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ABSTRACT

Findings from a study that explored the role changes and stresses experienced by superintendents in school districts undergoing school and union restructuring are reported in this paper. Methodology involved interviews and field investigation in five cities--Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, Miami, and Rochester. New superintendent roles included recognizing the need for change, developing an organizational view, engaging in new labor relations roles, and creating new allies to mobilize political and financial support. Findings indicate that, due to changing school board membership and ideology, the superintendent/union alliance is inherently unstable and is therefore insufficient in itself to sustain lasting restructuring. (31 references) (LMI)

"Basic to all the improvements we see on the horizon is a more realistic definition of the job of the superintendent. School staffs, boards of education, and even superintendents themselves have tended to define the superintendent as a superman....Few people meet the mark.

"We have taken the position in this chapter that superintendents will for the most part maintain and not change their organizations. Thus, every superintendent need not be a great innovator."

The Organization and Control of American Schools, 1965.[1]

"The old saw 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it" needs revision. I propose: 'If it ain't broke, you just haven't looked hard enough.' Fix it anyway."

Thriving on Chaos, 1987 [2]

SUPERINTENDENT ROLE CHANGES AND LABOR RELATIONS REFORM

by

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Taking On Reform Roles

Restructuring schools virtually requires restructuring labor relations. For superintendents, the bad news is that their jobs become even messier. Control and authority become more ambiguous as teacher unions take on explicit educational reform roles. As a consequence, superintendents find their role expectations changing, partly in response to the increased intensity of interactions with union leaders. The good news is that through labor relations reform superintendents gain allies in the task which union leaders know best:organizing. Organizing--gaining commitment and energy from large numbers of people--is the building block of organizational reform, and the ability to organize is the primal function of union leaders.

In this paper, we explore the role changes and stresses experienced by superintendents in districts where both schools and unions are changing. The paper is based on interviews and field investigation in the five cities -- Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville (Jefferson County), Miami (Dade County) and Rochester.

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Ongoing field studies in these cities and approximately 20 other sites form the empirical basis for Claremont Project VISION, a study of emerging patterns of labor relations in U.S. public schools. The project is investigating changes in school governance, operations and in the work lives of teachers and administrators. We believe that fundamentially new patterns of unionism are emerging, patterns of representation distingushed by union involvement in educational policy formation and the assumption of joint responsibility for educational outcomes.

The messiness of reform is easy to recognize. The five cities we have visited can each be characterized as experiencing a whirlwind of change. Reform is not so much a single program as it is a general unfreezing of prior assumptions. For the superintendent, the result is unsureness about who has authority or responsibility. In the sense of internal bureaucratic controls, this change is uncharacteristic of urban school districts. As Louisville superintendent Donald Ingwerson put it, "historically, big city school districts aren't messy at all. I just say what we will do, and the word goes out. Now that doesn't mean anyone *does* it, but they all say that they are going to. There's a lot of respect in a big city school district, people understand society [hierarchy] and the organization."[3]

If messiness of reform is easy to recognize, so too are the advantages of allies. Routine managing within the confines of a large public bureaucracy is an exercise in structural controls. It involves establishing a barrier between improper outside influences and an organization's internal operations. Organizing reform requires political control. It requires going outside the hierarchy to import energy so that superintendents can successfully engage and reform their own organization without internal political revolt. To fail in developing allies is to make a pyrrhic victory of a reform effort.

Things are Broken

The first and biggest role change for superintendents follows a realization that business as usual won't suffice. Sometimes, for the superintendent, that realization is part of the mandate which came with taking office. Rochester superintendent Peter McWalters' previous position involved analyzing achievement results. He reported, "I went to the board and said that 'it's broken, we can't do it the way we are doing it.'"[4] The

sense of a broken system also comes from inside oneself, sometimes through reflection on the general state of urban schools and the impatience of the polity to set them right. Pittsburgh superintendent Richard Wallace reflected, "Do we have another decade? In the cities we may not. Particularly in some high risk cities...."[5] Each superintendent we interviewed recalled a conscious decision to effect fundamental change in the district. In role theory terminology, the result was a conscious decision to intensify the superintendent's "leader" role and to de-emphasize other aspects. Wallace calls these the four B's of administration--buses, budgets, buildings, and bonds.[6]

Coupled with the realization that change must take place is a second realization that superintendent's can start the process but that it will take on a life of its own. As McWalters put it, "I begin to feel like I know what Gorbachev feels like when you turn loose energy that you can't control but that was what you intended to do. I don't think that there is an understanding that in this institution one of the principles that we are going after is that it will not be a directed change activity."[7]

The almost universal response to the problem of wanting change but not wanting chaos has been to simultaneously centralize and decentralize reform. In Louisville and in Pittsburgh, training in the highly decentralized system of site management is handled through the district's professional development academy. Teachers and principals are socialized in the district's mode of reform and its essential vision.

The Vision Thing

The decent and expressive words "transformation" and "vision" have become incantations and lost much of their original force. However, the importance of an organizational view that extends into the future with sufficient force to bind oneself and others to it remains a vital and important element in each of the districts we have visited.

An operative vision entails both a highly conceptual, abstract belief system and sufficient organizational structure or program to create movement toward the ideal. Ingwerson calls this, "developing a transparent umbrella that gave people a sense of vision, that there is a direction, beginning to get a feeling of commitment, empowerment, destiny."[8]

The transparent umbrella is usually made of words which serve to describe what the organization stands for. As Daniel Bell reminds us, reforming organizations has always had this abstract quality. Speaking of Alfred Sloan's account of the reformation of General Motors, Bell notes,

> The most striking aspect of Mr. Sloan's book is its language. Sloan's key terms are *concept, methodology and rationality....* The language is not an accident or affectation. It is surprising only to those who associate such language with the academy and not with the analytical necessities of organizations."[9]

The question of creation, ownership, and care for the vision is central to the role expectations of the superintendent and to the superintendent's capacity to conduct labor relations that depart from conventional industrial patterns. To depart from labor relations as usual, the superintendent must clearly and consistently signal something other than business as usual is taking place at the school district headquarters. Otherwise, attempts to change the labor relationship will be interpreted as a headlong assault on the contract.

The superintendent may operate more as the midwife than the parent of the vision, and a role in the parentage is often publicly accorded to the union. This is clearly the case in Miami and in Rochester where McWalters and Rochester Federation of Teachers president Adam Urbanski speak together with such frequency that they can finish each other's sentences. Accounts of the Cincinnati change generally credit the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers as the driving force in making reform issues public.[10]

The ideas involved do not have to be unique, but they do need to find local expression. The Schenley Teacher Center in Pittsburgh began with a local recreation of Madeline Hunter's method, and the fine hand of Peter Drucker's management teaching underlies the Gheens Academy in Louisville. However, in each city the idea of reform takes on a regional dialect. Teachers in Pittsburgh talk about PRISM, the acronym for Pittsburgh Instructional Management System, rather than the Hunter method. In each city, teachers and administrators speak of "gaining a common language" that allows them to go ahead.

Most importantly, the superintendent may not hoard the vision. Some superintendents, such as Wallace, write extensively. Others speak

frequently about the direction of their district, but the central ideas cannot be interpreted as their personal, intellectual property. The vision must be given away freely, including the ability to reinterpret its meaning. The irony of this situation is that the more of the vision that is created by others and the more that others become invested in the idea the more visionary capacities are ascribed to the superintendent. In a school visit in Louisville, three teachers proudly described the details of their program for 9th grade students:how they saw the need for it, how it was planned before and after school and on weekends, where the teachers found resources, and the problems they overcame. At the end of the conversation they referred to the superintendent as a great visionary leader.

Custody of the vision is transferred among incumbents. The late Paul Bell was Dade County's third reform-era superintendent, following Leonard Britton and Joseph Fernandez. Other administrators we met took pains to illustrate that the vision of professionalism had become institutional property, owned by everyone, and that they looked to Bell as superintendent to care for it. In an interview, Bell took pains to interpret his interest in achievement within the context of established vision:"I want to sharpen the focus...I think that we need to make clear that the purpose of the professionalization movement, of shared decision making...is improving the quality of educatio..."[11]

Throughout the organization, and for labor relations in particular, the vision functions as a superordinate goal, a means of saying that other activities need to be arrayed in support of that ideal. To McWalters, this means sweeping the decks in favor of teaching:

> The only critical moment in the whole institution is the one between the teacher and the kids. And that quality is directly related to the quality of the teachers. The whole system is really a series of investments to get the very best creative, prepared, empowered, authorized energy standing there for that moment. And get everything else the hell out of the way.[12]

Mandates for action get everything else out of the way or at least move the superfluous aside. Miami, Pittsburgh, and Louisville created mandates for themselves binding the district and the board to specified priorities and courses of actions. By doing so, the superintendents also mobilized external support for change, a characteristic also recognized by

the the Rand report, Educational Progress, which recognizes change taking placy by:

- The superintendent creating an external mandate for reform through the use of political support building, blue ribbon committees and the like.
- The superintendent increasing flows of information, managing the principals better by simplifying reporting relationships and changing the symbols of expectation around high quality instruction.
- The business community's recognition of self interest being linked to the quality of labor and the quality of life in their cities, and in encouraging accountability on the part of reform process. [13]

Five New Labor Relations Roles

Role theorists see organizations as a system of acts or events rather than as structures.[14] Thus, one understands restructuring more by understanding how individuals reorder their working lives than by looking at what new job titles or committees are created. Although we have noted that change is characterized by the whirlwind of new programs, and joint-labor management committees are almost always established, the positions of superintendent and union president remain structurally unchanged. Each has a position within their organization and each position is surrounded by the same laws, rules and barnacles of public policy as before. Yet the behavior of superintendents toward unions, and particularly union presidents, is different.

From the messy mix of labor relations and school district reform, we can discern five substantive changes in superintendent labor relations work roles.

- First, superintendents take on the role of publicly pronouncing and explaining the union's legitimacy in educational policy, and in a series of ongoing interactions with union leaders the expectations of the two organizations are negotiated.

- Second, interactions between the union leader and the superintendent increase in both scope and intensity.
- Third, the superintendent either leads or responds to an increased scope of bargaining between the union and the school district and the need to divide negotiations between contractual and non-contractual arenas.
- Fourth, superintendents negotiate new rules for conflict resolution.
- Fifth, they find complementary roles for principals and central office personnel.

Proclaiming the New Unionism

In each of these districts, the union has become a legitimate participant in initiating, carrying out and overseeing educational reform. The districts have entered what Kerchner and Mitchell call "The Era of Negotiated Policy," the third generation of teacher unionism.[15] In most cases the change in unionism is recognized explicitly. As Peter McWalters indicates:

> Let me first be real blatant about it. It is about a new unionism, absolutely, no doubt about it. And the word professionalism in the relationship between Urbanski and myself is professionalism through unionism.[16]

This short passage introduces two key concepts to the changed relationships. First, superintendents and union presidents each see reform taking place through changing work roles of teachers. Second, there are expectations about what values and behaviors will come about, idealized expectations that do not always match reality. One of these expectations has to do with the role of teachers in policing their own occupation. Richard Wallace:

> The bedrock of a professional union is in the willingness to police their own troops...and take the responsibility for it. They have to be willing to be held accountable publicly. [Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers president Albert] Fondy understands this. I'm not sure about his troops. [17]

In Pittsburgh, teachers' roles in evaluation and particularly in corrective and disciplinary action has been the subject of protracted and

intense negotiations. One of the results of the 1985 labor agreement was the Instructional Teacher Leader (ITL), Pittsburgh's adaptation of the lead teacher concept. At one level, naming ITLs was regarded as simply reflagging existing department heads, for at the secondary level most of those named to the new positions were existing leaders. However, in concept, and increasingly in practice, the ITL position involved substantial expansion of conventional teacher work roles. The most controversial change was teachers becoming part of the official teacher evaluation process. The ITL's role underwent definition and negotiation between Fondy and Wallace for five years before it was settled that they could be called upon to provide testimony in dismissal hearings. Both Wallace and Fondy publicly support the expanded role. In 1988, Fondy wrote a union philosophy which included the statement, "When a teachers union...achieves strength and influence, it also acquires clear and inescapable responsibilities, including the fundamental responsibility to attain and maintain the most effective teaching performance and learning results that can be achieved...."[18]

Changing the Scope and Intensity of Labor Interactions

While it is not unusual for superintendents and union leaders to meet frequently, meetings between superintendents and union presidents in these districts have taken on a strategic character. Union presidents and other leaders have become part of the district's strategic planning processes. In the Cincinnati case, teacher union president Tom Mooney was a member of the Goals and Long Range Planning Group, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, and CASE, which supports school tax efforts. Mooney and superintendent Lee Etta Powell also meet twice monthly. In Pittsburgh, the district-wide steering committee does not meet unless both Wallace and Fondy can be present.

These organizational relationships are independent of interpersonal bonds. In some cases, close interpersonal relationships develop around educational philosophies, as is the case with McWalters and Urbanski or around friendships, but the new labor relations does not rest on these relationships. As Louisville's Ingwerson says, "it's about the schools, not a social relationship. Both June [Lee, president of the Jefferson County Teachers Association] and Steve [Neal, the executive director] are very loyal

to the school district. They wouldn't agree with me [about an issue] because I'm me, but they will agree if I make sense to them."[19]

In most instances these new organizational roles are not fully formed. In Rochester, the recent contract rejections--first by the teachers and then by the school board--have tested the McWalters/Urbanski relationship. In Pittsburgh both Wallace and Fondy speak of a period of testing one anothers resoluteness. Says Wallace, "I think that event [the ITL dispute] communicated to Fondy that I am persistent, which I am."[20]..In Cincinnati, superintendent Powell provides an example of differing role expectations between herself and union president Mooney:

> I don't think our goals are any different...in terms of providing a climate where teachers have the opportunity to exercise as professionals and participate in the affairs of the school as a team....His method of doing this sometimes are not always the most constructive ways.
>
> Its a matter of saying we are going to work things out together...as opposed to taking action that increases tension between administrators and supervisors.
>
> I'll give one example....He sent a memorandum around to all the teachers and the building representatives saying if there is some disciplinary incident at your school and you are not pleased with the way it was handled, or if you think a kid should have been suspended and wasn't, and the principal didn't do the right thing, then report this to him [the union].
>
> Well, the principals see that. [It] just drives the wedge that we're trying to bridge. My response would be that if someone is not handling the situation appropriately, then neither one of us want that to happen. So subsequently actions can be taken to make sure things are handled more appropriately without creating an atmosphere that the teachers become big brothers watching the principals. [21]

Mooney sees his role differently. Uniform student discipline policies and procedures have been a teacher issue for years, long before Powell came to the superintendency in 1986. Teachers complained that anagreement designed to remove disruptive students from classrooms had not been put into place. Calling attention to these areas, Mooney said in an

interview, was a way of providing information that allowed the district to control itself.

Changing the Scope and Arenas of Bargaining

One of the surprising aspects of the labor relations changes is that the scope of bargaining expands with so little controversy. The standard management ideology is that collective bargaining is highly intrusive on management prerogatives and that good bargaining policy is to reduce and simplify the number of items discussed and particularly the number of encumbering work rules that are written into the labor contract. This concern is turned on its head in reform districts in which the management, as well as the union, use the rule structure of collective bargaining to negotiate the rules for reform. Concern for flexibility remains, however, and each district has created its own arena for negotiations away from the setting in which the labor contract is negotiated.

Superintendents serve important roles in legitimating the expanded scope of interactions and in encouraging the success of new negotiating arenas. Taking on this role is born of a realization that interactions with teacher representatives can be highly fruitful. For example, Powell lauded the district's participation in the Harvard negotiations model, "because up until that time there had not been a forum for the administration and the teachers to really talk with each other."[22] The Harvard model, which involved both a news blackout on the negotiations process and sustained, intensive interactions between teachers and administrators is credited with setting the tone for the successful 1988 negotiations.

Those negotiations produced Cincinnati's first large-scale agreements about educational reform including the use of teachers in peer review roles, a standing committee to allocate resources to schools whose enrollments have changed, and the outlines of a career ladder plan. Contract negotiations produced a large number of items that were to be discussed later, items that were labeled as "trust agreements."[23] The contract thus spurred a large number of subsidiary negotiations to develop working programs from agreements in principle.

Deputy superintendent Lynn Goodwin discusses the importance of two arenas for discussion:

Many times in collective bargaining there is the initial threshold: "I'm not going to talk to you about it because it's not a proper topic." Our solution to that in 1988 was to say, "We'll talk about all of the stuff and try to divide it into those things that go into contracts and those things that don't.[24]

Cincinnati is not alone in having created a second arena for negotiations. Miami and Pittsburgh have district-wide steering committees, both of which have adopted teacher professionalism as their stated goal; in Pittsburgh it is the Professionalism in Education Partnership.

These third generation labor agreements also decentralize school governance by allowing teachers and administrators at school sites to deviate from the district policies in plans. For example, in Louisville, the contract initiates site-based participative management. Through the Gheens Academy, the Jefferson County Public Schools' professional development institution, the union and district staff members each train school personnel in the practice of site management. The operating agreements are developed at the sites, not the central office. These agreements may require waivers of contract, board policy or even seek relief from state law.

Superintendents in these settings serve as brokers and traffic cops matching problems to solutions and directing attention. Having reversed the conventional wisdom on the scope of bargaining question to allow interactions with the union as a way of solving problems, superintendents now need to direct problems to places they can be solved or worked on. Some issues are directed toward the contract, others toward newly created forums outside the contract.

Two mechanisms work to sort things out, usually in combination. The first is the district committee and various subcommittees, where large numbers of problems can be worked on simultaneously. The second is decentralization, pushing the problems down to the sites for resolution. Each mechanism can work, and evidence from our site visits shows that they can. However, it is also clear that neither mechanism is preordained to work. Assigning problems to a committee or school doesn't necessarily get them solved. Each superintendent has found it necessary to personally

monitor aspects of the problem allocation, and each has invested in training and development.

Negotiating New Expectations for Conflict Resolution

When the public became aware that "unions were not acting like unions" it was labor peace and cooperation they applauded first. The *Pittsburgh Press* heralded the 1985 contract as a document that would bring labor peace in an era of acrimony, and the *Cincinnati Inquirer* called the agreement there a great departure from the past. But the words harmony and cooperation do not capture the core of what is happening. The new labor relations is not about peace at any price. It more nearly reflects an agreement to fight about different things and to fight differently. Each of these districts lives with its history of strife, antagonism and mistrust, and these characteristics quickly resurface.

The major conflict abatement aspect of third generation labor relations is the common investment in education and the schools as an institution. Both parties come to realize that defense of prerogatives, whether managerial or union, put the district at risk. More pointedly, the parties *like* the new relationship more than they liked the old one. They are invested in it, and the instinct to solve problems is greater than the instinct to go to war. There is a role expectation that parties will attempt to solve problems. Consider the following conversation between Frank Petruzielo, associate superintendent, Bureau of Professionalism, and superintendent Paul Bell about fiscal uncertainty:

> Petruzielo: I think you can expect that your unions to be reasonable as well in terms of searching for solutions and be flexible about how you get this fixed. This does not have to be viewed as a board problem or a management problem....
>
> Bell: I think it [the budget problem] can be viewed as a necessary evil that we all face together rather than them pointing to us and saying, 'OK, now tell us how you're going to do it so we can pick it apart.' [25]

There was a mental calculus between the administrators about what kinds of changes would lead to destruction of the new relationships. Across the board salary reductions would "pick it apart" the two administrators said, but program reduction, even if it resulted in layoff would be tolerated, "if

arrived at through a rational process.... Maintaining the climate of trust and honesty is absolutely essential."

It is clear that the instinct for problem solving does not protect superintendents from difficult times. Fiscal disasters and contentious school boards are currently pressing at the web of these new relationships and bringing new conflict handling roles to the forefront. Cincinnati and Toledo (the district that virtually invented teacher peer review) face great fiscal stress in the wake of failed tax issues on the November 1990 ballot. In both cities, the reforms bargained earlier face budgetary extinction. Management, and superintendents in particular, face an extraordinarily difficult role of needing to symbolically support continuing reform and simultaneously cut the budget. The Toledo Federation of Teachers and school district management are in sharp disagreement about how to balance the budget. Management's list of reductions includes the heralded peer intervention program. The union's includes reducing middle management positions and car allowances for top administrators.[26] A factfinder's recommendation is due in late March. Pittsburgh also faces a tight budget, and it is expected that some existing programs will fall victim. An early and easy contract settlement, such as that experienced in 1985 and 1988, is not expected.

We do not yet know the roles that superintendents will play in these conflicts, whether they will personally involve themselves in settlements, which has been the norm in the so-called breakthrough contracts or whether they will disassociate themselves personally leaving the close-in negotiating to what are called "hired guns."

However, it is not axiomatic that conflict will destroy the relationship. In Rochester, two successive attempts to ratify a new contract containing promised teacher accountability language have failed. The teachers failed to ratify the first, and the school board turned down the second. In the midst of this still unsettled disagreement, union president Urbanski said, "What others don't understand is that the relationship between McWalters and myself has become even stronger during all of this. We've learned a great deal."[27]

Finding Complementary Roles for Other Administrators

Probably the most difficult aspect of the superintendent's role prescription is finding new roles for principals. As Powell put it, "I think more administrators, school based in particular, seem to question, 'What is my role now?' And there is need for that kind of clarity."[28]

Administrator unions or organizations have explicitly opposed changes in teacher work role definition. In Rochester the administrator's organization unsuccessfully challenged the teacher union contract in court, and in Cincinnati, the administrator's organization is vocal in its opposition to the new working arrangements. As McWalters put it:

> I am a superintendent with a lot of middle managers who do not necessarily want to go where we are going....I have principals who made it on the structural authority question. And now I'm saying, "sorry, your authority is in your competence, not in your position.. I am holding you accountable for your capacity to build consensus, to engage colleagues as peers." There are no magic answers to these questions. If there isn't ananswer to the curriculum, then I don't want principals to act as if they have a corner on the market.[29]

In Miami-Dade, school-based management pilot project sites were removed from the hierarchial reporting chain through area superintendents. Current plans to return those schools to their normal reporting arrangement has been greeted with dismay by at least some of the pilot project principals, who became accustomed to the flexibility and autonomy accorded them by the pilot project. They feel as if area superintendents don't understand site-based management and will attempt to reassert their control over the principals.

It is clear that the new labor relations does present a problem for principals. Individual principals, rather than principal organizations, express more ambiguity than tension about their new relationships with teachers. They are not sure how to act, and they appear most concerned that new decisional mechanisms will cause their school to fly out of control and that they, rather than the new system, will be held responsible. Administrators, who clearly saw a place for themselves when reform equated to the Effective Schools Movement, find it much harder to identify with reforms couched in the language of the Carnegie Report on Teaching.

It would be crashingly naïve to suggest that the tension has in any way been resolved, but the superintendent personally receives the expectation to make the principal's job a tractable one. This is done by sending clear messages to the principals about the superintendent's expectations of them, repeating those messages, and showing the consequences of not heeding them.

In Pittsburgh, principals undergo extensive training in the use of Instructional Cabinets. Wallace, who writes more than most superintendents, has laid out clear expectations of how cabinets are to operate.

In Louisville, entry into Participative Management, or any other reform program, is voluntary and non-judgmental. However, failure on the part of administrators to understand the direction in which the school district is moving places their tenure at risk. While Louisville is a "many-chances" school district, and the word "failure" has almost literally been banned from conversation, principals say that Ingwerson can be quite direct about performance in one-on-one conversations. Several central office administrators and principals have been reassigned, and ripples went through the organization last spring when senior principals, referred to as "the Rocks of Gibraltar," were moved from their schools.

In Miami, there is concern that too many schools may have come forward for the school based management program in order to show loyalty or curry favor with the superintendent. Bell spoke of concentrating the reform with those who were sincerely motivated and getting those with "personal agendas" to drop out.[30]

Another way that superintendents communicate their seriousness about reform, and the need for teachers to sacrifice and be flexible, is in the extent to which roles of central offices are changed. The phrase the "central office as a service institution" is uttered, and is somewhat evident in activities, but only somewhat. For example, under the rubric of "flattening the hierarchy" Louisville has created a direct reporting relationship between 150 principals and the superintendent. In the bargain, principals gain increased access to central office service delivery units and the clear expectation that responses will be timely. Still, we were hard-pressed to find evidence that the central office bureaucracies had shrunk.

Allies in Mobilizing Political and Financial Support

Maintaining allies is an extraordinarily difficult job, both organizationally and personally. Alliances are sometimes highly temporal relationships, good for the course of the battle. Renewing and maintaining alliances requires as much care and dedication as that usually accorded to marriages. And some of the same rules apply:

- Short memories are best.
- The future looks prettier than the past.
- Trust is hard won and easily lost.

In the beginning of an alliance, superintendents need short memories. In each case, the labor-management alliance was formed of former adversaries, however, often not personal adversaries. This is one of the reasons that new superintendents frequently form labor-management alliances more readily than veterans to the district, and it is one reason that the removal of an incumbent superintendent is frequently associated with movement between one generation of labor relations and another. Forgetting the past is a prerequisite to working in the future. Investing in a better future stabilizes alliances. Part of the power of vision is its ability to focus energy on future possibilities and away from past problems. Trust making has two elements. The first involves veracity and consistency. Will the other party tell the truth and how consistently? The second involves capacity: Is the other party capable of following through on pledges of support? This is particularly important when contracts or agreements are up for ratification. A failed pledge to bring the school board to ratification can hurt an alliance as much as a refusal.

As hard to maintain as they are, alliances are necessary. As we discussed at the opening of this paper, to attempt to reform a school district is to step outside the superintendent's usual bounds of support. Most certainly the superintendent will have to incur the opposition of much of the site management and important elements in the central office, many of whom were present before the superintendent came to the district and many of whom eagerly await the superintendent's departure. Reformation means taking on the permanent bureaucracy, and for this strong allies are needed.

At this juncture, the union organizing capacity, which was traditionally viewed as a liability, becomes an asset to the superintendent and the district. Unions have two capacities which school districts lack. The first is the ability to gain willing commitment from teachers. Bureaucracies can extract compliance, and talented site administrators can garner committed followers among the teachers, but the organizational distance between superintendents and teachers is too great for superintendents to loom as figures of personal and charismatic leadership for most teachers. Unions leaders accord legitimacy to the reforms and to breaking down old teacher behaviors. As one teacher in Louisville told us, "Look, June Lee (the Jefferson County Teachers Association president) is a hero in this district. If she says its okay to set aside parts of the contract in order to reform this school, then it's okay with me." The second ability of unions is external and political. School superintendents in many of the districts we visited have an independent political constituently, frequently connected to the business community, and enrolling business leader support of school reform is an important aspect of reformation. Unions have civic connections, too, but they bring direct electoral and lobbying ability that superintendents often lack. Unions can be explicitly political supporting school board candidates for election, and lobbying in the state capital. Pat Tornello, the Dade County Teachers Association executive director, spends most of the legislative session in Tallahassee, and Pittsburgh's Albert Fondy is also president of the state teachers union.

Superintendents bring matching political gifts. The superintendent's connection into the corporate and foundation communities expand the fiscal resource base for reforms. Each of the districts has established partnership arrangements with business that bring in sizeable amounts of discretionary money that serves as the seedbed for reform. Part of reform involves legitimating the entrepreneurial spirit within principals and groups of teachers. At school No. 6 in Rochester, teachers raised $150,000 for a model environmental and humanities education project in an effort that is a prototype of where the district would like other schools to go. In Louisville this totals nearly $10-million annually. Schools also become the object of corporate attention and support. Xerox and Kodak are conspicuous in their presence in Rochester school reform as is Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati.

Conclusion: A Sufficient Union?

Taking on new roles in labor-management relations is sometimes easy and sometimes difficult depending largely on interpersonal and political relationships. But the task is not one about which the superintendent has much choice. Without taking them on, superintendents risk a continued skirmish war over reform. Either one engages the union up front or you meet them down the road. As McWalters put it, "I need the union with me as I go down that road or I'm going to be bumping into them every time I want to change something." [31]

However, it is still questionable whether the union alliance is sufficient to allow the district to engage in long-term renewal, and the evidence so far suggests that it is not. The mandate for change requires something close to a grand coalition rather than a series of trade-offs and side payments among interest groups. The grand coalition is inherently unstable, and it requires periodic renewal. The most unstable element in the coalition is the school board, its membership and its ideology. In four of the five districts we have studied, school board membership has changed substantially since efforts at reform began, and in two of the districts no member of the original board still serves. School board politics have become contentious in at three cities. Even given their lobbying and electoral strength, the unions appear unable to exert sufficient influence to calm the waters. For superintendents this means that an alliance with the union, alone, is not sufficient and that public overidentification with the union or its positions may be harmful.

Notes

[1] Roald F. Campbell, Luverne L. Cunningham, Roderick F. McPhee, The Organization and Control of American Schools (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, 1965) p. 225.

[2] Tom Peters, Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Management Revolution, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1987) p. 3.

[3] Ingwerson interview.

[4] McWalters interview, p. 2

[5] Wallace interview.

[6] Richard C. Wallace, Jr. "The Superintendent of Education: Data Based Instructional Leadership," University of Pittsburgh, Learning Research and Development Center, 1985, p. 4.

[7] McWalters interview, p. 2.

[8] Ingwerson interview.

[9] Daniel Bell, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A venture in social forecasting. (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 276-277.

[10] Susan Moore Johnson, "Bargaining for Better Schools: Reshaping Education in the Cincinnati Public Schools," pp. 124-145 in Allies in Educational Reform (San Francisco:Jossey-Bass, 1989). p. 129.

[11] Bell interview.

[12] McWalters, p. 1.

[13] Hill, Paul T. Arthur E. Wise and Leslie Shapiro, Educational Progress: Cities Mobilize to Improve Their Schools. Santa Monica: Rand Center for the Study of the Teaching Profession, January 1989.

[14] Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations, 2ed (New York: Wiley) 1987, p. 187.

[15] Charles T. Kerchner and Douglas E. Mitchell, The Changing Idea of A Teachers' Union, New York: Falmer Press, Stanford Series in Education and Public Policy, 1988.

[16] McWalters interview, p. 1.

[17] Wallace interview.

[18] Albert Fondy, A Statement of Union Philosophy and Objectives (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers, 1988)

[19] Ingwerson interview.

[20] Wallace interview.

[21] Powell interview, p. 11.

[22] Powell interview, p. 14.

[23] The Educational Policy Trust Agreement as a parallel document to the contract has been the subject of a four year experiment in ten California school districts.

[24] Goodwin interview.

[25] Bell interview, p. 7.

[26] Ann Bradley, "Budget Standoff is Seen as Peril to Toledo Reforms," Education Week, March 6, 1991.

[27] Urbanski telephone interview.

[28] Powell interview, p. 2.

[29] McWalters interview, p. 4.

[30] Bell interview, p. 8.

[31] McWalters interview, p. 2.