of things.

Not all team members, however, were as enthusiastic about the science units. The team member who taught Photography regretted the relatively short length of the science cycles. As he said:

> I can't do the kind of long-term science I like to do. Making the gigantic papier-mache globe my class made last year took months. Now I can't do that sort of thing. If I were doing science in my own class I'd do it intensely every day for a six to eight week period and that would be it.

He also felt that his co-teacher in this unit served more as an assistant and not as an equal partner. An intern worked with him during the first three cycles of the year while the remediation specialist worked with him during the last cycle. This teacher's frustration is apparent in his description of his Photography unit:

> I didn't really experience at any time this year a sense of true mutual teaming ... all the way through I bore the brunt of overseeing it .... There were some very nice moments, working moments, team moments within it, but I ... didn't experience a real kind of teaching give and take, of two people in the process of teaching something and really bouncing off each other.

The remediation specialist did not enjoy teaching science. She felt her time could have been better spent supporting the children in the other groups who needed her assistance rather than teaching a full science group of her own.

> I don't really know if it was the best use of my time, considering my role in the program. I really think my time could be used better ... really concentrating on the

> remedial kids, having time to make modifications or taking time to work with just the remedial kids ...

Co-teaching in science was perceived by most members of the team as a positive experience. Difficulties did occur where the teaching partners were unequally matched and where the remediation specialist wished to focus on remedial issues. Co-teaching was most significant for the interns who worked together and for the experienced teachers who co-authored new units and taught them collaboratively. All members of the team agreed that the quality of science instruction dramatically surpassed what they had previously offered in their individual classrooms.

Classroom Teacher and Remediation Specialist. The remediation component provided another way for teachers to work together in the same classroom. All remediation was handled "in-house," and the half-time special needs teacher worked with the children who had deficits in reading, writing, and/or math in the classroom during regular class lessons.

The remediation specialist enjoyed this new way of working. She had new insights into working with remedial children based on her experiences in their "regular" classrooms:

> It lets me know the expectations of a remedial student within the larger context .... Before, if I'd just see them pulled out, they might be wonderful in a small group. But then you see them functioning here, and it's a different thing .... Now I have more expectations of the children because I know where they have to fit in when they go back to the classroom. You lose sight of that after awhile if you're working in your own little cocoon .... I push them harder in the individual setting and make the expectations a little higher because I know that they have to go back and fit in.

Because remediation happened in the classroom, classroom teachers were

more directly responsible for the needs of children receiving remedial assistance. One teacher, referring to his increased responsibility for special needs children, stated:

> A lot of times teachers feel impotent with special needs kids. Teachers often think, "I don't know, nor do I have to know how to deal with these kids. This is not my bailiwick." That's not true anymore. I have to know and I have to care.

In an end-of-year interview, another teacher stated:

> Because the kids never left ... it reduced my sense that they were remedial .... It forced me to deal with them ... whereas if you have a pullout program, there's a part of you that says, "Oh, well, they'll deal with them there. I'll just do the best I can." But the remediation program made me face things I wouldn't normally face.

Though the teachers could point to only one case in which in-house remediation had produced quantifiably improved test results, all the teachers sensed a difference in the attitude and self-image of their special needs children. In-house remediation had diminished the effect of labeling by peers which occurred when children repeatedly left the classroom for remediation. It had also eliminated the fragmentation of the special needs child's day. One teacher referred to a child who normally would have been out of the classroom for up to three hours a day: "He is so happy that he's doing what everyone else is doing for the first time in his life...." Another noticed the "blossoming" of his special needs children who were now "very much a part of the class."

For the two experienced teachers, one a "specialist" and the other a "regular" classroom teacher, working together in the classroom was a new experience. It had its advantages and its disadvantages. One classroom teacher noted how much he was gaining from the remediation specialist's presence:

> I think I'm learning. The remediation specialist being there gives me lots of

> strategies and that helps me to deal with special needs kids.

Another remarked that her relationship with the special needs teacher had changed:

> I have a different relationship with the special needs person. Often there's an adversarial relationship about expectations--and this way we can get together and have common expectations.

Nonetheless, there were problems with the remediation component. Many had to do with the new experience of peers teaching together in one classroom.

Of all the teachers in the project, the remediation specialist had experienced the most profound change in her work situation. She no longer had her own room, and she no longer made all her own curricular and scheduling decisions. Though she said she felt much "more a part of the school" because she was now part of regular education team and though she aid she felt "invigorated" by her work, she had less control over what she taught and how she organized her day. The classroom teacher's plan and schedule determined what and when the remediation specialist taught. For the classroom teacher, that meant co-planning the week's schedule with the remediation specialist and then keeping to that schedule. If, for example, a particularly interesting social studies discussion went overtime into the scheduled writing period, the remediation teacher would arrive and find her services unnecessary. This meant that scheduling had to become more rigid, and the flexibility and spontaneity so valued by the classroom teacher had to diminish.

The remediation specialist felt the change in a somewhat different way:

> The difficulty ... for me is not so much in the teaming as in my role as a remediation person within the context of the classroom--in that I'm not in charge, so to speak. I'm used to being in charge. I'm used to having an agenda with one child or a group of children. I know where I'm going with them. During our time together I find that it's useful productive time. In this model I've had to be more flexible, and just kind of go in for awhile and observe what's going on .... I feel that it isn't wasted time, but that if I had them alone I could be doing more.

Though the remediation specialist stated that she felt a loss of control over her schedule and the programs of the children she taught, she emphasized how important she felt it was that remediation occur in the classroom setting:

> I do think that remediation in the context of the classroom is the way to go ... you see, they're learning other things ... they're learning responsibility and learning to fit into a larger context, which they're going to have to do eventually. I mean, they're not going to have somebody there in a small group all the time .... When I see that the help is needed, I go ahead and do it, so it's a different view of remediation. It isn't that I feel less useful, but I feel a little antsy, standing around so much.

When asked how she could resolve the problem of "standing around so much," the remediation specialist replied:

> I think it takes time. I just think it takes time to sense each teacher's style .... What's appropriate, how directive should you be--and after you sense the styles then you can be more effective doing the appropriate thing at the appropriate time. But it takes time, it just takes time.

It also took time for the regular classroom teacher to grow accustomed to the remediation specialist's presence in the room. One classroom teacher admitted that scheduling and finding "solid, consistent times" for remediation had been a "huge problem." He commiserated with the special needs teacher's plight of "floating," and he recognized that it was difficult for her to "plug into those kids and make some sense out of it."

Another teacher expressed dissatisfaction with the way remediation was structured into the day and recalled his frustration when:

> ... the remediation specialist would show up and it was the designated time we set aside, but ... maybe we would be doing a mini-lesson or Daniel might be deeply involved in a conference, and she didn't want to intrude on that.

He wondered whether he should not have used the remediation specialist differently:

> I wanted to use her more as a consultant, more as someone to come in and watch a child, observe. I think she's very astute and she's got a lot of knowledge. So I see her as a remedial trainer--that she could supply me with strategies and resources.

Perhaps, because of the remediation specialist's tight time schedule and the newness of the experience for both classroom teacher and remediation specialist, she had not filled a consulting role.

The classroom teacher who was most satisfied with the remediation component attributed her success to two things:

> I think that you need to adhere to a certain rigid schedule with the remediation specialist, because if you don't use her then it doesn't work. The other thing is to follow her lead. And I feel that I do a lot of following. She'll say, "Well, with Mary you should do thus and such," and I can follow up. Before, when the kids left the room I never knew at all what they did or what they were supposed to do."

All the teachers recognized the value of the remediation component, both for the children and themselves, and were determined that it be continued into the project's second year. However, they admitted the complicated nature of the component and stated that it was not yet working smoothly. It worked in varying degrees for the different teachers. All remarked on the importance and the necessity of remediation in the classroom.

Co-Teaching: Interns and Teachers. The four teachers and three interns sitting shoulder-to-shoulder in front of more than seventy-five parents at an evening meeting in January gave visible testimony to their interpersonal commitment. Interns were functioning as part of the team. In conversations with parents, teachers consistently referred to the interns as co-teachers. Project teachers had carefully printed both the teachers' names and the interns' names on signs outside their respective classroom doors.

Each intern had her own desk. One teacher had situated her intern's desk directly beside the entryway to the classroom. This meant that visiting parents were likely to interact with the intern before they met the teacher. Interns collected homework as the children entered the door and handled all money matters including book orders and money for field trips. Parents began to ask interns about their children's progress--a rare occurrence in the normal student teaching situation; student teachers are only in the classroom for sixteen weeks, are barely known to the parents and have only a short-term relationship with the children. One teacher laughed and said that she felt a little neglected--her usual morning interactions with parents which revolved around activities such as homework delivery and money collection had all but been eliminated because the intern dealt with these matters.

The full-time presence of the three graduate student interns had altered the teachers' level of commitment to pre-service education. Prospective interns had been carefully screened in the spring before the project began. This was rarely, if ever, done at Devotion School, where student teachers generally arrived on their first day of college classes in late September without introduction or benefit of an interview. Those interns chosen to work in the Teaching Project began work prior to the opening of school in September and continued as interns through the closing day of the 1987-88 school year.

The interns took on substantial teaching responsibilities as the year progressed. By March, 1988, each intern was teaching unassisted at least two-tenths

time a week (the equivalent of one school day). Individual classroom teachers allocated this time differently. In two instances the interns had complete responsibility for social studies--taught on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, instructed a regular science and reading group, and performed an assortment of other teaching and clerical tasks (i.e., taking attendance, conducting class meetings, ordering materials, photocopying). The third intern had complete responsibility for teaching math, handled nearly all organizational matters, and taught a science and reading group.

All the classroom teachers praised their interns. One teacher's description of a typical day included this comment about her intern:

> ... the intern has far more responsibility than the regular student [teacher] has. The intern designs her own units. Her commitment is so different. In my room, math is entirely designed by the intern and she has 100% responsibility for math. And she's great!

Another teacher remarked:

> I view her as a co-teacher. She'll do everything I do, take attendance, direct the class, and it feels very comfortable to do it on the spur of the moment or to plan it in advance.

Perhaps because the interns had been in their classrooms since September, the teachers developed strong relationships with them. All three classroom teachers referred to their commitment to the interns.

> There's a different kind of commitment .... There's been time to allow it to unfold and develop over the course of the year. I have more at stake in what happens to her. If someone's in your class for eight or sixteen weeks, you barely know them and you don't care about them so much.

The intern's presence allowed teachers to take their APT time.[6] The interns

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[6]APT Time will not be addressed in this paper, but will be addressed in the detailed study of the Teaching Project, to be completed in May, 1990.

returned from their Wheelock College courses with interesting ideas and shared them at team meetings. The interns introduced the work of Jane Hansen to the project teachers, who had never before used this approach to reading. As one of the teachers stated: "[the interns] were the ones who nurtured us through articles they brought us, which is an interesting model, I think."

The teachers also saw the project's benefit to the interns themselves.

> It's working remarkably well. They are enormously excited. The most mature of the interns, and the one who needed this the least--she must say at least once a week that this is the best time of her life. She has never had such a worthwhile experience.

Relationships between the interns and the children were deeper than relationships had ever been between children and student teachers. One teacher stated:

> The children relate to her at least as much as they relate to me. She does so much management stuff. A lot of these relations with children have become important. So she's really seen as a teacher.

The interns knew the children better. One intern stated:

> I think the most valuable thing has been just being here from the the very beginning of the year, and being able to observe the children since the first day, and watching them develop and grow over the course of the year.

Co-teaching was viewed as a boon by the interns. As one intern stated:

> I've really appreciated the fact that I never feel isolated. I always have someone to ask if I have a question. And it's very stimulating and very energizing to brainstorm ideas with another teacher, my co-teacher, or the person I'm sharing a science group with, or anyone when we're having lunch. I think I've worked with everyone in some way on the team.

It is clear from interviewing both student teachers and cooperating teachers that this component of the Teaching Project was the most successful. As one teacher put it, "I used to breathe a sigh of relief when the student teacher left. I'd

think, 'I don't have to deal with that anymore!' There's a whole different framework now for the student teacher." Teachers, who had more control over the interns' student teaching experience, also experienced an intensely satisfying long-term professional relationship.

In summary, team teaching represented a complicated component of the Teaching Project. It had its drawbacks as well as advantages, and teachers acknowledged the difficulties with various aspects. What is clear, however, is that team teaching had opened new teaching possibilities and working configurations for these veteran teachers, which stimulated them and renewed their interest in their profession.

## Working Together: Team Meetings

Although team teaching was the primary way that Teaching Project participants worked collaboratively, team meetings provided another avenue for working together. At team meetings, they were able to discuss pedagogical and curricular aspects of teaching that were rarely addressed by other teachers during the course of the workday. Equally important, meetings were used for team decision-making and as a means of governing the team.

### *Meetings in Brookline: An Overview*

Faculty meetings in Brookline are scheduled every other week after school hours and are usually conducted by the school principal. At the Devotion School, these meetings occur sporadically throughout the year. Devotion's principal

attempts to be responsive to the needs and interests of teachers by soliciting their input for the content of these meetings. Despite his efforts, faculty meetings are not highly regarded by the teachers.

District-wide curriculum meetings, offering staff development opportunities, occur once a week after school. They are usually planned and directed by curriculum coordinators with the assistance of teachers. Teachers are encouraged to attend these meetings, but attendance is not mandatory. Oftentimes, teachers are dissatisfied with them.

Teachers schedule and plan their own meetings infrequently among themselves. Such meetings deal with a variety of issues including: arranging class placement for the following year, ordering materials for a grade level, or planning grade level events or field trips.

*Team Meetings*

The four teacher participants in the Teaching Project expressed dissatisfaction with meetings both in their school and in the district. Believing that substantive meetings should become a part of the teacher's day, they structured three weekly meetings for professional discussion and arranged to meet one Saturday each month. They considered meetings a part of their work and important for professional development.

The teachers did not differentiate between the goals of the weekday meetings and Saturday meetings. They saw the Saturday meetings as an opportunity to spend a sustained period of time on issues they could only address cursorily during

the short weekday meetings.

*Weekday Meetings*

Weekday meetings occurred every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at different times in the morning while the third and fourth grade children attended art, music, or physical education classes. These meetings ranged from thirty to forty minutes in length and were made possible because the principal had rearranged the master schedule to provide the staff with common planning periods. The teachers were committed to holding the meetings during their planning periods. This meant, however, that what would normally have been done during these times had to be accomplished either at other times during the school day or after school.

In no other part of the school did teacher meetings occur with such frequency. In contrasting life in the Teaching Project to life in the school in general, one project teacher noted: "I think it's unusual to see teachers actually meeting and talking about practice and about kids during school hours."

Still, the weekday meetings were not as successful as the teachers had hoped. One teacher stated:

> The time is important. There is a level of frustration. We had thirty minutes sometimes to meet. You really have to be very, very structured to do that, very focused. And even then some of the issues we made decisions on, we really didn't have time. Sometimes we made political decisions based on thirty minutes of time, and they weren't the right decisions.

Unless the agenda was specific and dealt with matters of immediate importance (such as plans for organizing reading groups) teachers reported that the meetings lacked focus and were unproductive. Many meetings were used to make decisions

regarding the project's immediate future, or to grapple with political issues concerning how the project was being perceived in the larger school community.

A number of factors contributed to making weekday meetings dissatisfying. The limited time period allocated for the meetings and the difficulty of focusing on issues and making substantive decisions in thirty minutes worked against the teachers. The knowledge that meetings took time which could have been used for the more immediate and pressing responsibilities of the school day coupled with the realization that the next class lesson would start the minute the meeting was over also sapped the participant's energy. In short, the pull of the teachers' other school responsibilities prevented the focused use of meeting time during the workday. In addition, the political issues which surrounded the project--the need to search for the next year's funding, the teachers' inexperience at dealing with political issues, and making decisions which had ramifications beyond the classroom--further complicated the meeting process. Still, the teachers agreed that even unsuccessful meetings were essential to the functioning of the team. According to one teacher in an end-of-year interview:

> Meetings are tremendously important. Teachers are not used to meeting together. I think it's a skill we need to hone--to improve--because we've got that time, and we don't use it. We haven't used it as well as we can. I'd say we've used twenty-five percent of the meeting time well.

Though a dismal figure, he said twenty-five percent was surely better than the percentage of meetings that worked well for teachers outside of the project.

The teachers needed the meetings to discuss the new curricula they were implementing. They had to agree on issues such as when to schedule and how to

structure parent open house meetings, whether to take an overnight camping trip and how to organize it, when to begin a new science or reading cycle. Making these decisions took time. Since the group had decided to reach all decisions by consensus, it took even more time. As one project member remarked:

> We make decisions by consensus .... I think decisions are better because there are seven people [four teachers and three interns] constructing decisions .... It's sometimes a little overwhelming, the number of decisions that have to be made, time-consuming.

Teachers recognized that when team meetings revolved around curriculum, the level of conversation was raised beyond the level of most of the school or district-wide meetings they attended. It forced them to bring their thoughts about curricular issues to a conscious, spoken level. As one teacher stated:

> Stuff that I've always done by the seat of my pants, by instinct and intuition, now I have to try to explain to somebody else and justify it. That's the scary part.

Another teacher noted the difficulties with team meetings, but also recognized their strength.

> I see the drawbacks of teaming meetings and team teaching as kind of the drawbacks of democracy. It's cumbersome. It's easier to think in my car about what I'm doing the next day. On the other hand, I'm not as creative in my car--and certainly to bounce ideas off somebody else is very exciting.

The teachers' dissatisfaction with their use of weekday meeting time stands in contrast to their highly directed and well-organized Saturday meetings, which were, for team members, among the most satisfying of their experiences in the team.

*Saturday Meetings*

Teachers met for five paid hours one Saturday each month. The day began

at 8:00 A.M. when teachers and interns gathered at the home of one staff member. Following a potluck breakfast from 8:00 to 8:30, they worked steadily until noon. At this time they stopped working and shared a thirty minute potluck lunch. After lunch they worked from 12:30 until 2:00 P.M. Agendas were planned at the Thursday team meeting prior to the all-day meeting, and revolved around curriculum, all-team events and planning for the future of the team. Science curriculum was planned on Saturdays. Reading groups were designated and books were chosen. Whole team parent open houses were discussed. Schedule alterations were arranged. Though team members gave up valuable Saturdays, they shared the belief that the meetings were important and worthwhile. They even enjoyed them. As one teacher put it: "Our Saturday meetings were fun ... we put energy into setting a really tight agenda."

When asked why Saturday meetings were so much more useful than weekday planning meetings, teachers referred to the lack of pressure to get through an agenda in thirty minutes, the luxury of having time to sit back and reflect on the project, and, as one team member said:

> Saturday meetings worked better because they were more focused, and people knew they were really there a bunch of hours and they didn't want to waste them. What happens during the week is that it's sometimes only thirty-five or thirty minutes and you have a lot of things to do, and you want to make one more phone call to a parent, and you want to get all these things done. During Saturday meetings there was nothing else to do. You couldn't talk to another teacher in the hall, or schedule another meeting in school or that kind of thing, which I think is problematic.

Meetings were essential to the functioning of the Teaching Project but were less successful than the teachers had hoped. The meetings provided a forum for the important discussions and decision-making of the team. They served to

maintain communication among the participants and to give the teachers the opportunity to discuss curricular, pedagogical, and philosophical issues rarely discussed with teaching colleagues. Weekday meetings were often unfocused, however, and teachers reported that they were too short and unproductive. The valuable Saturday meetings, on the other hand, illustrate the teachers' capacity to conduct business efficiently when given adequate time and distance from the pressing responsibilities of the school day.

## Leadership in the Teaching Project

The idea of teacher leadership is currently of interest to reformers studying school restructuring. What a teacher leader is, the qualities that a teacher leader must have, and how to identify and train teacher leaders are all topics for consideration. This concept is also directly related to the discussion about the professionalization of teaching and the empowerment of teachers.[7]

The Teaching Project, developed and sustained by teachers, can inform the debate about teacher leadership. Thus, it is important to understand the history of the Teaching Project and to recognize the crucial role that teacher/leaders played in the development and success of the project.

In 1986, when Vivian Troen and I first proposed what was eventually to

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[7]Judith Warren Little, "Assessing the Prospects for Teacher Leadership," in *Building a Professional Culture in Schools*, ed. Ann Lieberman (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), p. 78-106; Kathleen Devaney, "The Lead Teacher: Ways to Begin," paper prepared for the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, New York, January, 1987; Susan Moore Johnson, "Teachers, Power, and School Change," paper presented at the Conference on Choice and Control in American Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, May 17-19, 1989.

become The Teaching Project to central office officials in Brookline, our idea was dismissed immediately. The Superintendent of Schools stated that such a project would be too expensive and he was not interested in implementing it. We subsequently took our idea to Wheelock College, the State Commissioner of Education, and the Director of the state-supported Field Center for Teaching and Learning. After political maneuvering at the state level, some assistance from Wheelock College, and with the promise of in-kind funding in the form of the part-time aide by Devotion's principal, we raised the start-up money for the project. Once inaugurated, the project's survival and success depended on at least one teacher member paying attention to outside issues. Of the teachers in the project, only Troen was interested in this new role.

Troen handled the bulk of the project's political work. She advocated for the team with the State Commissioner of Education and at all levels of the school system. She learned about budgets and how to get the money that had been promised to the team. The team members acknowledged Troen's expertise and accepted the fact that she was taking a leadership role. Their intense interest in the project's survival meant that they too became involved in the politics surrounding the project's perpetuation. They recognized their limitations in this area, though, and as one teacher stated:

> One of the weaknesses of this project is how hard it is for long-term, seasoned practitioners to make the switch to being politically savvy and perpetuating this program because that requires you to think in a different way. It requires a mind shift .... You have to go from being an educator to being a politically savvy organizer .... It's a weakness because we're not used to it. We're not particularly savvy. I like to think we are, but we make mistakes right and left. We're very here and now, we're very involved in the nitty gritty.

Troen's leadership role was essential, both internally and externally, through her negotiations with school and state officials. But the Teaching Project belonged to all the team members: it was a teacher project. At an end of year interview, one teacher described the equality of team members in this way:

> I felt my input was as important as anybody else's so that if I argued well, and presented a credible case I could sway the group, and I felt as though I was listened to ... it was a necessary ingredient for all of us to feel that we were listened to and that our suggestions were valid within the group.

The feeling of shared resporsibility for the team, the belief that every team member's opinion was equally valuable, and the emergence of a politically-oriented team member who played a leadership role in the project's sustenance, were important ingredients in the success of the Teaching Project.

## Governance in the Teaching Project

The Teaching Project participants controlled the project. They developed the teaming structure of the project, arranged the schedule, made decisions about budget and staffing, and decided how to respond when administrators, parents, and other faculty members challenged their actions or raised political questions. Though the governance of the project initially affected only the principal, the teachers, and the students involved in the Teaching Project, it rapidly became obvious that teachers' control of this small project would cause reverberations in the school at-large and in the school district as a whole.

### *Power and Control*

Power and control are issues which arise in any discussion of governance.

The project teachers used the words frequently. They spoke of control over their time or the "power to control" their work. The teachers were interested in governing their small project so that it would work for them.

It was clear from interviews that the teachers were more interested in control of their work than they were in the power to determine policy. Individual project members consistently referred to control when questioned about what they meant by power. To them, control meant the right to determine their own schedules, create their own curricula, and define their roles within the classroom. Asked what the word power meant to him, one teacher said:

> It means control over my work environment. Power means being able to make my own decisions, to have a say in budget, staffing, scheduling. It means to have control over my workplace.

Another explained:

> The project to me is power. I think the project has tremendous potential to be very powerful if we use it the right way. We're still learning how to use it and I think if we learn how to meet well together and how to work well as a decision-making group we can influence the things that bother me at the school, and those are the frenetic pace of school, the intrusive quality of assemblies, things like that.

The teachers' comments support assertions that teachers are less interested in running schools than they are in controlling the work they do, the business of teaching.[8] However, when the teachers began to govern themselves and make decisions in larger spheres, they were forced to confront individuals and structures beyond their classrooms. Their decisions began to impinge on the larger school organization and bureaucracy. With this expansion of control, teachers entered a

[8]Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin and Sylvia Mei-Ling Yee, "School as a Place to Have a Career" in *Building a Professional Culture of Schools*, ed. Ann Lieberman (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), p. 24.

new domain of decision-making.[9] They were not prepared for the problems and possibilities that this shift demanded and they struggled with all aspects of it. Teachers less determined or less knowledgeable may have failed where the project teachers succeeded.

*The Issue of Authority*

Before joining the Teaching Project, the teachers had not attempted to make changes beyond their individual classrooms. All had expressed their dissatisfaction with various aspects of the school structure and organization but they had neither approached the principal with their concerns nor attempted to alter accepted traditions in the school. During most of the project's first year, the team and the principal worked together smoothly. The principal arranged the master schedule to accommodate the teachers' need for three common planning periods. He expressed his support of the teachers in all meetings with parents and upper administration. He praised the teachers and allowed them to function independently in the school. On two occasions, though, the team and the principal disagreed. These two incidents forced the teachers to confront the limitations on their authority within the school.

Each instance involved the team's decisions to use staff time in ways contrary to the principal's beliefs about how time and staff should be used at the Devotion School. The teachers felt that they should decide how the aide's time would be used. They expected the aide to do small group instructional work and to perform

[9]*Susan Moore Johnson, "Teachers, Power, and School Change," p. 5.*

a substantial number of clerical duties including photocopying, collating, and stapling of packets of materials for the children. The principal, however, considered this an improper use of the "instructional aide." He informed the teachers that they were using the aide's time inappropriately and stated that henceforth the aide could perform clerical duties no more than thirty minutes day. No discussion of this matter was held between the teachers and the principal. The teachers did not want to confront the principal who believed he was right and held that his decision was final. Neither, at the end, understood the other's position.

A second incident occurred toward the end of the school year when the teachers decided which school assemblies they would or would not attend. An assembly organized on relatively short notice conflicted with interviews the teachers had already scheduled with prospective interns for the following year. The teachers sent their children to the assembly with their current interns, and conducted the interviews in their classrooms. The principal disagreed with their decision. He said it was important for the teachers to accompany their children to the assembly to demonstrate their support for children whom they had previously taught and for the music teacher who had organized the performance. By sending their classes to the assembly with their interns, the principal believed the teachers made a decision beyond their authority. The teachers were reprimanded for their behavior. Again, the teachers felt they had the right to make the decision but there was no discussion to clarify the two views. Once again, neither the principal nor the teachers fully understood the other's position.

In neither incident did the teachers and the principal meet to discuss the problems and resolve them together. At year's end, lines of authority remained unclear and the issue of teachers' authority versus the principal's authority had never been confronted. Clearly, however, the principal had the power to make decisions which affected the team and could make these decisions without the team's approval. Myrna Cooper, in an analysis of power, authority, and decision-making in current school reform, contends that the authority of teachers in the present wave of reform is delegated authority which "lacks scope and scale." According to Cooper, "to have authority delegated is not the same as to have authority. It is very clear that that which is given may be withdrawn."[10] It would seem that this issue of authority is of considerable importance and one which the Teaching Project participants have not really begun to address.

*Decisions and Influence Beyond the Classroom: Special Education*

Many Devotion School teachers complained about the effect of "pull-out" programs on special needs children. Some children spent four forty-minute periods with the remedial reading teacher each week. In addition, these same children might have classes with the Chapter I Math teacher four times a week. Other children spent between one to three hours a day in the Resource Room and two or three children in any one class might spend a forty-five minute period with the school social worker every week.

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[10]Myrna Cooper, "Whose Culture Is It, Anyway?" in *Building a Professional Culture of Schools*, ed. Ann Lieberman, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988), p. 50.

Individual teachers at the Devotion School had never attempted to organize a system which would meet the needs of special needs children within the classroom. They also saw no alternative to counseling of children during the school day. When Teaching Project participants decided that no special needs children would leave the classroom during the school day, they reached a new level of decision-making, generally considered to be beyond the realm of the classroom teacher. The decision brought the teachers up against the legal and bureaucratic structure of the school district.

When team members asked that the two children in the team whose Individual Education Plans required up to three hours a day in the Resource Room, not be "pulled out," Brookline's special education department denied their request. Rather than accept the decision of the Special Education Department, the teachers called the State Commissioner of Education (an early supporter of the mainstreaming aspect of the Project) to ask for his assistance. He informed them that if the children's Core Evaluations were rewritten to a .1 (three hours of remediation a week) and the children's parents gave their permission, the children could remain in the classroom and be serviced by the special needs teacher with consultation provided by the resource room teacher. The parents agreed, the Core Evaluations were rewritten, and the children remained in the classroom.

A similar situation arose when team members stated they would not send children to Title I Math remediation outside the classroom. This upset the Title I Math director who then informed the teachers that if identified children did not

receive services from her department, Brookline could lose important state funding. The teachers again called the Commissioner of Education. He reiterated his support for the project and guaranteed that none of Brookline's funding would be lost because of the decrease in the number of children receiving math instruction from the Chapter I Math teacher at the school.

In a third instance, project teachers informed the school social worker, accustomed to meeting with children during the school day, that the children in the project would be unavailable during the school day for counseling sessions. The social worker was not pleased. The principal, however, supported the team's decision. Arrangements were made to counsel children after school. In each of these instances, teachers in the Teaching Project challenged individuals outside the project. And in the two instances when thwarted by the school district's bureaucracy, Teaching Project teachers took their case over the heads of Brookline's special services and received the State Commissioner's support instead. As might have been expected, those in the Brookline hierarchy were not pleased with the teachers' actions.

In these cases, the teachers were exercising new power and exerting influence far beyond that ordinarily exerted by classroom teachers. They were certain that the delivery of services to children was not working, and that the project could provide better these students with better services. The teachers were, in fact, behaving much like the "Lead Teachers" described in the Carnegie Report, who as professionals are "presumed to know what they are doing, and are paid to exercise

their judgment ..." and who "should be provided with the discretion and autonomy that are the hallmarks of professional work."[11]

Had the Project been larger and affected more children and Brookline staff, it is clear that teachers and administrators would need to conduct more formal negotiations to alter those situations changed with the assistance of either school principal or the State Commissioner of Education. The complexities of such negotiations can only be imagined and the likelihood that the school district would have been willing to enter into such negotiations is debatable.

This experience raises serious questions for others interested in teacher-initiated restructuring who lack the resources and political access enjoyed by Teaching Project participants. The Carnegie Report seems to presage such experiences when it warns:

> Policymakers will be tempted to implement only those features ... that cost little in organizational trauma or dollars. That would inevitably defeat the purpose, because the result would be to leave in place the force, that make the current system work the way it does. It is the entire structure that needs an overhaul, not just a few components.[12]

*Teacher Control Over Budget*

For the first time in anyone's memory at the Devotion School, teachers had control over what was, for them, a large sum of money. The teachers had solicited and received grants totalling over $20,000 from a combination of sources at the state level and from Wheelock College. State law stipulated that the money be

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[11]Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, (New York: Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), p. 56-57.

[12]Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, p. 57.

deposited in the school district's bank account.

Troen monitored the use of the money throughout the year. She submitted the requisitions for salary and reimbursement and experienced some difficulty obtaining the money. As she stated:

> There was on-going difficulty accessing the funds. Teachers and interns had to be paid for Saturday meetings. We filled in the forms and then waited months to get paid. Then we called again and finally they paid us.

At the end of the project's first year, the district informed the teachers that all their grant money had been spent. Although Troen had kept only sketchy records of money dispersal, she was sure the team had not spent all its money. She, therefore, asked central office for a full accounting of the team's funds.

At first, the office claimed the information was unavailable since it was impossible to separate the project's budget from the larger district budget. Troen persisted, but the information remained unavailable. Finally, after Troen stated that she would have to inform the original funding sources of this problem, a printout was prepared. Indeed, a few thousand dollars still remained in the account. This money was carried over into the second year's budget.

In a conversation at the end of the school year, Troen made it clear that she did not think the school district's actions were directed particularly against the teachers. Since this was a new project with funding from a number of sources, she said, the central office staff did not quite know how to handle the money. She felt that administrators probably had to go through the same annoying procedures to insure they received the money that was due them. She wondered, however, whether most teachers would have pursued the problem as far. According to

Kathleen Devaney, teachers, lacking control over such matters as budget, "feel equal in their impotence."[13] The experience of the Teaching Project participants indicates that the issue of budget is central in any school reform effort. An understanding of budget and the budget process will be essential if teachers are to take leadership roles in restructuring schools.

## Conclusion

An understanding of how teachers respond to restructuring of their work will be critical in the design and implementation of any school reform project. An analysis of the Teaching Project at Devotion School demonstrates both the difficulties and the possibilities inherent in teacher-initiated school restructuring. The project participants had not anticipated that work in the Teaching Project would be easy. They soon discovered, however, that the work they had agreed to do involved more time, used more energy, and demanded a greater commitment than they had expected.

The aspect of the teachers' restructuring plan that enabled them to maintain their commitment and energy throughout the project's first year was the team nature of the project. The experience of working together in the restructured model was the most challenging, and worthwhile part of the project. This substantiates the work of those refomers who insist that working together "enhances ... the level of capacity for teachers, because it serves as a critical, essential source

[13]Kathleen Devaney, "The Lead Teacher: Ways to Begin," p. 7.

of stimulation and motivation."[14] In addition, though not an explicit goal of the Teaching Project, some sophisticated, high level staff development was undertaken and accomplished by the Teaching Project participants. Staff Development no longer occurred at afternoon workshops mandated by central office. Instead, it was an outgrowth of the work the teachers did together. Roland Barth's comment that "[s]taff development ... is most fruitful when it is an incidental outcome of other school functions thoughtfully undertaken"[15] would seem an appropriate description of what occurred in the Teaching Project.

Working together had its disadvantages, though. Teachers reported a myriad of problems related to the team nature of the project: they experienced new constraints on their creativity due to the inflexibility of the team's schedule and some resented it; they lost much of their autonomy and the discretion to make their own decisions about curriculum and the business of teaching; they sometimes missed working alone; the school day had become more fragmented; they had to make compromises to achieve group consensus. These findings demonstrate how complicated it will be to move from the parallel work of isolated classroom teachers to the interdependent work of collegial professionals. The current literature on collegiality[16] does not highlight this potential difficulty nearly as much as it should nor does it highlight strategies to overcome it. If the problems of working together outweigh the benefits, team teaching and teacher collegiality will be just two other

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[14]McLaughlin and Yee, "School as a Place to Have a Career," p. 34.

[15]Roland S. Barth, *Run School Run*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 147.

[16]Little, "Assessing the Prospects for Teacher Leadership."

teacher fads that have come and gone.

The benefits of working together in the Teaching Project did outweigh the drawbacks, though, and the experience of team teaching eliminated the isolation that all the teachers had reported was a serious issue for them. It gave the teachers a common frame of reference, a common language, and a common group of children. They began to talk about teaching and felt energized by team discussions. They explained how they were taking increased risks with curriculum and how they had come to feel accountable to other team members for the work they did.

Discussion of teacher isolation is not new. Seymour Sarason wrote a chapter entitled, "Teaching is a Lonely Profession"[17] in 1966. Since then, many writers have discussed the problem. The Teaching Project demonstrates just how lonely teachers are in their classrooms and how stimulating and rejuvenating working together can be. What is also clear from the early interviews is that project teachers were apprehensive about leaving isolated classrooms and giving up their autonomy and independence to join the project. In schools where teachers are not as good friends, even greater difficulty in coaxing teachers to work collegially can be anticipated. Working collegially is not part of the culture of schools.[18] Teachers' training does not foster collegiality. The value of teamwork is not emphasized

[17]Seymour B. Sarason, et. al, "Teaching is a Lonely Profession" in *Psychology in Community Settings*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), p. 74-97.

[18]Seymour B. Sarason, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971).

among children or among pre-service teachers.[19] Thus, it is no wonder that teamwork is such a foreign experience for teachers.

Teacher accountability increased within the project. The teachers were not accountable to some distant authority, but to each other. The power of this form of accountability has not been emphasized nearly enough in the current school reform literature. The experience of the project teachers suggests that being accountable to a trusted colleague can be an effective tool for ensuring accountability in the classroom. And, as Devaney states, "teachers can achieve a professional standard of accountability and excellence only within school organizations that foster teacher collegiality."[20]

The Teaching Project participants had become an independent unit within the school. Individually, teachers had no more and no less control over the curriculum than they had before they joined the Teaching Project. The group of teachers working as an organized team, however, was more capable of implementing curriculum and making changes from the traditional way things were done in the school than any one of the individual teachers. The teachers agreed that they implemented more new curriculum during the team's first year than they had implemented individually in any one teaching year. Teachers, responsible to one another for curriculum implementation and for the perpetuation of the project, took themselves and what they were doing seriously.

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[19]Sarason, *The Culture of School and the Problem of Change*, p. 95-117.

[20]Devaney, "Lead Teacher", p. 13.

The teachers had empowered themselves. Although they had nearly total control over what occurred in their own classrooms and their own project, their authority in the school did not increase. So, when they began to question the way things were done in the larger school environment, as they did in their disagreement with the principal over the use of aide time, the teachers began to recognize limits on their authority. Lines of authority were hazy in the school and teachers did not generally challenge the principal's authority. When the teachers, acting as a team, began to challenge the traditional way things were done in the school, they came up against the authority of the principal. This sort of experience will inevitably arise in teacher-initiated change projects. What happened in the Teaching Project is a mild form of what, in other schools, could be an experience that devastates a fledgling project.

There is a necessary interplay between a given environment and any plan that seeks to produce a change in that environment. Though the environment in which the Teaching Project functioned was not hostile to change, change did not come easily. The principal espoused the right of teachers to act independently and provided them latitude, but he exercised his authority when teachers' overstepped unstated but long-accepted boundaries. The teachers did not know how to respond.

Successful school change initiated by teachers has potential benefits for all concerned. My data indicate, however, that the success of such initiatives will rest on the emergence of teachers with an understanding of school structure and the

politics of schools. Not all teachers are interested in such matters, but at least some must take politically-oriented roles if teachers are to empower themselves.

Finally, if, in a small liberal school system that claims to support teacher empowerment, teachers encounter personal and political difficulties in making change, we can anticipate even greater difficulty in larger, more impersonal systems with less flexible infrastructures. If teachers are not prepared for this, there is even less likelihood that their projects will develop or come to fruition.

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