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ABSTRACT
                This book is part of a series of case studies that
demonstrate better ways to educate Ohio's students. The case study is part of
the Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project, designed to support
significant school-reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high
schools. This report describes the implementation of an innovative program at
a high school in Cincinnati, Ohio. The text provides an overview of the
school and the West End Community of Cincinnati. It describes school-reform
efforts in Cincinnati and the high school. The book details the challenges
that the students and supporting adults faced, describing of the
administrators, teachers, and support services. It looks at the overage and
the dropout problems in the school and the various strategies that were used
to combat these difficulties. It examines the role of community partnerships
in school reform and the Taft Career Academic Program, a restructuring of the
school in which a career-focused program with a solid academic framework was
introduced in the school. The report also looks at teaming and its impact
throughout the school. The last two chapters discuss the classroom
environment and the importance of inquiry, collaboration, and transformation
in school renewal. The appendix describes the project methodology. (Contains
30 references.) (RJM)

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TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES
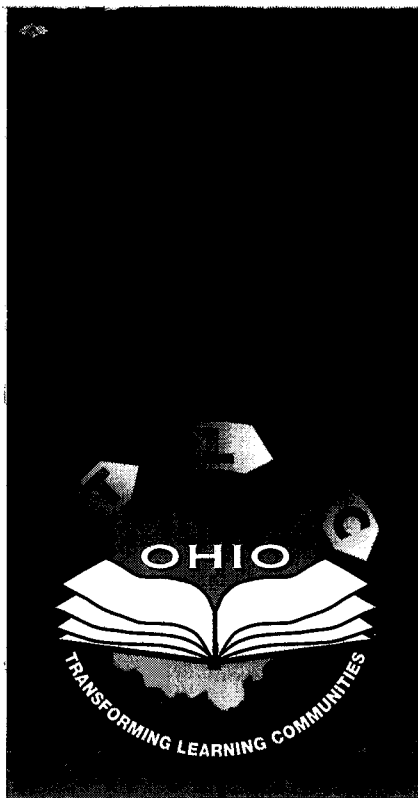
Collaboration Within and Without

The Case Study of Taft High School

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TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

COLLABORATIONS WITHIN AND WITHOUT:

THE CASE STUDY OF TAFT HIGH SCHOOL

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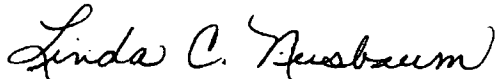
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Dear Readers:

The 12 Transforming Learning Communities case studies enlighten readers about the search for better ways to educate Ohio's young people. The stories, told by educators themselves, paint a realistic picture of schools in Ohio.

The unique and inspirational perspectives of the school people highlight the triumphs of team spirit, the drive to turn obstacles into opportunities, and the effort to consider complex questions and find answers that lead to higher student achievement. These researchers tell stories of success and frustration in the endeavor to make life better for future generations.

At the core of educational change is a long-term commitment to teaching and learning that has the potential for creating positive change throughout society. The case studies emphasize intense, high-quality professional development; increased service to others; a holistic approach to education; the promotion of a sense of community; and a deepened understanding of the daily work in the classrooms, corridors, and boardrooms of public schools.

The educators at the heart of change encourage us to examine and refresh our views about schools. Sincere thanks is extended to the educators, researchers, students, and concerned citizens for their willingness to examine the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of change.

Sincerely,

Linda C. Nusbaum

Linda C. Nusbaum
Research Project Manager

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Transforming Learning Communities Project

INTRODUCTION

The Transforming Learning Communities (TLC) Project was an initiative funded by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to support significant school reform efforts among Ohio's elementary, middle, and high schools. Education researchers associated with the International Centre for Educational Change at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto were contracted to undertake in-depth case studies of school improvement in a select number of schools supported by Ohio's Venture Capital grants. The aim was to understand the school improvement efforts in these schools, and to engage other Ohio educators in the lessons learned from these schools' experiences.

The project title communicates the orientation to the study. "Learning communities" is a metaphor for schools as learning places for everyone (especially students and teachers) who has a stake in the success of schools as educational environments. "Transforming" signifies that the schools are in a process of change, and that the changes they are striving to achieve involve fundamental reforms in teaching and learning, assessment, organization, professional development, and/or governance. Transforming also captures the intent of the project to support — not just to document — the process of change in participating schools.

The TLC Project began in the Spring of 1997. A three-stage process was used to identify and select schools that had demonstrated notable progress in their efforts to implement significant change over the preceding three to five years: (1) solicitation of nominations from ODE staff familiar with the Venture Capital schools, corroborating opinions from independent sources (e.g., Regional Professional Development Center staff), and statistical profiles for nominated schools (e.g., performance and demographic data); (2) telephone interviews with the principal of each nominated school; and (3) ranking of schools according to relevant sampling criteria. Twelve schools were chosen for variation in type (elementary, middle, secondary); location (rural, urban, and suburban from various regions in Ohio); focus for change (e.g., teaching and learning, professional growth, school-community partnerships); school improvement model; and evidence of progress.

The individual case studies were carried out during the 1997/98 school year by teams consisting of at least two members of the school staff and researchers from four Ohio universities and one college that partnered with the schools. Each team designed and implemented a multi-method study of school improvement activities and outcomes in their school learning community. These included interviews, observations, surveys, and documents. While each case study reflected the unique character of school change at each school, the studies employed a common conceptual framework to guide their exploration and analysis of change in these school learning communities. The TLC framework oriented the case study teams to investigate change and change processes in multiple contexts — the classroom, the corridors, and the community — and in relation to three key processes of learning in organizations: collaboration, inquiry, and integration.

The major products of the Transforming Learning Communities Project include 12 individual case study monographs, a cross-case study and handbook, and a companion video at www.ode.ohio.gov.

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Contexts: Cincinnati's West End and School Reform

Welcome to Taft High School

Robert A. Taft High School is an aging brick structure built in 1955. It is located on Ezzard Charles Drive, a half-mile east of the interstate highway and across the street from the modern, red-brick, block structure of the Queen City Vocational Center. On one side of the school are public housing projects — the Laurel Homes and Lincoln Courts — which share its brick color and architectural style. On the other side is the central Cincinnati police station. Behind the school is a large parking lot for staff and teachers, the maintenance facilities, and a track and football field with bleachers.

A telling indicator of the school is a sign posted on the front of the building, facing the neighboring apartments, that offers information for the community — dates of upcoming proficiency tests, basketball games, the prom. Often the wording on the announcements provides not simply information, but advice for parents — "Proficiency Tests March 2nd–13th. Must pass to graduate. Talk to your child." And, "200 students absent or tardy daily! Is this your child? Come in and see."

Taft High School sits squarely on a plot of grass facing Ezzard Charles Drive. There are a few trees or bushes on its otherwise plain facade. A path leads to the wide steps and the front doors of the building, which open into an entrance lobby. Decorating this lobby are large photos of teachers with students, arms around each other, smiling broadly. These photos offer the first visual impression of community, relationships, and activity in this otherwise dark and impersonal building. The first floor houses classrooms, the main office, and various other administrative and counseling offices, as well as the library, which also serves as a computer center, meeting room, and audiovisual storage area. The building also houses a gymnasium and a swimming pool that has been out of use for at least five years because of high costs. An auditorium serves as a gathering place for assemblies. Teacher meetings, for example, take place in the cafeteria on the second floor, which has no air conditioning. Teachers sit on benches at the long lunch tables. Depending on the position, the view of the person speaking at the front of the room might be blocked by concrete pillars.

All four stories of the building are used for classrooms and offices; science classes are held in the basement. Like any high school, teachers' classrooms differ in style — some are crowded and busy with posters, books, and tables pushed in a circle; others are more neatly arranged with desks in rows. Most teachers have no telephones in their classrooms, nor any computers on which to calculate grades, do lessons, or send electronic mail to colleagues. Not surprisingly, teachers' desks are often piled with attendance records and other paperwork. The building does not have central air conditioning, and the few rooms that do have air-conditioning units (the library, the main office) have signs advertising that fact and reminding people to close the door. Many classrooms have broken shades, dirty windows, and peeling paint.

However, teachers have clearly made an effort to make do with what they have. Almost all classrooms are personalized with inspirational posters or homemade signs by teachers reminding students of certain deadlines or behavioral rules, congratulating students for accomplishments or birthdays, listing credit requirements and school opportunities. Many teachers have scavenged tables, desks, and bookcases to create their own style of room. One science classroom is so filled with working aquariums and plants that entering the room feels like walking into a deep forest.

Cincinnati and the West End Community

Taft High School is one of four public comprehensive high schools in Cincinnati. Cincinnati is an open-enrollment school district: when students approach their ninth-grade year, they apply to one of a variety of high schools which they want to attend, including the highly competitive college preparatory Walnut Hills Academy; the School for Creative and Performing Arts; Hughes High School, which houses specialized programs in communication, health professions, teaching, and zoo training; and an international studies academy at Withrow High School. Students who do not choose or are not accepted to one of those schools are assigned to one of the local comprehensive high schools in or near their residential neighborhood — Aiken High School in North College Hill, Western Hills on the west side of town, Woodward High School (now a year-round school), and Taft High School.

Taft is the local comprehensive high school for the West End neighborhood and the adjoining neighborhoods of Over the Rhine and Lower Price Hill, two inner-city neighborhoods with predominantly poor African-American and Appalachian populations. Taft High School thus faces many of the same problems that face all American inner-city high schools, because in many ways Cincinnati is typical of American cities. Taft High School itself tends to make the news in articles that cover the topics of violence and drugs in schools.

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Interviewer: *Do you feel like people like to tell bad stories about Taft?*

All students: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *Why is that?*

Student 1: *Because of where we are.*

Student 2: *The area.*

Student 3: *They don't expect people from downtown to be good people.*

— Twelfth-grade students (interview, February 18, 1998)

In the past 30 years, racial and economic segregation has increased in Cincinnati, in part because of white flight, deindustrialization, and the movement of jobs and the tax base to suburban neighborhoods. As in many American cities, the trend since the 1970s in Cincinnati is that the poor became poorer, more likely to be unemployed, African-American, and have more children living in single-parent homes.

Census statistics tell part of the story. In the 40 years following 1950, the percentage of Cincinnatians who were African-American more than doubled, from 15 percent in 1950 to 38 percent in 1990. Of the city's white population in 1990, 15 percent were poor as compared with 40 percent of African-American Cincinnatians. In 1990, 44 percent of whites attended some sort of higher education, as compared with only 27 percent of African-Americans. Cincinnati is a city of neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods work to further define the ethnic and economic segregation of the city. Poor African-Americans are especially centrally located in Cincinnati, with 96 percent of poor African-American families living in the poorest neighborhoods on the far west and far east sides of the inner city.[1] The West End, where Taft High School is located, and the adjoining Over the Rhine neighborhood are two of the city's most consistently poor and predominantly African-American communities.

The West End is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Cincinnati, and it has a long history of persistent racial segregation, poverty, and political marginalization. North and west of the city center, the West End has historically been identified as a neighborhood of poverty. In the nineteenth century, the West End housed first-generation immigrants in notoriously rundown tenements. By the 1930s, the neighborhood was still poor but now primarily African-American. It was a densely populated community condemned by the city, even as segregationist housing and social practices relegated the bulk of the city's poor African-American population to the area. In the 1930s and 1940s, the West End was the site of the first public housing project in Cincinnati funded by the Public Works Administration: the Laurel Homes and the neighboring Lincoln Court Homes. Through the 1960s, the area was the focus of a series of redevelopment plans which either failed to be implemented or worked at cross purposes to community organizations.[2]

Today, the West End remains primarily a poor, African-American community. According to the 1990 census, 67 percent of families in West End lived below the poverty line, 76 percent of families were

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female-headed, and over half of those families lived in poverty. In one West End housing tract, only four percent of children under 18 lived in two-parent homes. Almost two-thirds of the adult population does not have a high school diploma.[3]

The neighborhood is bordered on its west side by a highway and the light industrial area of Queensgate, and on the east side by the historic Music Hall, which serves as a literal barrier to the metropolitan center of the city. The central avenue of the neighborhood is Ezzard Charles Drive, named for a Cincinnati-born African-American prizefighter. The neighborhood itself is defined by the sprawling Laurel Homes and Lincoln Court Homes housing projects. Only one-third of West End residents own their homes, the majority of which are newly renovated historic buildings on the north side of the neighborhood. With 16 percent of West End buildings lying vacant, in recent years, the area has attracted developers who are renovating historic housing units for middle-class families. This marks the neighborhood as a transitional one. The increases in income and home ownership, however, are primarily by new white residents, not long-time residents.[4]

Taft High School draws most of its student population from the West End, the Over the Rhine neighborhood to the east, and Lower Price Hill to the west. Over the Rhine parallels the West End as a predominantly African-American neighborhood of poverty, crime, and social disruption. Over the Rhine was also subject to slum clearance in the 1950s and more recent historic preservation — both policies of which have stamped the residents of Over the Rhine as *"a problem"* for the city at large.[5]

Lower Price Hill is one of the largest and most concentrated Appalachian communities in Cincinnati. Urban Appalachians are identified as a white ethnic group with common characteristics, including a strong social unit, low educational attainment, and minimal upward mobility. The descendants of rural poor from Kentucky who migrated to southern Ohio after World War II, some estimates report that 40 percent of Cincinnati's population is Appalachian. In Cincinnati, urban Appalachians mirror African-Americans in poverty, employment, and education statistics, although the two communities tend to live in distinct neighborhoods. In predominantly Appalachian neighborhoods like Lower Price, up to half of all adults in the neighborhood do not have a high school diploma — high school dropout rates can be as high as 75 percent. Lower Price Hill is the only white neighborhood in the city with a poverty rate of over 50 percent.[6] When in school, urban Appalachian children face a myriad of social and educational problems, including conflicts between their culturally based ethic of community and familial kinship and the educational norm of individualism and competition. The dropout rates for Appalachian students are among the highest in the city.[7]

Because of the open-enrollment policy in the Cincinnati public school system, children from these three neighborhoods do not have to attend Taft High School, but by all estimates, the majority of Taft students are from these three neighborhoods. Taken as a whole, students at Taft represent the most

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beleaguered of the city's youth population. They come from communities where the dropout rates hover between 30 to 50 percent, whereas in Cincinnati as a whole, dropout rates for high school students average 12 percent.[8] They live in communities with high proportions of single-parent households and with high concentrations of poverty, unemployment, and welfare dependency. They live in old, run-down tenements or crowded public housing projects in neighborhoods with few stable adult role models and high youth crime and delinquency problems. In a city which is marked by an unemployment rate of about four percent, with a great influx in skilled jobs for high school and college graduates, unemployment in these three communities averages around 20 percent, with actual jobless rates of nearer to 50 percent.[9]

For the African-American residents of the West End, the history of city housing policies and the legacy of poverty tell a story that is familiar across all American cities, a story that has powerful implications for schooling. As two scholars of Cincinnati's urban problems argue,

> [T]he persistence and growth of the ghetto, America's most visible stamp of disdain for African Americans since the time of slavery, constitutes Cincinnati's major problem at the approach of the twenty-first century. It encourages social and civic alienation among African American adults and undermines the confidence of middle-class blacks in their ability to compete on everything from standardized tests to on-the-job performance. It tempts their children to drop out and into the underclass. It fosters a climate of fear, misunderstanding and mistrust among the races that erodes faith on both sides of the color line in the city's political system and economic prospects.[10]

The social, economic and political context of Taft High School is reflective of larger social problems and reforms in American cities in the past few decades. Cincinnati, like many American cities, struggles with racial problems. These struggles have deeply rooted historical origins, politics, social relations and the dynamics of urban school reform. The ways in which Taft High School has addressed these broad social and racial concerns through its reform initiatives is an important theme in this case study.

School Reform in Cincinnati: A Business Partnership

> Business leaders in Cincinnati believe it is their responsibility to make this a better place to live and work.... Contributing to the community in which you live is good business.... It's a partnership, not a competition between government and big business.[11] – Cincinnati business leader

The story of school reform in Cincinnati in the 1990s is a story of increased business involvement in schooling and expanded partnerships between local business leaders and the school system. Indeed, school reformers across the nation herald Cincinnati as one of a few American cities that has success-

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fully incorporated local business interests, universities, and community agencies in school restructuring.[12] Simultaneously, the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers has taken on collaborative relations with the school district in a variety of reform initiatives. The image of Cincinnati's school reform since the 1980s is one of multiple agencies, interest groups, and communities creating a mix of linked reform initiatives in city schools.

By the early 1980s, business leaders in Cincinnati were worried about the city's schools. In part, the impetus was the notorious 1983 federal document, A Nation at Risk, which sent out a clarion call to economic communities to pay attention to an apparent lack of skills training and job preparation in American schooling. John Pepper, an energetic vice president of Procter & Gamble who would go on to become chief executive officer in the early 1990s, attended a National Alliance of Business meeting in 1986, which spurred him to look more closely at his own city's schools. The issues of that time were a complex amalgam of change and conflict — demographic changes in the city's population brought about by the 1970's desegregation plan, a series of teacher strikes, the certification of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers as the city's bargaining agent in 1977, and a growing national conversation among business leaders about urban schools. Nevertheless, Pepper and many other city leaders were ready to take action.

In the summer of 1986, a Ford Foundation's Planning Grant funded a series of discussions between members of the Cincinnati Public Schools system and local business leaders. Participants were interested in reducing dropouts and youth unemployment in Cincinnati. As a result of these meetings, in January of 1987, the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC) was formed — a collaborative venture between the private business sector, the Cincinnati Public Schools, and elected city officials. The goal of the CYC was synthesis and organization of school reform planning. According to the CYC, the school system in 1986 had

> ... a number of excellent and successful programs [but] lacked a comprehensive total system vision and plan to better mobilize these resources, create synergy between them and identify additional gaps that require action. The role of the CYC is to establish a vision; facilitate and oversee; secure alignment and cooperation; and provide financial and human resources.[13]

The CYC, then, is a civic enterprise, currently co-chaired by the superintendent of schools, the president of Procter & Gamble, and a city council member (usually the mayor). It is composed of and funded by senior corporate staff, business executives, university officials, church groups, and political-interest group leaders. The CYC was formed with three co-leaders: Pepper, the vice president at Procter & Gamble; Dr. Lee Etta Powell, then Superintendent of the Cincinnati Public Schools system; and J. Kenneth Blackwell, then vice Mayor of the city (who later held the positions of State Treasurer and Secretary of State of Ohio). The Steering Committee for the organization included representatives of major corporations, the Urban League, Cincinnati schools administration; the city, the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, and local non-profit organizations. Fourteen out of the original 28 Steering Committee members were from area private corporations or public utility companies; six were affiliated with the public school sys-

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tem, either as salaried administrators or school board members; seven were community nonprofit organizations, including the University of Cincinnati. In its first three years, the CYC raised $7 million to support reform efforts in city schools.[14]

The CYC was founded for the purpose of dropout prevention and workforce and college preparation; these remain its core goals. In particular, the CYC's mission is to further the involvement of the community in the school system in order to reduce the dropout rate, prepare students for entry-level jobs upon graduation, and build bridges with local institutions of higher education. Eventually, the CYC would facilitate and manage funding from private and government sources for the Higher Education Information Center, student internships funded by local businesses, some college scholarships, and an extensive city-wide mentorship and tutoring program with over 1,000 adult volunteer tutors.

Since the founding of CYC, the business community, through CYC and other organizations, has played a significant role in school politics in the city, working at times as the initiator and, at other times, as the funding engine for reform initiatives. A case in point is the 1991 report of the *Cincinnati Business Committee Task Force on Public Schools* (also known as the Buenger Commission Report, after the author of the document, Clement L. Buenger, then chairman of Fifth Third Bank). The Buenger report was the product of a task force of chief executive officers from the Cincinnati Business Committee. The report was critical of school bureaucracy and management, calling for a complete overhaul of school administration, suggesting a decentralized authority structure and deregulation from state, city, and union regulations.

The immediate effect of the report was a reorganization of district management and the cutting of $16 million from central administration staff. But the long-term effect of the report was a legacy of business authority in school managerial decisions. With the Buenger report, the leadership of the business community in Cincinnati gained recognition as school reform leaders on a national level, and this encouraged their involvement in city school issues. By 1992, the business community supported five of the seven seats of the board of education and supported the newly appointed school superintendent, J. Michael Brandt.[15]

Cincinnati's school reform movement has involved other players as well. Through the late 1980s, the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers gradually developed a collaborative relationship with the board of education, through which the Federation positioned itself as a central player in urban school reform. Under the leadership of Tom Mooney, the Federation developed and enacted a peer appraisal program, a teacher-allocation committee that assigned additional teachers to schools with high enrollments, and other avenues for teacher involvement in school reform and policy making. In recent years, the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers has bargained for smaller class size, a decrease of course loads for high school teachers, and a teacher education training partnership with the Cincinnati Public School system and the University of Cincinnati. Thus, although the business community plays a central leadership role in school reform in the city, the teachers' union has not been left out of the discussion.[16]

School Reform at Taft High School

> Originally, when CYC came in — I truly won't forget the first meeting that they had with the administrators. We came over here in the library with [some leaders from Procter & Gamble], . . . teachers and administrators. . . . I can remember [one Procter & Gamble spokesperson] . . . [saying] . . . "We're going to help you knock this problem out in two years. I've got this budget person and we've got this person and that person. We're going to solve this problem." And I came out of that meeting with a headache that just knocked me back. I was just furious to think that they were going to come in and tell us this. . . . It was as if they were saying, "You guys don't know what the heck you're doing." Bless them, that by the time the year was out, they came back to us and said, "We had no idea what you dealt with on a day-to-day basis. This is not going to be fixed in a year or two, and we realize that it's going to take more of a commitment and a longer term commitment to bring about any real change. – Taft administrator (interview February 25, 1998)

Perhaps no school in Cincinnati has been more affected by business interests than Taft High School. Taft's school-to-work program (Taft Career Academic Program) was set up and supported by CYC and is not affiliated with the district's Career Pathways program. Taft is the only city high school to house the CYC-sponsored youth advocates. Taft High School, which presents some of the most challenging social, economic, and academic conditions of all of Cincinnati's high schools, is also the school most highly supported by an activist business community.

By 1989, CYC had focused some specific programs at Taft High School under the umbrella name of the Taft High School District Pilot Project. According to one CYC representative, the Taft Pilot Project was initially set up mainly to move the school into a site-based management model of governance and to use this system of self-governance to empower teachers as leaders of school reform. The design was based on the belief that has driven the nationwide movement to site-based management models: free teachers from bureaucratic, top-down models of governance and allow them to design, implement, and assess their own work, in collaboration with their local communities. The Taft Pilot Project helped to put site-based management in place at the school by providing funding for inservice programs and conferences on the topic. Also included in this initiative was "last-resort financing" for graduating Taft students to attend college, a training program to build at-risk students' self-esteem and social skills, staff development, additional guidance staff positions, and support for instructional change in teaming.[17]

Former Cincinnati City Schools Assistant Superintendent Cecil Good became the CYC director. Dr. Good took on the task of identifying areas in the school that needed funding, setting to writing grant proposals to obtain the money, staffing positions, staff development, and technology for Taft. By 1990, Taft was also a site-based management school. Dr. Good, working with the CYC, used that structure to help iden-

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tify needs of the school. In the early years, the CYC funded an extra attendance officer, a counselor for at-risk students, and other supports.

The Taft Career Academic Program

The Taft Career Academic Program — or T-CAP — was also an invention of CYC. Initiated in early 1992 by a group of Cincinnati business leaders, the president of Cincinnati State College, and other CYC officials, T-CAP was designed to be a partnership between local businesses and Taft High School. The point of T-CAP, according to John Bryant, current head of CYC, was to help students make a connection between education and the workplace. The focus of T-CAP was job skills and workplace training, including the education of social skills, habits for the workplace and support by individual in-school counselors, called youth advocates. More than a traditional vocational training program, T-CAP promised overall employability training.

Dr. Good wrote the initial proposal after some members of the group had visited other school-to-work programs around the country and in Munich, Germany. At this point, the group invited all Taft staff on board to discuss the proposal at a weekend retreat at Miami University in nearby Oxford. The CYC lobbied for the program in the community, meeting with the school board, the Urban Appalachian Council, and church officials from the West End. The Taft faculty was introduced to T-CAP and asked to vote for or against it in a meeting in the spring of 1993.

In recent years, T-CAP has picked up significant funding from the federal school-to-work initiatives, the Justice Department, and the state of Ohio. This combination of state and federal funding supports the salaries of the youth advocates. Local businesses support the initiative by providing paid internships and on-site support for interns.

T-CAP was designed by an outside entity. The program was not a product of the school staff. Although teachers did vote for the program in the spring of 1993, and many teachers approve of it today, there is a feeling among some of the staff that T-CAP was added to the school by business interests that maintain the program.

Questions for Discussion

1. To what extent has school reform in Cincinnati excluded or ignored certain parties? What roles can and should business partners of public schools play in deciding policy and shaping curricula?

2. How important is it that different cultures be represented in the staffing, curriculum, and the general school climate of urban schools?

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3. To what extent are Cincinnati's educational problems comparable to other American cities? In what ways is Cincinnati unique?

4. How do contemporary urban renewal movements change the environment of a neighborhood school like Taft?

5. How might the physical character of the school building affect the kind of work that can go on in school?

Further Reading

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Illustrating the Challenge: Taft's Students and Their Supporting Adults

To provide a backdrop for the subsequent chapters about school reform, this chapter introduces the people at Taft School — what kinds of students attend, and what kinds of adults work there. We provide a brief overview of these people with statistical data and some portraits of individual people. These portraits are not intended to be representative of all people at Taft, but rather to introduce the reader to the general character and daily atmosphere of Taft classrooms, hallways, and offices. Names of students as well as all teachers and administrators have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Students at Taft

Interviewer: *What would you make sure remained the same at Taft?*

Student: *Keeping it a small school. Here you have a good chance of being heard and getting some attention.*

— Twelfth-grade student (interview, February, 1998)

Taft is a relatively small school by inner-city high school standards. Only 1,000 students are assigned to Taft's grades nine to twelve, with about half of that number in the ninth grade alone, and a decreasing number in the higher grades. Actual attendance is significantly less, however. Trying to identify the number of students enrolled at Taft is symptomatic of the larger problems of attendance and record keeping in a system in which most students will drop out, skip school, move away, or transfer sometime during their four years. On any given day, about one quarter of students registered at Taft do not come to school, rendering the validity of how many students are formally enrolled at Taft questionable. For example, official statistics show that in the 1996-97 school year there were 500 ninth-grade students, 200 tenth graders, 150 eleventh graders, and 146 twelfth graders.[18] But these numbers include students who had left the school without formally withdrawing and chronic absentee students who might remain

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on the register for up to a whole school year. Teachers commonly describe this latter group as "ghost" or "phantom" students. Another common descriptor is the drop-in student who only occasionally comes to school. Because Taft faculty choose not to implement a more laborious period-by-period attendance monitoring system, students who come in for a few periods but skip others may be counted as present or absent, depending on which classes they attend during the day.

Teachers' descriptions illustrate the attendance problem better than any statistics. This past year, one science teacher had 26 students registered in his tenth- and eleventh-grade chemistry class, but only four took the final exam. The other students remained on the register all year long, even though almost half of them never appeared in class. A math teacher had 25 to 30 students on his register for one class, but fewer than 20 chairs in his room, and fewer than 15 students regularly attending his daily class. To a great extent, both teachers and administrators see attendance as the core issue of every problem and proposed solution at Taft.

> All the change [at Taft] is based on the issue of poor attendance. Everything we do, our whole center of being, is that we're not getting the kids to come to school. . . . [E]very change — teaming, over-age policy, T-CAP, everything — is centered on poor, urban school attendance. – Teacher (interview, May 18, 1998)

Another challenge that faces teachers, staff, and students at Taft is state-mandated proficiency tests in writing, reading, math, citizenship, and science, to be taken at grades four, six, nine, and twelve. To earn a high school diploma, all Ohio students must pass the ninth-grade proficiency test. In 1997, 45 percent of Cincinnati public high school students passed the ninth-grade proficiency tests. In that same year, only 20 percent of Taft students passed the ninth-grade test. Last year, 37 percent of Cincinnati students passed the twelfth-grade test, while at Taft, only 14 percent were successful. This academic year, less than 10 percent of Taft students passed all sections of the proficiency test, even as the Cincinnati scores on the whole surpassed those from the rest of the city schools in the state.[19] Fewer than 50 Taft students in 1996-97 took any college entrance exam or advanced placement test.[20]

But there is much more to students than statistics, and this is especially true at Taft High School. The following three students are described in a Taft newsletter.[21]

Partners (February 1998)

Jade, a sophomore, is a rising star. She maintains high academics and rarely misses a day of school. She was on A honor roll first quarter and has a cumulative GPA of 3.8. Jade plays volleyball for Taft, is a member of Student Venture, FHA [Future Homemakers of America], and actively participates in East End Christian Church. After graduating from Taft, Jade plans on attending Miami University to study pre-med.

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Rita, class of '98. This phrase may seem obsolete to some, but for this young lady, it means everything! Last year, Rita had an accident which resulted in hospitalization and loss of school time. Determined to overcome her obstacles, Rita attended intervention classes and passed with an A. She made the honor roll, is active in many of the activities at Taft, and is still able to keep her grades above average in all of her classes. College is not a dream ... but a reality, as she looks towards the future! She will graduate on time and will go to college to pursue a career in journalism and broadcasting. Look for her on one of the local or cable TV stations!!![22]

As the number-two student in the class of 1997, Khaula was the salutatorian. She took advanced-placement literature and European history, as well as higher-level physics and Spanish 3. Khaula served as vice president of the senior class and was a teen leader with the Postponing Sexual Involvement Project. She was honored by WIZF Radio with a $2,500 Unsung Hero Scholarship. Khaula was an intern with the Cincinnati Public Schools as a teacher's assistant at Rothenberg Elementary and an aide in the office of the attorney for the school district. She will attend the University of Cincinnati and major in elementary education.[23]

These students were highlighted for their successes, but a Taft administrator describes a different type of student at Taft.

> We never, in education, will be truly able to greatly affect [a kid like] Roberto. He's a ninth grader who's coming in here [to my office]. He's a very streetwise kid. He's been with his mother, his older sister, an aunt, and back with his mother again in the last three months. Sometimes it's going OK and then, sometimes, it's going real bad. He spends a lot of time on the street because it's so uncomfortable at home. Because he spends a lot of time on the street, he's gotten in with the wrong crowd. Because he's gotten in with the crowd, he's up on a couple of burglary charges. He spent two months with an ankle bracelet. He's frequently hungry. I have peanut butter crackers up there [in a cabinet near the door], and if the door's open ... [he and others will stop by] and eat them. – Taft administrator (interview, February 25, 1998)

🏛 Administrators, Faculty, and Support Staff at Taft High School

Administrators

> Now we have a principal who is effervescent. She's kind of bubbly. She's the carbon dioxide in the Pepsi Cola. She gives this cola its bubbles. . . . And she's a good reflection of

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what people are starting to feel [at Taft]. And students are starting to pick it up. — Teacher (interview, June 19, 1998)

The administration of the school has changed significantly in recent years. Until 1994, there was one principal for 14 years. Since 1994, there have been two principals. The current principal is a retired administrator who was lured back to the school in August 1997 after the previous principal resigned. It is difficult for a school like Taft to hire a principal, because of a school board policy of pay for performance by which principals are rated by an equation of proficiency scores, student and staff attendance, and staff inservice activities. If the principal does not reach an established goal, he or she may not get a raise or may be reassigned.

The current principal has made a mark on the school in only one year by tightening discipline and rules in the school. This year, Taft is a closed campus, meaning that students cannot leave the building and return during the school day. Many students object to this policy primarily because it prohibits them from walking a few blocks to buy lunch in the neighborhood, keeping them in the cafeteria, which has a limited menu. But some teachers and counselors say that discipline is still too relaxed and that the principal needs to tighten up on students wandering the hall without passes. In one single day in the spring, the fire alarm was pulled four times.

The principal is very visible in the school. An African-American woman with a broad smile and a personable demeanor, she is often in the hallways and in the front lobby of the building, greeting students by name, asking where they are going and how they are doing. When she wants to talk to teachers, she often goes to their classroom instead of calling them to her office. Her visibility and welcoming, personal attitude have earned her respect from the teachers.

Teachers

Interviewer: *Is Mrs. Douglas tough?*

Student 1: *She's one of the stricter teachers. Most students don't like her because she don't take any ___ from students.*

Student 2: *Other people don't like her because she's different. She's a teacher and she knows what's going on in the streets better than they do. That's why they don't like her.*

Interviewer: *That's why they don't like her, because she knows?*

All students: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *So she's harder to fool, is that what you mean?*

Student 1: *Yes. She's real hard to fool.*

— Tenth-grade students (interview, February 18, 1998)

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There are 41 regular Taft teachers, 10 vocational teachers, and 12 special education teachers at Taft. Five certificated teachers have non-classroom responsibilities, e.g., counseling, special resources, guidance. More than half of all Taft staff members hold a master's degree or above. Both instructional and administrative staff are almost evenly divided by gender and by race. In both the adult and student populations at Taft, the dominant populations are African-American and white.

Taft teachers vary in age, background, and training. Two portraits of teachers at work give an insight into the types of classrooms at Taft and the different ways that teachers approach them.

Miss Gibson has taught for 20 years, including some elementary level teaching in another state and a suburban college preparatory school. She has been teaching English at Taft for a few years and loves it. When she first arrived in the building, she took her classroom, which looked like "a warehouse," and made it her own. She found tables and shelves and scoured the place. "I like making something out of nothing," she says. The room is organized around a collection of small tables grouped to make a big table in the middle of the room. On the middle table, under glass, are snapshots of students. She has a pile of new books on the table that she bought with her own money. During the day she will pass them around for students to look at and, if they like, borrow.

Miss Gibson is persistently upbeat in her attitude and she is constantly trying to connect with her students. As students wander into their first period class, she greets them brightly. "Hello, sleepy girl!" "It's nice to see that smile!" She is constantly pulling on students to respond to her by asking someone to change the date on the board; to tell her when the next quiz is and what today's topic is; or to respond to questions about the reading. She moves quickly around the room, firing questions. "What did we do yesterday? What did I say? What did Paul just say? What can you tell me? Will someone read this out loud?" Even when students are engaged in group work, she circles the tables, monitoring and asking probing questions. "Is it cheating when you help each other?" She calls students by their names, sometimes putting her hands on their shoulders, calling them sweetheart, teasing and joshing with the more lively students.

Miss Gibson makes an effort to connect parts of the day's lesson with events that students might recognize. One of the new vocabulary words for the day is genesis. Miss Gibson shows a new book, Bill Moyer's Genesis, which she has sitting on the table. She reads from a chapter on "Apocalypse" about the mystery of surviving a disaster, which raises the question of why some people survive and others don't. She presents an example about a recent car accident in Cincinnati where a car was hit head-on and burst into flames. The relatives of the people in the hit car were driving right behind them, so they saw their own relatives killed. "Did you hear about that story?" she asks. "Tell me about it. What do you think about that? What would you do?"

Miss Gibson drops everything when a student approaches her. Between classes, she often reaches out to pull a student to her for a little talk. She calls one boy directly to her and lectures him firmly. "Look at me, Kareem. Look me in the eye. You are screwing up. You are not living up to your manly responsi-

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bilities. _You have got to come to class."_ To another boy who begins to talk back to her she says with authority, _"I know you are not raising your voice to me!"_ She quietly counsels a girl.

Miss Gibson: _You are six weeks behind. But you can do it. You're very bright. You can be a good student. Where were you last period?_

Student: _In Mr. Smith's class._

Miss Gibson: _Why are your eyes puffy?_

Student: _Medication for my neck._

Miss Gibson: _You need to be here every day. You can't afford to miss another class._

Student: _I might have to, to get a biopsy on my throat._

Miss Gibson: _Have your mother call me._

Miss Gibson doesn't eat lunch, because she says she'll lose her rhythm. Instead, she spends half of her 30-minutes lunch break counseling a group of students about course requirements and proficiency tests. She has a cooler of water behind her which she uses to fill up her plastic foam cup. During the day she takes one cigarette break at the loading dock off the basement and one bathroom break. Otherwise, she is in her classroom — teaching, counseling, and doing paperwork.

In a science class in the basement, a teacher provides a variation of the kind of nurturing, pulling, pushing, and caring that Miss Gibson shows in her classroom. To help students prepare for an upcoming quiz, Dr. Onzola gives them 10 minutes to review their notes as he wanders around their desks talking. "Ask me any questions, study your notes, review the material." He circles around students, leaning over, hands on their shoulders, coaxing, urging. "Did you study? Why are you socializing? Why aren't you studying? What do you need, son? It's just a short quiz — 10 minutes, I know you can do it." One student retorts. "Gimme a break, man!" Dr. Onzola responds in mock surprise. "What's this 'man' thing? I know what it means on the street, but this isn't the street!"

As students are taking the quiz, Dr. Onzola keeps circling the desks, checking students' answers, talking softly, and patting them on the back — "That's good! OK, nobody's perfect, just do the best you can, you can do it. Just spell out the words as best you can. Keep your eyes on your own paper, buddy. I expect an A from everybody, because you are an A person."

After the quiz, Dr. Onzola begins a lesson on DNA with an animated story about "two guys named Watson and Crick," clearly explaining the topic and its importance. He urges students to do their homework and then ends class 10 minutes before the bell, although he reminds students that they cannot leave the room. Most students spend the next 10 minutes crowded around Dr. Onzola at the front of the class talking in groups and with him. A few students literally reach out to talk with him. He puts his arms around shoulders, bends his head to listen — acting like a mother hen, clucking to his brood.

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Dr. Onzola always starts and ends class with a few minutes for socializing, because that's when he can really observe what's going on with the students. During these times he sees how they work and hears important stories that help him to understand what is going on in their lives. He is like an anthropologist.

Support Services

Youth Advocates

Like many urban schools, Taft provides a variety of school and agency support services and programs. It is often difficult to evaluate what is the most central office at Taft, since services range from an attendance officer in a corner office, to an entire program with extra support staff and outside funding. A description of two key support services — the youth advocates and the attendance counselor — can illustrate this situation.

Interviewer: *What are some of your concerns?*

Youth advocate: *Students' apathy. Many of them are conditioned to think of short-term rewards. It is hard for them to make a connection between now and the future. This is the root of other problems — for example, attendance. Students also have very low self-esteem and a very limited world view. What they see as "normal" is what they see around them. They have no connection between here and their future. This is one reason why all [youth advocates] must have a college degree to serve as a role model. One of the goals of this program is to expand their vision of the world and their access to that world. We emphasize their own role in making change.* – Youth advocate (interview, October 17, 1998)

There are 21 youth advocates (YAs) at Taft, who are paid under the auspices of the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative. The job of the YA is to coordinate resources related to Taft Career Academic Program, Taft's school-to-work program, and to make links between students and internships. But this coordination of jobs reaches far outside of the internship proper. YAs also counsel students in academics, make home visits to parents, supervise students in personal, academic, and internship areas, and coordinate links between students, teachers, parents, and staff. They act, literally, as students' advocates. In this way, YAs emulate the theory that T-CAP is a schoolwide program that involves students in a total experience.

A YA's normal caseload is 30 students. YAs have a designated contact frequency — the amount of time needed to meet students, teachers, parents, and mentors/internships. YAs are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They carry a pager for parents, students, and the internship to call. On school holidays, YAs work outside the building, visiting worksites or parents. Some YAs also work as sports coaches for the school. They often take on supervision of attendance at student activities, like manning the concession stand at a game or chaperoning the prom. They regularly attend internship worksites and teacher team meetings.

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Because YAs are funded by grants raised and managed by CYC, the nature of their job is somewhat distinct from other social services at Taft, which are funded by the school board. The YAs' two-room office in the basement is noticeable for its comfortable and professional look. The walls are painted a clean white. The floor is carpeted in light gray. In each room, seven or eight desks are pushed up against the walls, leaving a large open space in the middle of the room. The dominant feeling of the room is openness, cleanliness, order, and warmth.

Many of the YAs are young people trained in education, counseling, or social work, and they go through extensive training in crisis intervention. They are dressed casually but neatly, and they generally put forward a positive and enthusiastic attitude. The group as a whole is friendly and collegial, and they seem to have relentlessly positive attitudes. One YA spoke about enthusiasm for his job and his vision of the kind of work that YAs do. "I would love to just be a youth advocate and follow students through their school career, becoming an integral part of their lives. It would be great to create a small, ongoing community for students." This type of personal concern, commitment over time, and individual adult attention is critical for many students at Taft. For those students who are involved in T-CAP, the youth advocates provide a physical and emotional oasis.

In contrast, the social services at Taft are understaffed. Taft is the only Cincinnati high school with only one visiting teacher. (A visiting teacher is a staff member who serves as a link between families and the school. The four other high schools in the district have two visiting teachers.) Taft has a visiting psychiatrist who spends most of the nine days a quarter doing special education evaluations. Taft has no school nurse and has not had one for the past six years. In December, a counselor called 911 to get help for a student who was going into labor in the building.

Attendance Counselor

Mrs. Edmonds is the attendance counselor, who also acts as visiting teacher. Echoing comments from other staff and teachers, Mrs. Edmonds says that attendance is symptomatic of larger problems at Taft, and that the nature of attendance problems encompasses a range of social services, including the courts, family case workers, and judicial agencies. On a daily basis, Mrs. Edmonds has 375 active cases. About 70 of those students are on the school records but have never appeared in school; the rest are students with the most chronic problems in the school. According to Mrs. Edmonds, the classroom teachers and the grade facilitators — Taft teachers who are released from teaching responsibilities in order to attend to team needs such as discipline and attendance — are the first line of defense in identifying students' attitude and attendance problems. However, deeper social problems are brought to her, in part because she is the one person in the building with the computer technology to track all students' attendance and records. She also has the connections with the courts and social workers. She describes her job as a bit of counseling and "triage." Mrs. Edmonds addresses the myriad issues raised by transfer students, special education students, and medical and legal problems that restrict students' access to

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schooling. A lot of her job is literally tracking down students — Where are they? Are they in school? When were they last in school? Much of Mrs. Edmonds' job is also the individual counseling of students whom she may only meet once.

Field Notes

Anthony, a 15-year-old boy, arrives in the counselor's office. He has an attendance problem. Mrs. Edmonds had talked with his mother and she said he had been to court for truancy.

Mrs. Edmonds [to Anthony]: You don't like school?

Anthony: No.

Mrs. Edmonds: What do you do when you're not in school?

Anthony: Nothing.

[Telephone rings.]

Mrs. Edmonds: Hold that thought.

[Takes telephone call about privately funded homes for children in the city. Turns back to Anthony, who tells her that his mother wants him to go to Western Hills. His mother has filled out the special transfer form.]

Mrs. Edmonds: I would deny that transfer if I could, because you are not coming to school here. Why would you go to school at Western Hills?

[She then gives Anthony a lecture about going to school.]

OK, go to Miss Brown, get your books from your locker, and hand them in. Go to every single teacher and have them sign the form Miss Brown gave you and have them give you a grade.

[One hour later, Anthony drops by.]

Anthony: Instead of going to Western Hills, can I just stay here?

Mrs. Edmonds [sighing heavily]: Anthony, ask Miss Lennox to get your mother on the telephone.

— November 1998

The work of the attendance counselor and that of other guidance counselors expands outside of the classroom into a universe of school, city, and state agencies. Ccompared with the YAs, who center their advice on those students who are qualified for T-CAP internships and the progress of those intern-

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ships, Mrs. Edmonds describes her job as a potpourri, because she knows about schools, board of education policy, special education and youth criminal laws, available homes and counseling centers, and other social services for poor youth.

Mrs. Edmonds works in a tiny office which opens out to the end of a hallway on the first floor. With the doors open most of the time, both she and her secretary have full view of people passing in the hallways, often pulling in students and staff for whom they are looking. Her tiny office is jammed with papers. The center of the room is her computer, on which she can track students' attendance and student records. The telephone is always ringing, usually interrupting her talk with a student.

In a three-hour period one morning in December, Mrs. Edmonds is visited by a dozen students, sometimes with their mothers; an officer of the Hamilton County Juvenile Court who is in school to give a boy a drug test; the school guidance counselor; the special education coordinator; the principal, who is looking for help for a pregnant student who had just passed out; and a social worker at the only treatment center for children in Hamilton County — essentially a halfway house for truants, runaways, and incorrigible children whose next offense will land them in prison.

Mrs. Edmonds also talks on the telephone to half a dozen parents; the Probate Court; an independent agency that has references for special counseling for children; a youth advocate, about a runaway who has two warrants out for her; and another youth advocate, about a student who is legally blind and therefore cannot do an internship. With the students in her little office, she counts credits from transcripts and explains credit requirements, counsels students about attending school and about improving their behavior in class, urges, lectures, hugs, and praises.

Assigned responsibility for the most challenging students in the school, Mrs. Edmonds provides some students with both the first introduction to the school and a last-ditch effort to keep them in school.

Field Notes

A boy called DJ shows up. He wants to come back to school but is in special education, so Miss Luce, the special education coordinator, has to be here for the meeting. Mrs. Edmonds calls Miss Luce, and she arrives in a few minutes. DJ has been in a Children's Home, in the city's main detention center, and in Severely Behaviorally Handicapped at Withrow High School. He is 18 years old and has eleventh-grade standing. He was a junior last year at Withrow High School, but he earned no credits. Miss Luce says that special education does have space for him, but that she needs his Individual Educational Plan (IEP). DJ doesn't have it. Miss Luce looks through the papers and finds out that DJ was withdrawn from special education by his mother in June 1997. To get back into special education, he will have to go through the entire referral again and get another IEP made. DJ can enroll in regular education, but this raises another problem. He basically hasn't been in school in a year, his prior education was in a Children's Home, and being in regular education means he has to take the state

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proficiency test. Furthermore, under regular education he is covered by the school only until age 18, not 21. So now, at age 18, as a regular education student, if he misses school, he'll get kicked out. He won't qualify for special education intervention. Special education gives students a longer protected time, and students don't have to take the proficiency test to graduate. So now DJ faces two and a half years of school — two years of work and a half year of make up. Mrs. Edmonds asks DJ, "Are you going to go to school today, DJ?" He says, "No." She says, "No? When are you planning to come to school? You can't afford to miss more school. Tomorrow, be here in my office at eight o'clock."
— November 12, 1997

Not all Taft students demand the kind of efforts that the attendance counselor is expected to give. Taft students present a range of talents and problems and come from stable, more nuclear families, as well as more nontraditional and fractured families. And not all Taft teachers and counselors put out the kind of care and energy that those described here do. As in any school environment, there is a range of teaching practices and approaches. Some teachers focus heavily on purely academic concerns; others are very engaged in extracurricular activities; and others develop close, personal relationships with their students with great needs. It is the mix of different needs and demands of the students that makes Taft such a busy place and that makes observers feel that people in Taft are constantly in motion and constantly juggling.

Questions for Discussion

1. How could Taft coordinate social services more efficiently?

2. What are the critical qualities and characteristics of teachers and support staff needed by urban schools like Taft?

3. How might Taft go about addressing students' attendance problem? Are there structural, personnel, record-keeping, or scheduling changes that could be made?

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The Over-Age Problem as a Case-Within-a-Case

In November 1997, a group of Taft High School educators, including one former district administrator now employed by the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, gathered on a Saturday morning to discuss the over-age problem. This Saturday meeting symbolizes the commitment of a resourceful group of educators to solving the complex challenges faced in creating a successful teaching and learning environment in a working-class neighborhood school. The over-age problem, in many ways, is no different from many challenges that Taft educators face on a daily basis. Yet its persistence and complexity make it an ideal case-within-a-case, a mini-case of school renewal efforts within a larger context of ongoing change.

What does it mean to be over-age at Taft? The majority of ninth graders beginning their education at Taft High School are older than the typical American ninth grader: Only 40 percent of the ninth graders are age-appropriate and on target. Many of these over-aged students do not lead typical American ninth grade lives, and their struggles at school directly reflect on the stresses of poverty, underemployment, discrimination, and urban decay experienced by their families. If the class of 2001 is typical, it can be accurately stated that most students arrive at Taft having experienced some form of school failure. Given the enormous challenges this presents to faculty and staff at the school, addressing this problem has been a daunting task.

The Problem: Over-Age and Dropping Out

Typical Teacher, Typical but Complex Problems

Ms. Berger stands at the door of her classroom in Taft High School on an unusually cold Monday morning in early April. "Glad it's cold out," she thinks, "so maybe more of the kids will be inclined to come to school rather than hanging out on the corners or staying in bed." She welcomes her students as they enter the room, greeting them by name, exchanging jokes with several favorites, inquiring about families, schoolwork in other classes, or school activities. She knows them well. She has taught most of the students for the past four years, and there is a feeling of familiarity and comfort among the group. As the bell sounds to begin first period, she looks at the class to see 15 out of the 30 desks filled. By the time she's gone over the reasons for the French Revolution on the board and managed to rouse her students enough to work on a writing assignment at their desks, three more students have drifted in as "tardies." She accumulates their unexcused-tardy slips in files in her drawer; however, there are no official sanctions for these students.

After she's walked around the room several times to help students and quiet others, she stands at her desk and looks at her roll book. The 30 students on the roll for this class are part of the Falcons, the senior team of the school. Some of the students who are absent today have been pre-excused for some reason: Monica delivered her baby last week and will not be back at school for another several weeks; Jeff's mother was taken to the hospital yesterday and is in surgery today; Nathan was sick yesterday and the day before, as she discovered when she called him after school yesterday, and he will be out today as well. But a handful of others have been steadily missing more and more days this year, and it worries her.

After class is over, she sits in her room and uses this nonteaching period to grade the students' writing assignments. As she looks over Dwayne's work, she feels happy and encouraged. She and one of her teammates, Mr. Royce, have worked very hard this year on Dwayne's writing and analytical skills, and he's made fine progress. She is relieved that he will graduate, for at age 19, he becomes more and more in danger of dropping out with each passing year.

Dwayne's case is not unusual at Taft. Dwayne arrived in ninth grade with a history of attendance problems at school and a year older than many of his class, having been held back in grade four. Dwayne struggled through ninth- and tenth-grade history and writing classes, and he fell behind in credits as a result. She's not sure why he decided to stick it out when so many of his classmates dropped out between grades nine and 12, but she thinks part of the answer was the close relationships he had developed with some members of the team, including a few teachers who were especially fond of him. Through a great deal of encouragement and prodding, Dwayne became enrolled in

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> the city-wide Interventions program and was able to make up the work he had missed. None of this was easy. Many conferences, phone calls, and discussions had taken place between members of Ms. Berger's team, Dwayne, and his mother in order to help Dwayne overcome his various difficulties with school.

Dwayne and Ms. Berger are not real people at Taft; they are characters invented through the compilation of the observed actions and expressed thoughts of many teachers and students at Taft throughout this case study. These representational characters are used to illuminate an authentic and complex problem at the school. The issue of over-aged students at Taft has been on its reform agenda since the 1989 Taft Pilot Project, initiated by the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative. Although this problem has been identified by many leaders of the school and has been written into numerous reports and goal statements, in 1998 it remains a difficult problem.

The approach to the over-age problem used by this representational teacher in her classroom is typical of the kind of resources Taft educators have summoned to respond to the needs of their students. In teams, teachers can collectively think about students like Dwayne and work together with parents (when available), team facilitators, and youth advocates to strategize, motivate, and assist. In teams, collegial relationships between students and their peers and between students and teachers enable teachers to develop strong bonds with students, gaining their trust and respect. As individuals, teachers like Ms. Berger and her teammates are seasoned teachers, each with different styles, but all implementing a caring, parental demeanor with the students. To address the over-age problem, the Falcon team teachers had used available resources: their own time and effort, the teaming structure, and the Interventions program, a city-wide program operated by the Cincinnati school system and taught at two schools in the district, in which students can enroll to make up failed or missing credits in required subjects. But the task is difficult. Taft educators lose roughly one student "to the streets," as they say, for every one they graduate.

Dropout rates are exceedingly hard to estimate in such a mobile population. For example, students who transfer to another system are often counted as dropouts if they do not complete the appropriate paperwork with the school system; students who leave school to get their General Equivalency Diploma are also counted as dropouts. One school administrator characterizes the problem in simple language.

> We're losing students at a tremendous rate. And it's accelerating. In the past eight years that I've been here, we've had between 240 and 255 students enter the ninth grade as new ninth graders by the time things settle down at the end of September. And that has really held fairly strongly. Last year [in the 1996-1997 school year], we went into senior year with about 120 students; we graduated 86. This year we've got less than 100 kids going

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into senior status out of about the same number of kids starting. Now we think we'll have
a better graduation rate; we'll graduate 80 out of that class. – Taft administrator (inter-
view, May 20, 1998)

The educators at Taft have long recognized the severity and complexity of this situation. The over-age
problem is at the heart of the ongoing renewal efforts. Almost a decade ago, an initiative called the Silver Team
was born to address the over-age problem and its related issues of poor attendance, school failure, and lack of
interest in schooling. The origins and work of the Silver Team effort are important to reconstruct in order to
understand more about how school change initiatives originate and grow.

First Attempts: The Silver Team

Taft's focus on the over-age problem was part of a district-wide and city-wide assessment of the
dropout problem as a whole, driven by many city leaders, but fueled by strong corporate leadership and
fundraising capabilities. The over-age problem was understood to be directly related to the drop out
problem that plagues high schools in poor or working-class districts across America. In 1987, the
Cincinnati Youth Collaborative — the partnership of public and private sectors designed to reduce
dropouts and youth unemployment — reported that "80 percent of all dropouts had repeated a grade
and 16 percent had repeated twice or three times."[24]

Part of the CYC's original action plan, which included hiring a full-time director and a launching a com-
munications program, was the task of developing an interventions plan. Taft High School was one of three
schools explicitly targeted, with the proposed Taft High School District Pilot Project, including counseling,
monitoring, tutoring, staff development, instructional restructuring, and community resource coordina-
tion.[25] The Taft Pilot Project, as it was known in the CYC documentation, included instructional regroup-
ing, counseling, and staff-development activities; funding was provided for staff development/training,
salaries, materials and supplies, equipment, and computer software. Financing came in part through
Ohio's Earn and Learn state grant funding and the CYC. Earn and Learn monies are part of the state
program to keep low-income and working-class students in school and on track with their grade level;
summer classes are combined with job placements and special programs targeted for these at-risk kids.[26]

The pilot project also helped initiate instructional restructuring, specifically in the form of the Silver
Team. Silver Team students were repeat ninth graders who were deemed most at-risk for dropping out
and/or causing problems in other ninth-grade classrooms. Students chosen for this program had com-
pleted 2.5 or less credits during their first year at Taft. The motivations were at least twofold for pulling
these kids out of regular classrooms and into their own separate track. Pulling over-aged students out
of regular classrooms enables educators to design programs that are specially suited to their needs and
to provide them with the extra support that they need. Segregating over-aged kids also helps the over-

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all learning climate at the school. Over-aged students were seen by some teachers to have a detrimental effect on the new ninth-grade classes.

> *That's really why this [Silver Team] was set up, to get the over-age predators out of those new ninth-grade classes. . . . Everything else was, quite frankly, the window dressing to make it look good to people who wanted it to look good. But from our perspective here, we were tired of 18-year-old drug dealers in the new ninth grade in English classes, just for two or three weeks, long enough for them to be registered as students so that grandma could collect her Social Security, and to project to the kids, "Hey this is Taft, we don't work here."*
> — Taft teacher (interview, May 20, 1998)

The 100 students from the 1989 ninth-grade class who were chosen for the Silver Team were placed with four core subject teachers (English, mathematics, science, social studies), who worked with a team facilitator and one instructional assistant. All nonteaching personnel salaries were funded by Earn and Learn. These staff worked with teachers in a variety of supportive roles. According to a CYC administrator, the teaming concept was to provide solid adult support to students who were perceived to be experiencing a great lack of this in their lives (CYC administrator, interview, May 4, 1998). The curriculum was a program of self-paced, individualized study, designed by the four teachers who made up the Silver Team. One teacher remembers how the curriculum worked.

> *It was like an IEP [Individual Educational Plan]: the kids were all doing the same thing, but wherever they were, that's where they were. If you did five lessons and you were out five months, when you came back you started on lesson six. Each quarter had its own syllabus, what was required, the lessons . . . they paid us over the summer to do that.* — Taft teacher (interview, May 20, 1998)

The team was outfitted with extra computers, donated by IBM, to complement the individualized learning strategy built into the curriculum. The team had a daily common planning period, which included the facilitator. The facilitator met each day with the entire team to help plan lessons, to discuss individual intervention needs, and to plan for team activities. The instructional assistants were to play supportive roles for teachers by being the go-between with the community and parents. Instructional assistants did home visits for the whole school, focusing on Silver Team students when possible, and relayed information to Silver Team teachers regarding individual students.

More than one Silver Team teacher reported the "enabling" function these home visits provided when instructional assistants communicated to teachers the various problems their students faced at home. One teacher described his frustration with the instructional assistant's role.

> *I have a good feel for what goes on with poor people, because I was poor. . . . Just get the students here. But don't tell me that their house is dirty or their parents are alcoholic. . . . What do I want to know that for? That doesn't help me."* — Taft teacher

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By not making excuses for students, teachers on the Silver Team hoped that focused support, individualized attention, consistent monitoring of student attendance in class, period-by-class period, and learning at one's own pace could help them overcome the well-documented effects that being born poor has on school success.

Many teachers at Taft, whether born poor or not, have a very good idea of why their students don't succeed. Every teacher who has been at the school for more than a few years can recount the complicated lives of their students — from difficult home lives, to instability caused by economic dependency, to the temptations of the streets. Part of an unspoken reform strategy at the school among some educators, however, is to block out this knowledge and not allow students' backgrounds to interfere with expectations of work completion and graduation. "You can only do so much," teachers explained in interviews. Other professionals at Taft — the youth advocates, counselors, and some teachers — become very involved with students' lives outside of the classroom. Regardless of individual philosophy, all educators at Taft realize the tremendous odds they are up against when a majority of their students enter their school with experiences of school failure under their belt.

The results of the Silver Team initiative not only show the tenacious will of both Taft educators and the Cincinnati business community to solve a problem, but also demonstrate the enormous challenges in educating students who have accumulated many years of school frustration and failure by the time they reach high school. No one has officially tracked how many students graduated from the original Silver Team, but out of 80 students, no more than 15 graduated from Taft High School. One administrator put the graduation number closer to five. The frustration of this effort comes through in the comments of one Silver Team teacher.

> How do you handle kids who show up but refuse to do the work, and they get old? I
> think we helped pilot [a program] with the resources we had. We did three years, [and then]
> all the people on the original Silver Team wanted to get out. No one wanted to continue
> with the Silver Team. . . . It's very tough. . . . What we would have [are kids who] were
> mostly not motivated. They were the kids who were the ones who being evasive was their
> modus operandi, and they wanted to . . . feel like they were getting over on you. . . . [They
> were] tough kids to work with. – Taft teacher (interview, March 18, 1998)

At the end of three years, members of the Silver Team submitted a report to the administration and recommended that the project be disbanded. Their successes were too limited to justify continuing the expenditures associated with the program. Furthermore, team members were tired from their intense efforts in working with the most challenging students and families of the school. Despite this negative review of the Silver Team's success, the schoolwide renewal initiative of teaming would develop from the Silver Team's pioneering efforts.

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Action and Reflection: Evaluating Silver Team Efforts

Why was the Silver Team relatively unsuccessful in its efforts to change the dropout problem through directly addressing the over-age issue? Learning more about this experiment required relying on the memories of those involved, since the final report issued by the Silver Team was unavailable for review. However, teachers and administrators alike offered various reasons for Silver Team outcomes. A few prominent school leaders thought that the model was right, but the implementation was incorrect or insufficient. One educator, for example, thought the experiment had not received proper start-up curriculum materials related to the curriculum and technology. Part of the problem with the Silver Team, she commented, was that "we didn't give them enough support long enough to really demonstrate the efficacy of the design." Similarly, a CYC representative thought that the curriculum needed work.

> Our original intention was that we would have some curricula that would be so unique that it would appeal to the kids who are the most severe at-risk that we had, and that they could do this work through the computer. And we really never got to the point where we had that. So a lot of the times, the kids were doing some work, but it wasn't the kind of sexy, glamorous kind of thing that we had originally intended that would catch the kids atten-tion and bring them in. – CYC representative (interview, May 4, 1998)

What was needed, he continued, was a "good range of self-supporting kinds of software" available through companies such as IBM and Apple Computer. "A total curriculum package" was missing.

Other educators at Taft who were asked to look back on the Silver Team experiment believe, in hindsight, that the design of the program was flawed in some important ways. Some teachers expressed reservations about the independent, mastery model of learning in which each student worked at his or her own pace. One Silver Team member said that working at one's own pace is "a dangerous concept" for at-risk students, stating that while there is a need for flexibility, the curriculum needs defined "bound-aries, strictly adhered to" by staff. It was not a good idea, he concluded, to let the students "take years to do what [could have been] done in months." (Interview, May 21, 1998.) Another structural flaw men-tioned by Taft teachers was the whole idea of tracking at-risk students into one team.

> You cannot take everybody who has the same problem and put them all together. They feed off of one another. And you cannot take that kind of child and give them a packet and say, "Have this finished, and this is your first step."... You have to engage them in some-thing. You can't just say, "Here," and hand them a worksheet, or "There's the computer, do something." That's not enough. – Taft teacher (interview, May 20, 1998)

In the experiences of both these teachers, working with at-risk kids is much more complicated than setting up individualized, self-paced lessons in an environment with other students who have also expe-rienced school failure. The problem of tracking students is a tricky one, however, because all teachers

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understand the detrimental effect that some over-aged students can have on new ninth-grade classes. For a variety of reasons, most teachers do not want these students in their regular classrooms.

The Silver Team pilot was not in vain, however. It was chalked up as a learning experience in the path of school renewal and paved the way for several reform initiatives that have made substantial changes in the Taft learning environment. The most visible of these initiatives is that of teaming, wherein all students and all teachers are teamed beginning in the ninth grade and lasting until the twelfth. Another very visible initiative that was a whole-school program aimed at decreasing the dropout rate was the Taft Career Academic Program. (Both these initiatives are detailed in later chapters.) School leaders hoped that whole-school teaming and the T-CAP program would help to reduce failure rates and curb the number of school dropouts. It was believed by some school leaders that the combination of teaming and T-CAP would drastically curb the school failure, over-age, and dropout problems. Therefore, a specialized program for over-aged students was disbanded when the Silver Team pilot ended and the staff turned its collective attention to the huge schoolwide changes involved with teaming and T-CAP.

🏛 Recent Strategizing

After the Silver Team disbanded and the staff focused on the changes of teaming and T-CAP, the over-age problem continued to remain on the list of school priorities, but it was on the back burner while other programs were initiated. Still, four years into these new initiatives, the school failure problems continue. Attention to the over-age problem was sustained through several evaluation processes, though no direct programming efforts on the over-age issue were attempted from 1992 to 1997, years when teaming and T-CAP were becoming solidified in the school.

Taft's participation in the accreditation process through the North-Central Association Commission on Schools provided an external impetus for renewed problem solving around this issue. This accreditation process is in two parts. The first is a self-evaluation report issued by the school; at Taft, this evaluation was conducted during the 1996-97 school year. The report outlines problems and corresponding goals set by each of the site-based management committees, and an overall three-year school plan. The three-year plan was written by school administrators, in close collaboration with CYC officials, and approved by a staff vote. In the spring of 1997, a review team appointed by the North-Central Association visited the school and issued an evaluative document based on the self-evaluation report and their visit to the school. The entire process, as remembered by some teachers, is extremely rushed. Nonetheless, it helped the staff to identify key challenges. "Attendance, staff development, and over-aged kids" were three of the main problem areas recalled by one educational leader.

After the North-Central review team issued its report following the April 1997 visit, Taft educators turned their attention to the goals and problems outlined in their school plan. The over-age issue was

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addressed in the fall of that year. A school administrator and a CYC liaison with the school called a meeting for interested teachers on a Saturday in November 1997. The CYC representative recounted his part in the proceedings.

> We went over and talked about the issue and brainstorm[ed] what the problems were.
> I wrote up the problems into a kind of a plan for over-aged kids with a lot of holes left in it.
> It wasn't anywhere near finished or polished. But we had a second meeting where I took
> that plan back to the staff, and I think most of the people there at the committee felt that
> I had done a good job of catching the spirit, at least, of the first session. — CYC represen-
> tative (interview, May 4, 1998)

At the Saturday meeting following the initial brainstorming session, the CYC representative shared his draft proposal with those in attendance. The result was somewhat "raucous," he reported. Several teachers raised concerns about the wording of the problem, the proposed solutions, and the funding issues involved. Most people seemed happy with the proposal, but several staff members vocalized concerns and wanted to keep looking at the issue before acting upon any specific program. After the proposal was edited by the group (but not to the complete satisfaction or consensus of the whole committee), it was then sent to the Site-Based Management Steering Committee for discussion.

The Report of the Taft High School Committee on Over-Aged Students, or the Over-Aged Proposal, as it was called by staff, was a document that attempted to once again define the problems of over-aged students and present program plans to address the needs of these students. The introduction of the proposal outlines the issue in strong language.

> The staff of . . . Taft High School exists to serve all of the students at the school, includ-
> ing those with unique needs. The staff accepts that responsibility and has demonstrated its
> willingness to respond to the challenge through special systems, including the overall renewal
> of T-CAP. At the same time, however, it must be recognized that many students arrive at Taft
> severely handicapped by failure that occurred before reaching high school. In some cases that
> failure is extended and/or accentuated by their experience in high school. The result is a sig-
> nificant number of over-age students on the school roster, many of whom under present pro-
> gram design have little or no chance for graduation.

Following these introductory statements, the proposal defined three categories of over-aged students: (1) extreme over-age, students who cannot graduate before they are 21; (2) very over-age, students who cannot graduate before they are 20; and (3) over-age, students who will be at least 19 before they graduate. From school records for the four most recent freshman classes at Taft, the proposal states, "nearly two-thirds" of these classes came to Taft over-age, "including 10% who are actually already in the extreme over-age category before they even begin high school." The proposal stated that although Taft staff accepts responsibility for those students who arrive at school "at or near the appropriate age,"

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over-aged students represent a special challenge. "The reality is ... that since all of the over-aged students have failed at least one year before reaching Taft ... it is likely that many will experience similar problems in high school."

1998 Solutions to the Over-Age Problem

The Over-Aged Proposal recommended several programs designed to reach the three categories of over-aged students. To identify ninth graders most at risk for school failure, the staff of feeder middle schools would identify 60 over-aged eighth-grade students who will enroll in Taft the following year. These students would make up a Special Pilot Project detailed in the proposal. This pilot would include a special teacher team for these students and the support of two youth advocates, the counselors who work with students to prepare them for their T-CAP experiences and support their academic work more generally. This pilot project staff was to meet with the students before the end of the 1997-98 academic year for orientation and to develop individual education plans for each student. The curriculum was described in the proposal as technology-based:

> The teachers will teach their subjects in a unique way using computer software and the
> Internet with an emphasis on career development. As the program is refined, the curriculum
> will continually be connected to the scope and sequence and the standards of the Cincinnati
> Public Schools so that eventually credit can be extended on a performance base leading to
> the potential of accelerating progress through high school.

This curricular design "will serve as a test for curriculum change for the entire school," the proposal continued.

The response to the extreme over-age problem involved four steps. The first step was a counseling session with each student to clearly communicate the number of credits he or she has earned, as well as the projected time before graduation "under the most optimistic if unrealistic schedule." Simultaneously, students were to be made aware of the Interventions Program and other programs that might assist them. Information was also to be mailed to the families of the students and, in some cases, to the students who are enrolled but who do not come to school. At this first stage, "the students and the parents will be asked to make a judgment regarding the best educational program for the young people."

The second step involved a community outreach initiative through the Local School Decision-Making Council, the Site-Based Management (SBM) Parent-Community Committee, and the CYC. This step seemed to involve frank discussions about the over-age problem. "The community needs to know that the effort [to work with extremely over-age] kids is not designed to push out students, but to find alternative answers to success for those who otherwise are bound for failure."

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The third step was the development of a school-within-a-school concept with the establishment of an in-house General Equivalency Diploma program taught by a small group of Taft teachers. Special waivers from the state would be gained to allow students to remain enrolled in Taft and to continue participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities. This Academic Academy would be assisted by the school's Technology Committee, as well as by IBM consultants (a school partner in technology) to provide media support. T-CAP internships would be available to these students.

The fourth step would require staff, in individual counseling sessions, to press extremely over-aged students to make a choice: commit to finishing at Taft through the traditional program, enroll in the Academic Academy, or withdraw and seek another GED program outside of Taft.

This proposal had an ambitious timeline: to be implemented less than one year after its original conception in November 1997. From the Over-Age Committee, the proposal made its way through the site-based management process. The Steering Committee for the site-based management governance structure has the power to decide when a proposal will be sent for a full vote by all full-time Taft staff (CYC staff at Taft, such as YAs, are not allowed to vote). At the meeting of this committee on March 2, 1998, the over-age proposal was discussed. Some members of the group positively commented on the problem statement of the proposal which captures the problem in broad, direct language. An extensive discussion took place, and opinions varied. Those present at the Steering Committee meeting concluded that, although the problem seemed fairly stated and reflected the complexity of the issue, there were information gaps in the document that prevented their recommendation for a full-faculty vote. Staff raised questions concerning the proposal and the programs described therein: (1) How will this program be funded? (2) How can it possibly begin so quickly? Is it wise to set up a program so hastily? (3) Where will these special teams be housed? (4) Will other teams have more kids as a result of the smaller numbers on the over-age teams? (5) Does the proposal suggest year-round school and, if so, what does that mean for Taft teachers? (6) What does some of the language mean in the report? For example, what does it mean to "press" extremely over-aged students to choose between finishing school or enrolling elsewhere? Because these questions were not addressed in the proposal, and because there was no representative from the drafting committee present at this meeting to answer these questions, the Steering Committee chose not to send the proposal to a full-staff vote, and the proposal was tabled in late spring 1998.

Making Change: Frustrations, Insights, Themes

At several points during this discussion of the Over-Aged Proposal, teachers noted that they did not want to be held accountable to anything that they did not fully understand. Several verbalized how, in other renewal efforts, they felt as if they had been rushed to vote a new program in and then only later understood the implications of the new initiative. The T-CAP vote was used as a specific example (see Chapter Four for details). As other teachers (not on the Steering Committee) discussed the pro-

posal in the following weeks, they questioned the over-age team model built into the ninth-grade pilot proposed in the document.

> It didn't work for the Silver Team, and by the Silver Team's own recommendation, it ended. . . . I can't see lumping them all together. It didn't work before! Why is it going to work now? . . . By their own admission, they said the program was a failure. – Teacher (interview, May 20, 1998)

In the weeks following this Steering Committee meeting, however, administrators and teachers talked about the failure of the Over-Aged Proposal to pass during the 1997-98 year. By and large, administrators commented on how the site-based management process slowed down the change process. Several administrators viewed the site-based management process as "holding up progress," seeing it as a way that individual teachers can impede changes that will disrupt their ways of working. Another administrator echoes this sentiment.

> We were kind of a victim of our own success. We were really very anxious to be site-based. It can work very, very well. I think in many areas it has worked very well, but it is an opportunity for people who really don't want to move on an issue to slow down the process. I think that's really what happened with the over-aged. – Taft administrator (interview, May 20, 1998)

The pattern of blaming the site-based management process on the Over-Aged Proposal's failure to pass in the 1997-98 year was also continued by another key school leader.

> Well, I've said to the committee and to some other staff that I think the process handicaps us, that a lot of things need to be done in a more timely manner. They don't need to be kicked back and forth and kicked back and forth, and agreed with and that type of thing. If we don't change that procedure, then we'll lose out on other things, and we really can't afford to do that. . . . Something different needs to be done. – Taft educator (interview, May 20, 1998)

A teacher who had been on the Silver Team stated that reform initiatives were often debated on the merits of personalities rather than programs. "It's who is doing it, and how he or she does it," rather than what the initiative is about, its merits, and its drawbacks. This teacher voiced views that are probably shared by much of the faculty:

> Because I don't have another way to do it, don't know of a better way to do it, [I think] we ought to give that a try. Call it what you may. Talk about [the person proposing it] indirectly by using this plan or what he does, if you may. . . . But you come up with something that makes us better off here at Taft High School in terms of having more students to walk across the stage in June, [or causes] more of these seats to be filled in here [motions around his classroom, where there are six students seated among the 25 desks] on a daily basis. – A teacher (Silver Team)

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Frustrated by the efforts to try and change current ways of teaching and learning, such teachers believe that trying something — any programmatic change aimed at helping the large number of over-aged students at Taft — is better than doing nothing at all and blaming those who seek to make change. The daily frustrations of losing so many enrolled students is such that the faculty is often prepared to try anything that might help them make an impact on the dropout problem. In the face of such serious problems, many believe that trying anything at all is better than business as usual.

Other teacher responses to the proposal raised serious concerns with the content of the proposal, stating that these questions were the cause of the proposal's stagnation. Several teachers wondered how this proposal was significantly different from the Silver Team experiment. One former Silver Team member commented, "it looks to me not very much different than what we were doing before." Another experienced teacher at Taft expressed caution for this reason, as well as for the reasons of problem definition.

> There are some people that are really, really for it, because they see it as a way to get rid of those students who are discipline problems. Then there are some of us who are cautious of it because [for example] . . . I think their definitions of over-age are too stringent. I think they need to attach to that, a certain amount of credits [built into the over-age definitions]. You may have messed up in middle school but be back on track here, just catching up. — Taft teacher (interview, May 20, 1998)

Some kids are not ready for school as soon as others. "There is such a thing as readiness," this teacher said, implying that some kids will take a while before they are developmentally prepared to learn in school. She, therefore, did not want simple age-related definitions of over-age kids to prohibit those learners who had been held back in earlier grades for reasons of readiness but who, in high school, had successfully settled down to work.

As this chapter was being written, the Over-Aged Proposal was being tabled until school started again in the fall, when it would possibly be revived in its current form or changed substantially. The proposal represented another attempt in a series of experiments, discussions, and proposals aimed at ending the related problems of attendance, school failure, and over-aged students.

Foreshadowing school renewal as a whole at Taft, the following themes are salient, because they run across various reform efforts at the school and will re-emerge in various ways throughout this case study report.

The first theme deals with the systemic relationship between poverty and schooling. The over-age issue is an example of how many schools serving high-poverty neighborhoods are attempting to solve problems that are deeply embedded in social and economic structures. Research overwhelmingly indicates the relationship between poverty and school success, and in a school where 64 percent of the students participated in the Federal Lunch Program during the 1996-97 school year,[27] there is no question that Taft reformers are battling tremendous challenges that began long before students arrive at their doors.

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The second theme follows logically from the first: Taft educators and their collaborators in reform battle not simply one problem in helping over-aged students, but a web of social problems. The attendance problem, for example, is closely connected to the over-age problem: many kids fail because they miss so much school and cannot keep up with assigned work. The problem of school failure is obviously a part of the over-age problem, and this situation is linked to the gap between the parents/guardians and the school (or, more accurately, schooling in general). And the root of these problems is the problem of poverty. Statistics show that kids who live in poverty are more likely to be vulnerable to a whole host of family tensions: alcoholism and other addictions, geographic instability due to economic vulnerability, abuse due to tensions in family life, and teenage pregnancy. In sum, the over-age problem is, in effect, a whole package of challenges that have their origin in the homes of the kids, in the elementary and middle schools, and in the effects of social and economic governmental policy on the poor and working class of Cincinnati.

The sheer tenacity of Taft teachers and reformers is the third theme of the over-age case. They face enormous challenges in educating students who mostly know school as a place of failure and humiliation rather than as a setting of inquiry, discovery, and achievement. The over-age story should not be read as failure of a group of educators to solve a problem. On the contrary, the Silver Team gave rise to many new reforms and initiatives that are still present and effective 10 years later. Taft educators, on the whole, bring a great deal of care and professionalism to their work, and this is demonstrated through a 10-year process of problem solving on a particular problem such as the over-age issue.

The fourth theme concerns school governance. While few Taft educators would say that the site-based management process is as inclusive or as functional as they would like, it is one form of institutional governance which allows teachers to participate in leading their own school. It is generally regarded as thoroughly imperfect. Administrators view the process as slowing down reform efforts; and teachers often view it as inordinately time-consuming. In addition, the process does not prevent the central office of the Cincinnati school system from making many of the decisions that affect Taft or other local schools, such as the way school principals are paid for school performance, the ways that school facilities are poorly maintained, or the ways that funding is allocated.

For all its faults, site-based management does enable faculty to start and stop reform. In the case of the Over-Aged Proposal, reform was stopped, at least for the moment. In the face of a serious problem, progress was stalled. But from the point of view of some Taft teachers, this stoppage was the result of insufficient information caused by either an incompletely developed proposal, communication failures, or a combination of both. Site-based management is a process which can be maligned by the politics of personality. As one teacher pointed out, people begin to target a proposal simply because of its author, rather than the proposal's merits. Like all self-governance processes, it is subject to abuse, and efficiency is not always its primary aim. Rather, its dual aim is to give educational professionals the room to shape their own practice and to enable reforms to be more directly targeted to specific schools, rather than dictated in top-down, "one-reform-fits-all" policies.

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As we venture into broader details about the Taft renewal initiatives in later chapters, these four themes raised in the over-age problem-solving process will be seen again. These themes — the systemic relationship between poverty and schooling, Taft students as part of a web of social problems, the tenacity of school leaders and outside reform agents, and school governance issues — do not capture all of the intricacies of the change process at Taft but are indicative of some of the main features of renewal movements there.

Questions for Discussion

1. What other over-age/dropout prevention programs can be studied or examined that might help educators learn more about what has been tried and succeeded at other schools similar to Taft?

2. School leaders often become frustrated with the pace of reform within site-based management governance. Is the failure of the over-age proposal to be passed during the 1997-98 school year a signal that site-based management is a slow and inefficient process, or does it simply indicate that the staff needed more time to understand the proposal? How long should it realistically take for a proposal to go from drawing board to implementation?

3. How can parents and community groups be creatively involved as part of the solution, rather than viewed as part of the problem? How might community alliances be built in the neighborhood?

Further Reading

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Chapter Four

The Role of Community Partnerships: T-Cap and Other Initiatives

Partners

Taft High School was described by one teacher as "an octopus," comprising multiple arms extending beyond a center. The center of the school can be thought of as the physical building of Taft run by the site-based management process and the public school board, but many arms extending out of this center link the school to various community partners. The octopus controls all the arms from the center of the body, where the brain is located. The arms and the central body must be in constant communication. If arms and body were to be at cross purposes for some reason, the octopus could not move; it would be caught up in confusion and find it difficult to proceed to any desired destination. The challenge of multiple arms or, in a school's case, multiple partners, is making sure that communications are clear and that the partnership is working towards a vision of education desired by all involved.

Using the octopus metaphor to approach the topic of partnerships and school reform at Taft raises two primary questions. The first question addresses the arms themselves. What organizations link up with Taft, and what roles do these organizations play in the teaching/learning process? The second question has to do with communication links. How do the arms communicate with the main body? Or, more simply, how do partners and Taft educators communicate to ensure progress for the school and for individual students? This chapter addresses these questions by looking at how Taft partnerships have affected the classrooms, corridors, and boardrooms (decision-making processes or outcomes) of the school.

Taft is fortunate to have a great many partners in the local community, organizations, and individuals who have, in one way or another, allied themselves with the school. In this chapter, we introduce these partners, but examine one — the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative — more closely because of its comprehensive and sustained engagement with the school. As an organization linking the many businesses,

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nonprofit organizations, and governmental offices in which Taft students work as interns through the Taft Career Academic Program, the CYC linkage with Taft is crucial to consider when documenting the nature of school reform efforts.

(For the purpose of this document, a partner is any institution, organization, or agency that is not on the payrolls of either the city public school district or the State Department of Education. Partners include large and small businesses, social service agencies, city and state governmental offices.)

A Look at the Different Types of Partnerships Found at Taft

There are four general types of partnership models at Taft. The first type brings additional resources into the school by way of volunteers, equipment, or teaching materials. The most clear-cut examples of this first type of partnership are Lazarus, a regionally based department store, and IBM. Lazarus is called Taft's Partner-in-Education in the current School Plan. Lazarus donated labor and materials to redecorate front offices in the building, but beyond this, little information was available regarding its role as a partner except through its participation in Taft Career Academic Program, hosting students in job-shadowing or as interns. IBM was a more visible partner during the case study period; the name came up frequently, as educators referred to the IBM grant in discussions. Eight laptop computers were donated by IBM in the spring of 1998 and given to members of two teams. These computers were to help teachers keep up with district-wide standards and rubrics by hooking into the board's record-keeping system whenever it would become functional.

Several administrators and teachers considered the IBM involvement to be more corporate hype than serious help for the school, however. A passage from the case study field notes captures this perspective shared by some staff.

Field Notes

I asked [the administrator] about the IBM grant. She laughs. She says that way back when the district and the CYC were working together, Macintoshes had really gotten into the schools. So, IBM wanted to get in. They flew administrators and teachers in to show them their new software. "They kept giving us presentations about how great the IBM software was. They never showed us what it could do on actual machines, however. They took us to lunch and dinner, but they never showed us the hardware." It was vaporware, as they say in the business. In the end, IBM gave Taft these 286s, 16 of them, with hardly any software. This was around 1989 [at the time of the Silver Team pilot project]; they are all still in the school. IBM never developed the courses they said they'd develop.

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> Then, two years ago, in a great big roll out, IBM gave the Cincinnati Public Schools $2 million. [The administrator] says she is cynical about this, given [IBM's] track record. This donation was going to be strictly administrative to help with the standards tracking. The district's end was to develop the standards. What IBM was to give was in-kind services to help the district fit these with a system. The dream was a computer on every teacher's desk. Originally there was hardware money to make this happen. They wanted a plan as to how each team could hook a computer up. The staff made several proposals that fell through. The pilot was supposed to be two teams all with computers. This hasn't happened yet. Meanwhile, here we are, almost two years since [and] there's not a single computer in a single classroom. We haven't even gotten Columbia (the district database) to work.
> — November 19, 1997

This type of partnership seems to have good potential, but meaningful communication links are not in place to allow the partnership to have its desired outcome. There is doubt, in the minds of some, that the partnership is designed with Taft's needs primarily in mind. This doubt remains, despite the fact that IBM came through on its promise of laptop computers in the spring of 1998. While such partnerships make good publicity for the businesses involved, they have, thus far, yielded uneven and sometimes questionable results in the minds of educators at the school.

The second partnership model at Taft is the type wherein the partner performs a very specific function for the school and the school works with the partner to make sure this function runs smoothly. A primary example of this partnership model is the Visions program. A promotional flyer on this community-based organization reads as follows:

> VISIONS/T.C. Child Care and Teen Support Center, sponsored by Dominican Community Services,[28] is a program designed to help break the cycle of poverty for teen parents and their children. The Center is located in the Laurel Homes Housing Development ... directly across the street from Taft High School. The target population for VISIONS is teen mothers who attend school in the Taft High School district.

The VISIONS director, a dynamic woman who did her master's thesis work on teen pregnancy in Cincinnati, guessed that there is an 80 percent pregnancy rate for females at Taft. Pregnancy rates are not recorded by individual schools in Cincinnati; further, many female students drop out before their pregnancy is noted. Still, one Taft administrator estimated that at least a third of all Taft female students have children, reporting that of 32 special education students in the tenth grade, at least 12 of the girls have children. While none of these numbers represents an official accounting of teen pregnancy at Taft, there is no doubt that VISIONS addresses an important need at the school. There are between 50 and 70 kids at VISIONS. Student parents who use VISIONS day care are required to keep a C-average or better, and their school attendance is closely monitored. Students are not allowed to use the day care

center so that they can skip school. Plans to expand the center are underway. Of the five students in the class of 1997 graduating class who participated in VISIONS, four graduated on time.

Communication between VISIONS and Taft is slowly improving. When the Taft principal and teacherleaders were touring the center, the issue of monitoring absences was raised as one area of frustration for the VISIONS staff. The director enlisted the principal's help in ensuring that a daily telephone call each morning would provide them with reliable information concerning attendance. During a summer 1997 meeting between the principal, VISIONS director, and the case study research team, the principal committed to improving communication during the 1997-98 school year. The VISIONS director attended the first faculty meeting of the 1997-98 school year to discuss her program and her ongoing efforts to work more closely with Taft educators. Taft teachers regularly serve on the Directing Committee of the VISIONS program. As a whole, this partnership seems to be helping the school to partially address a significant problem that they are unable to tackle alone.

The third type of partnership model is an advisory model, wherein a program is run by Taft staff-but relies on the help of outside agencies for advice and resources. An example here is the GRADS program, another program aimed at the teenage parenting problem. Like VISIONS, it is primarily aimed at young mothers (not fathers) who are already pregnant or who have a child. GRADS operates on a referral basis, where students who are known to be pregnant are counseled by teachers or advisors to enroll in this class.

The goal of GRADS is to help young mothers stay in school and get a diploma. The director of GRADS, who seems to be well-respected among Taft teachers, does everything: teaches classes on parenting, encourages her students during delivery, visits girls at home after delivery, and gathers and delivers donation boxes of baby clothing, diapers, and baby wipes to new mothers. Several students, in interviews, who had been through the GRADS program found the class only somewhat worthwhile. One student reported that in GRADS she was "making a quilt," and found the course content repetitious, because she has brothers and sisters and had been taking care of them for a long while. Another student said GRADS helped her to get day care for her baby, but that the parenting classes were repetitive of parenting classes she had already taken on her own.

GRADS helps students link up with other community agencies designed to serve young parents, e.g., SUMA (Services United for Mothers and Adolescents), LEAP (Learning, Earning, and Parenting, run through the Welfare Department), and VISIONS. Agency representatives from SUMA, LEAP, a local pregnancy center, and the county's child support division of Human Services all sit on the advisory board along with Taft educators. The advisory board helps the GRADS director develop and meet her goals: to make an effort to meet with every pregnant student at Taft; to keep in touch after delivery; to invite teen parents (who are not in GRADS classes) to special presentations; to make efforts to link the GRADS students with SUMA, VISIONS, and LEAP; and to encourage other staff members to teach about sexually transmitted diseases and abstinence. During the 1996-97 school year, there were 47 female

students in the program and one young father. Five graduated, two got their GEDs, four are returning to school, 22 others returned to Taft (after delivering), and 14 transferred to other schools or districts. The program has some effectiveness in keeping young mothers in school and is linked to both school and community through its advisory board. One teacher commented that she found the program to be invaluable, because it links students up with the services they need — work that teachers do not have time to do for students and their families.

The fourth type of partnership model is an integration model, wherein partners are linked to the daily experiences of the students through specialized programs, direct funding, and personnel. Since the late 1980s, the CYC has worked closely with Taft leaders to facilitate reform, and the scope of its integration into the life of the school goes far beyond that of any other partner involved with Taft. The complex nature of this fourth type of partnership is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative and T-CAP

> ### Youth Program to Guide Taft Students to Careers
>
> The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC), entering its seventh year, has begun a program to guide every student at a local high school to a career.
>
> Every ninth grader at Taft High school will be exposed this academic year to five different career paths as part of a four-year program to prepare them for the transition from school to work, CYC executive John Bryant said.
>
> They will learn about careers in manufacturing, business, health and human service, information systems, and professional fields, and what education is needed for each, Bryant said. By eleventh grade, organizers hope to see the students in paid apprenticeships through partnerships with businesses.[29]

Four years after this article appeared in the Cincinnati Enquirer, the class of 1997 had graduated as the first class to have gone through the entire Taft Career Academic Program. The success of the program was proclaimed in Partners, the T-CAP newsletter.

> Our first report card is in and we're celebrating! The Taft High School class of 1997 graduated with over 86 students, an increase of 80% over the class of 1996. One half the class is moving into postsecondary education.[30]

How did T-CAP come to Taft High School? By all accounts, T-CAP was an idea that originated with a small core of CYC employees — one was a former Cincinnati Public Schools administrator, and another was a former college professor, now director of CYC. In the fall of 1992, these two met to

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discuss the ongoing reform efforts at Taft and visions for the future. The former public schools admin-
istrator remembered that meeting.

> By the fall of 1992, it was clear that . . . we had a number of anecdotal successes with
> the program [through the Taft Pilot Project initiatives]. But it was very clear that, statistically,
> we weren't really making any impact in anything at the school. So in the fall of '92, we . . .
> met and we talked about why . . . we weren't making the kind of impact that we really want
> to have. And we decided that it really broke down into two areas. The first area was a ques-
> tion of the relevance of the program to the kids. And secondly, was related to that, but it was
> really a lack of strong enough adult influence in the lives of the young kids that would steer
> them in the right direction. – Former administrator (interview, May 4, 1998)

The program was sketched out into proposal form after the idea was shaped in a subsequent meet-
ing with Procter & Gamble executives, a representative from the Cincinnati Business Committee, and the
president of Cincinnati State Technical and Community College. Following this meeting, a proposal was
written (about 90 percent of which ultimately was implemented). After several trips to examine similar
programs around the country and overseas, the CYC employees finalized a proposal and invited depart-
mental representatives from Taft to "go on a retreat to talk about the proposal." The weekend retreat,
funded by the CYC and held in January 1993 at Miami University in Oxford, was when T-CAP was for-
mally introduced to members of the Taft faculty, though it had been introduced to the site-based man-
agement Steering Committee in 1992. It was subsequently voted on and passed in a full faculty vote in
the spring of 1993. Over 90 percent of the staff voted in favor of the T-CAP proposal. Curriculum for
the program was written by Taft faculty and staff working with CYC representatives over that summer.

T-CAP came along at a crucial time in Taft's evolution, however, for T-CAP was introduced to the
staff around the time that the Cincinnati School Board was proposing that Taft become a vocational
school. The district had proposed that Taft become one of several vocational (called career pathways by
the Cincinnati school system) magnet schools around the city, focusing on construction trades and cos-
metology. The Local School Decision Making Council and the faculty voted to adopt T-CAP instead of
the two-career pathways programs that the school system was offering Taft. The site-based management
structure, implemented in part with the assistance of the CYC, was used in this case to help decision
makers reject a decision which would have made Taft into a vocational school. In the eyes of some
teachers, site-based management also played a major role in how T-CAP came about. Some believe the
integrity of the site-based management process was undermined by those who believed T-CAP should
be implemented, and implemented quickly, at Taft.

When asked to reflect on the adoption of T-CAP at Taft, teachers interviewed for this case study told
different versions of a similar story — T-CAP came through the site-based management process in an effort
to implement the program quickly. Excerpts from conversations with three different teachers tell the story.

> *[T-CAP] was all decided outside the school. They first put in the [site-based manage-ment] structure, as if this were going to be "you decide what you want to do," and then they came and fused it. The plan was there ahead of time, and it all looks like we came up with it, but we were just the guinea pigs. — Taft teacher (interview, March 18, 1998)*

> *[T-CAP] kind of came through with [site-based management]. It was voted on and was kind of pushed through kind of hurriedly at the same time, because they said that they need-ed to do this in order to get some grants and write up these grants, and so on and so forth. Some people seem to think that it was railroaded through, but it may have been. — Taft teacher (interview, March 18, 1998)*

> *In reality, we never voted T-CAP in. . . . We said that we would try it for a year and then, at the end of the year, we would evaluate it and vote on keeping it. Somehow the eval-uation and the vote on keeping it got skipped and we just keep on going. . . . We didn't have a choice. . . . They didn't care whether we were going to vote yes or no, because they were going to do it anyway. — Taft teacher (interview, February 18, 1998)*

Faculty at that meeting remember wanting to get more information on the T-CAP program and being told by the CYC representative that there was no time because of the immediacy of fund-raising efforts for the program. The proposal for T-CAP was presented as something that Taft faculty needed to adopt very quickly or else lose altogether, possibly to another school in the district. Most Taft facul-ty voted for the T-CAP program.

What is T-CAP? What Does it Offer Taft Students?

CYC and T-CAP personnel stress, in interviews and in program literature, that T-CAP is not an add-on program but a whole-school restructuring.

> The Taft Career Academic Program is a restructure of Taft High School. It is a career focused program with a solid academic framework, geared to prepare all stu-dents for some form of postsecondary education en route to a career objective. The Taft Career Academic Program *is* Taft High School, not just an add-on. *All* students entering the school since 1993-4 have been participants.[31]
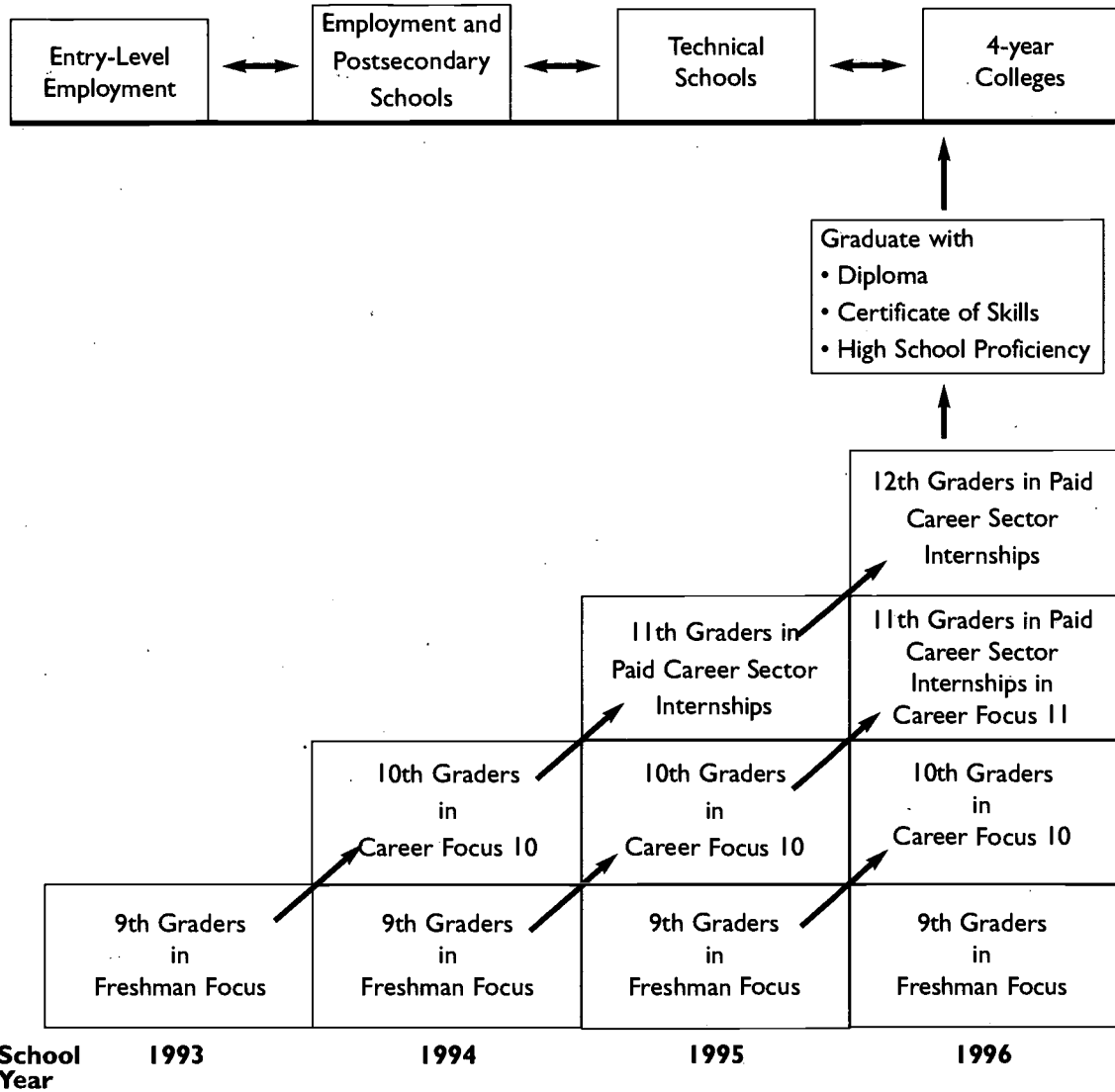
T-CAP was phased into the structure of Taft beginning in 1993, when the program started with ninth graders, adding new levels to the program as the class of 1997 moved through the high school (see Figure 1). The youth advocates were phased in over a period of several years as students reached the point of qualifying for internships.

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The structure of the program, as it exists schoolwide in 1998, has three prongs: school-based learning, work-based learning, and a mentoring/advising element, handled by a team of Youth Advocates (whose salaries are covered by the CYC through grants). Teacher teaming is listed on program materials as a key part of the school-based learning of T-CAP. Teams "implement integrated approaches for students experiencing academic programs, [and] provide continuity from grade to grade, helping students see career opportunities which are a good match for their strengths."[32] The other aspects of school-based learning in T-CAP are the special classes or programs that were initiated on a grade-by-grade level to help students make the transition from school to work.

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Figure I   SYSTEMATIC INSTALLATION OF
                  TAFT CAREER ACADEMIC PROGRAM

| Entry-Level Employment | ⟷ | Employment and Postsecondary Schools | ⟷ | Technical Schools | ⟷ | 4-year Colleges |

Graduate with
• Diploma
• Certificate of Skills
• High School Proficiency

12th Graders in Paid
Career Sector
Internships

		11th Graders in Paid Career Sector Internships	11th Graders in Paid Career Sector Internships in Career Focus 11
	10th Graders in Career Focus 10	10th Graders in Career Focus 10	10th Graders in Career Focus 10
9th Graders in Freshman Focus	9th Graders in Freshman Focus	9th Graders in Freshman Focus	9th Graders in Freshman Focus

| School Year | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 |

Reproduced from Cincinnati Youth Collaborative/Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati's Taft Career Academic Program (T-CAP) (August 17, 1994), p. 31.

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Freshman Focus (Ninth grade)
Career Exploration (learning the range of opportunities available)
Speaker Panels
Field Trips (to worksites)

Career Focus 10 (Tenth grade)
Career Exploration (seeking matches for personal interests and strengths)
Job Shadowing
The Efficacy Program[33] (how to think about learning and your own capacity to learn)
Employability Skills

Career Focus 11 (Eleventh grade)
Employability Skills
Workshop at Cincinnati State (Postsecondary Education Needs)
Computer Skills needed on the job[34]

Students choose a focus, between tenth and eleventh grades, on one of four pathways: (1) health and human services; (2) science, engineering, and manufacturing; (3) commercial and professional services; and (4) information, communication, and the arts.[35] The work-based learning component of the program is the 16-month paid internship. Approximately 105 local employers have offered a total of 275 internships through this program, and interns are matched with a worksite mentors on the job. All internships pay minimum wage or better and are requested to require students to work only after 1:30 p.m. release (at Taft, school ends at 2:08 p.m. each day). Employers are encouraged to increase the rate of pay dependent on student performance. Worksite mentors are matched with one intern and have several responsibilities. They must attend a mentor training workshop, help acclimate the student to the workplace, help the student set and achieve workplace goals, provide general orientation and ongoing coaching, and monitor progress and problems. Internships begin during the second semester of the eleventh grade if readiness criteria have been met. The foci of internship work is to develop "Employability Skills through practice," to learn career paths, and to understand "how the organization works — purpose, structure, process flows."[36] To further support students in meeting these goals, the youth advocates provide a "formal communication link between each internship worksite and the school."[37]

The goal of T-CAP is to see that all students "are strongly supported in developing the attitudes and habits needed to meet employer expectations — and the positive self-image needed for success."[38] How does this goal affect the actual classrooms and learning environments of the school? How do teachers, students, and administrators perceive the program and its influence upon their teaching, learning, and work in general?

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T-CAP and Taft Classrooms

Taft students learn inside and outside of classroom walls. This is true for all students; school-based learning happens in hallways, on sports teams, in assemblies, in the lunchroom, and in any place where students interact with one another, with adults, or with curriculum materials. But Taft, in adopting T-CAP, has intentionally expanded the classroom beyond the walls of the school. The school-to-work program has affected what happens in classrooms both in the school and in the informal classrooms of the workplace where students prepare to work. This section will discuss these changes in learning environments.

Many adults at Taft hold T-CAP in fairly high regard because of its focus on careers, workplace skills, norms of behavior, and real experiences beyond the students' own homes and neighborhood. Teachers noted the positive effect of the program, focusing especially on the value of the workplace in the context of the students' lives.

> Since T-CAP, almost all of our kids work. There are very few kids who don't work. It's kind of a status — status in a sense that makes you feel good — but also they realize that they can do something, they can make some money. So I think [T-CAP has] done a lot at that level. – Taft teacher (interview, March 18, 1998)

> I think T-CAP is a way to get the kids more experience in life than they would get just in a regular school situation. They get out into the work force. They see people and how they react to each other in a work force. How they handle conflict in the work force. Our students are so deprived of things outside of their very own environment, and they need this experience and interaction. We can't offer this here at school, because we're more of a parent-child relationship. – Taft teacher (interview, February 18, 1998)

> At least I feel like they got a chance to at least get out and work and be a wage-earning citizen, as opposed to somebody who's on a welfare roll. I mean, I think they have picked up the ideas that if they work and made some money — this is good. – Taft teacher (interview, March 18, 1998)

> A lot of [the kids] have more aspiration because of T-CAP. – Taft teacher (interview, March 18, 1998)

These teachers all comment on the value of work, a key element in the American dream. Teachers and administrators consistently allude to the belief that, given the home and neighborhood environments of many of the Taft students, the American dream and accompanying work ethic have been lost. Its reinstatement, as accomplished by T-CAP, is seen by many as inherently good.

The work ethic that is at the heart of the T-CAP curriculum was very evident at an Employability Skills Training Day observed by researchers in November 1997, a day that was open to eligible eleventh graders, most of whom would be starting internships the following semester. Around 80 students attended a day-long workshop facilitated by CYC employees, including youth advocates, as well as work-place representatives from a wide range of businesses who participate in T-CAP. Students watched a video about T-CAP and then watched student-performed skits. Following each skit, students discussed the skit with the youth advocates and the community, business or agency representative seated at their small table. The skit topics were aimed at helping students learn basic employability skills — depend-ability, adaptability, and conflict management were the focus of the skits. The situations presented imag-inary scenes in which student interns had to make a choice. What should this person do, for example, when confronted with a great excuse to blow off his internship that day? The students at one table knew the right answers to each situation. In response to this scenario, they immediately concluded that the intern should go to work; of the student who finished her work quickly so that she could leave early, the students knew she shouldn't leave early, but should ask the boss for more work. Business leaders and CYC employees stressed the opportunity available through T-CAP and the internships, and discus-sions among small groups focused on how students can succeed in their internships.

At the end of the day, current student interns (seniors) echoed themes of opportunity and of assim-ilation in sharing their experiences at their job site. "I had to learn to dress different, talk different. I had to watch them. After talking to co-workers, I felt more comfortable." The focus on learning how to speak and dress according to workplace norms was also expressed in conversations at a smaller table. "Internships will help us learn how to dress, to talk, and to speak." In the views of some students, the work ethic that is so much a part of T-CAP's curriculum seems to be an experience of learning dif-ferent habits of presenting oneself and interacting with others. T-CAP represents a process of learning another culture, in a sense: the culture of middle-class work. The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative has been attempting to gather data regarding the career-college paths of T-CAP graduates, and analysis of these data would provide more insight into the kinds of knowledge T-CAP internships provide to stu-dents.

The belief that Taft students do not generally possess a meaningful work ethic may be true in some cases, but it is also a view based on some stereotypical assumptions of poor and minority populations. While it is no doubt true that many students come from homes in which adults do not and/or cannot work a full-time job, just as many students are cared for by adults who work at least one job to make ends meet. While it seems that the curriculum of T-CAP is about employability skills, such as being dependable and cooperative, a key part of students' growth seems to be related to learning how to assimilate into a very different world: a world in which people have careers, not simply jobs, a world in which people talk, interact, disagree, and dress differently than they do. It is not an official goal of T-CAP that students learn to dress or talk differently, but it seems to be one of the key pieces of curriculum for some students. Moreover, it may be that the students who do end up taking internships are more

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likely to be successful in a career of some sort, since the students who have attendance and failure problems at school do not qualify for an internship in the first place.

The official curriculum of T-CAP, in its workplace focus, is based on helping students understand what a career is, what preparation is required for different careers, and what these careers actually look like in the real world. The program also structures an experience, in the eleventh grade, that connects these careers to programs at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, a two-year college in the city and a co-founder of T-CAP. According to one administrator, Cincinnati State helps push kids towards postsecondary education through the Career Planning Program run through the Offices of Counseling and Admissions. This program, not part of the original design of T-CAP, was added on several years into the program when school administrators and CYC officials found that students needed much more help — as potential first-generation college students — with the tasks of finding and enrolling in programs that fit their interests, as well as filling out the forms required to get financial aid. Students take a self-assessment test that is scored through the Counseling Department at Cincinnati State and, during a day-long session at the college, students spend a part of the day with instructors or program directors in their fields of interest, another part of the day learning about financial aid for postsecondary programs, and another part with college leaders who attempt to motivate and encourage them.

> [The current president of Cincinnati State] . . . is totally in support of [T-CAP]. He came and talked with the kids and was just inspiring with his approach with the kids. He's real no-nonsense. "You want to get somewhere, you're going to have to look at something after high school. You want to look here, because we have a range from a ten-week program on up to something that could hook into a four-year degree or smaller. You're going to get the support you need here. Start with us and then go to a four-year school." He was great.
> – Administrator (interview, February 25, 1998)

The curriculum of T-CAP, in its work-based learning component, consists of a four-year program of preparation for the work world. It also provides the students with a great many more adults who are watching out for them. If students attend school regularly, by tenth grade they can have the guidance of a youth advocate. In interviews, most students spoke highly of the ability of YAs to help them. Student comments included, "They try to keep you on track"; "He helps me with my classes. . . . He checks out our grades every now and then"; "They come to our classes sometime to see what we're doing"; "If we're having any trouble, they help our parents help us." Another student commented that YAs are like school counselors, only more plentiful. "You can't always talk to the counselors, because we only have two of them." Indeed, Taft High School employs two guidance counselors to work almost exclusively on helping students put together class schedules. The CYC, however, funds a school attendance staff person as well as the youth advocate staff, thereby supplementing the school's meager resources for individualized help for students. Beyond the help of their YAs, students who intern can gain the help of worksite mentors for additional support.

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T-CAP has a work-based and a school-based component. The school-based component consists of two main parts: support provided by interdisciplinary teams and the T-CAP classes such as Freshman Focus and Career Focus 10. Social studies teachers teach Freshman Focus, enabling some Taft teachers to be directly involved in the T-CAP curriculum. Otherwise, the T-CAP curriculum does not often link up directly with what happens in mathematics, science, English, or any other academic classes.

> As a teacher who's only taught grades nine and ten for the last four or five years, T-CAP has not really impacted me that much. I've always been supportive of . . . [the whole program], but it is not permeating through everything. — Taft teacher (interview, February 18, 1998)

Teachers "can be supportive of the T-CAP process," (teacher interview, February 18, 1998), but such statements reveal that teachers do not necessarily feel an ownership of T-CAP. There are exceptions to this generalization; for example, Freshman Focus (ninth-grade) classes are taught by social studies teachers, and Career Focus 10 (tenth-grade) classes are taught by teachers from the Family and Consumer Sciences Department. Some administrators and teachers devote a great deal of time and effort to the program. Yet T-CAP cannot claim full integration in the life of the school. In observations of classes, we saw no lessons that linked the official school curriculum with work-based experiences; we talked to no teachers who had visited or conferenced with worksite mentors or supervisors. If teachers are not directly involved in the workings of T-CAP, then they usually do their jobs in the same way they did before T-CAP ever existed.

This incomplete integration of T-CAP into the classroom learning structure is frustrating to T-CAP and CYC leaders and may reflect a transition process to future integration. It may also reflect the resentment harbored among some teachers who feel the program was forced upon them. It may represent underlying tensions, felt by some educators at the school, between conflicting goals for a high school education — school-to-work or school-to-college? There is fear that T-CAP is concerned with the former and not the latter. Finally, the incomplete integration of T-CAP may represent the future challenges of Taft leaders: helping to make work-based learning really become an important part of school-based learning, without compromising the potential for solid academic programs leading to postsecondary studies at colleges and universities.

Finally, our focus on classroom and learning environments must include the views of students themselves. Student impressions of T-CAP were, in general, very favorable, finding the program useful and an incentive to help "more students graduate and go ahead and go to college" (according to one ninth grader). A conversation with twelfth graders demonstrates the multiple lessons offered in a school-to-work curriculum.

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Interviewer: *What do you all think of T-CAP?*

Student 1: *It helped me realize that I didn't want to be an accountant. That was so boring.... When I went there in the beginning, they didn't have anything for me to do. I dropped out of a class that I had to have and then when I tried to go back, they told me they didn't have any work for me. From the beginning they didn't have any work for me and it was boring.*

Student 2: *T-CAP has helped a lot. The experience is real good. Sometimes it just helps you decide what you don't want to do more than what you want to do.*

Student 3: *Well, see, T-CAP ... has helped me see what my career objectives are, and how it would be to work in a professional atmosphere — the association with fellow employees — and also what I want to take in college. Where I work at, I had to take up art history. I sort of liked it.*

Interviewer: *You work at the museum?*

Student 3: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *What kinds of stuff do they have you doing?*

Student 3: *Right now, typing, photocopying, mailing letters. Also, working with kids. Telling them about the different galleries and what's in them.*

Interviewer: *Were you interested in art before? Is that how you took this job?*

Student 3: *Really, I tried to pick the easiest profession.*

This apparently honest dialogue seems to reveal several important points about student impressions of T-CAP. Not all workplaces are alike; there are some where students have little if anything of substance to do, as in the case of the accounting firm mentioned. Students usually indicated, however, that the real-work experience is valuable, even if it is in an office where the work is not what they expected. And finally, students who seem to have little career direction might stumble onto something they find interesting.

One senior student seemed to have integrated extremely well into an internship placement.

> *I help the account executives come up with different ideas. I do office staff assistant work, and they train me on all the different equipment that we use. I've been out at the Tri-View Center, which is our interviewing center, and they showed me how to use the equipment out there. They're showing me how to do practically everything that they do. — A senior-class student*

Note the student's use of "we" and "our," and the way she has been incorporated into many facets of the organization's operation. She helps people come up with ideas and, in her view, has become a trusted part of the organizational team.

More commonly, students acknowledge that T-CAP internships, even when they are not a student's first choice in placement, teach them skills.

> T-CAP jobs, I kind of like [them]. The program I kind of like, and I kind of don't. I like it because of the two jobs that I've been to. I've had two jobs and they really weren't in my field. I wanted to be an electrical engineer, but they put me in retail and in education. So it wasn't really benefiting me in any kind of way. It did show me how to communicate with the public and how to work with others. — A student

This comment seems to echo themes of the Employability Skills Training Day and the program emphasis on workplace skills. While these social skills are crucial to successful employment, it may be that they are the main focus of the learned curriculum for many students. Some teachers say that T-CAP could supplement these social learnings by building better bridges to the academic life of the school so that essential academic skills — such as writing, reading, analysis, and figuring — would be emphasized at work as well as at school.

While many teachers emphasized the value of these skills, several expressed the belief that most of the students who engage in internships would have probably made it to successful employment without T-CAP, since only those with passing grades and good attendance can participate in internships. This belief is related to the fear, among some teachers, that T-CAP over-emphasizes work at the expense of college. One teacher told a story of a girl who had expressed an interest in college, but after a T-CAP internship in the housekeeping department of a local hotel chain, the girl succeeded in earning a raise and subsequently quit school. For students raised in poverty, short-term monetary gains are often much more alluring than the longer-term gains of college. Other teachers raised concerns that T-CAP internships sometimes exclude students from taking courses required by many universities, such as foreign languages and fine arts courses, and from participating in after-school sports, clubs, or meetings with teachers.

All things considered, however, Taft and T-CAP have dramatically shifted the learning process for students. Students learn valuable lessons beyond the walls of the traditional classroom. This expansion of learning environments could not happen without the partners of CYC and the businesses and community agencies it represents; however, the communication between school and community partners has transformed learning environments only partially.

T-CAP and School Corridors

Corridors are where colleagues meet, discuss, plan, and interact in various ways. In this section, the relations between teachers, administrators, staff, and CYC employees are explored. How do these interactions among adult colleagues at the school shape T-CAP and its influence on students and teachers?

As we examine this question, the metaphor of the octopus, with its linkages between school and partners, can again be useful. T-CAP personnel — CYC employees such as the youth advocates — have added another layer of support for students, but this also adds another layer of personnel which must be integrated, in some way, into the organization. Both the T-CAP work-based coordinator (a retired Procter & Gamble executive) and the CYC employee who serves as a direct liaison between Taft and the CYC (a former Cincinnati schools administrator) are unusually autonomous individuals at the school. Beyond monthly meetings with the principal and fellow CYC leaders, neither person is integrated into the site-based management process in any way. The youth advocates, however, operate differently. They are, theoretically, the link between teams and T-CAP, between teachers and the school-to-work vision that is T-CAP. One of the duties of the youth advocate is to regularly attend team meetings, working with teachers on any T-CAP-related issues.

Yet communication between the octopus body — Taft High School, as personified by Cincinnati Public Schools employees — and its arm of T-CAP, funded largely through an external and autonomous CYC, is uneven and inconsistent, as in the example of the youth advocate–teacher relationship. Relations between teachers and YAs are somewhat troubled. At one YA team meeting of eight YAs in the fall of 1997, the issues raised included the problem of the best way to approach teacher team meetings. For some YAs, teachers were a frustrating group of people with whom to work. As the researcher's field notes indicate, the YA meeting revealed tensions between YAs and teachers.

Field Notes

Some YAs would rather not go to team meetings, because they are held at the end of the school day when, from the YAs point of view, many teachers seem tired and uninterested in discussing students. YAs believe it is their job to keep teachers on task and identify the key problem facing a student, rather than simply complaining about students. One YA suggested a checklist of issues to help teachers focus on the problem at hand with each student. Some teacher teams, and some individual teachers, seemed more effective than others; and while some YAs were discouraged and frustrated by their work with teachers, others didn't have problems with teachers. It seems to help if they have worked with one team of teachers for a long time; then everybody gets to know one another well. YAs agreed that the point of teacher team meetings seemed unfocused and irregular between teams, that the meetings did not always focus on students. – October 17, 1997

Difficult relations between YAs and teachers seem to be almost built into the school structure. YAs were being blamed for students wandering into their office without a hall pass, which meant that teachers were letting students out of their class without a note. YAs had a similar concern about their relationship with the school counselors. They felt that information was not always distributed in a timely fashion and that a spirit of cooperation was missing in the counselor's office, and that there was a con-

tinued notion of "us" and "them." One YA expressed that all teachers should be told, "if you don't want to be a part of T-CAP, then say so, and we can transfer you to another school." Clearly, some tensions of ownership, school vision, and communication are being felt by personnel within the school.

The work of the YAs seems complicated by the fact that they are, by definition, an addition to the school. YAs are funded through grants secured by the CYC and are not regular Taft staff. They are not considered part of the teacher teams and are not involved in the site-based management process, and there are few links — institutionally or socially — between YAs and other staff. Furthermore, not all students have a YA: students are assigned a YA in tenth grade if they have a certain grade-point average and minimal attendance record. Some teachers expressed concern that those students most in need of a YA were not able to have one. The Over-Aged Proposal that failed to pass in the spring of 1998 contained a recommendation that the service of youth advocates should be available in the ninth grade. At a minimum, it said, the over-aged students should be served.

Part of the tensions between YAs and teachers may have to do with teachers' concerns about T-CAP itself. Two primary criticisms were provided of the program. The first of these dealt with the way T-CAP classes and internships pull students out of academic classrooms. One teacher's remarks reveal the ambivalence of teachers toward T-CAP.

> . . . [I had] juniors and seniors last year, so they got to leave the last bell of the day and they went to their jobs. A lot of these kids were college-bound students, and they really needed to learn more academics and less on the job. Then again, I can see the goodness in going to see these people on jobs. Our kids are very deprived in seeing adults in the work force. So I think there's something that needs to be weighed, because sometimes their job got to be more important than their education. That was the scary part, too. — Taft teacher (interview, February 18, 1998)

The second of the concerns that teachers have with T-CAP is related to how teachers, by and large, have no real input into aspects of the program like internship placement or the work done by students on their internships.

> I sort of wish that teachers had more input on their skill ability [as it relates to] work force. . . . If I see a child who is extremely good in mathematics, I would like for them to work with somebody who works more with mathematics, instead of somebody who does social stuff. . . . I wish we had more input on [that]. — Taft teacher (interview, March 18, 1998)

Another teacher remembers being told that he was not to contact worksite mentors under any circumstance. Teachers are told, in all sorts of direct and subtle ways, that their business is classroom learning only. While it makes sense that channels of communication between school and work be regulated for the sake of simplicity and clarity, the views of teachers as professionals in the field of education seem under-utilized in the T-CAP program and curriculum.

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In the corridors of Taft, communication between partners is sometimes functional, sometimes strained, and rushed, given the nature of the workload of both teachers and YAs. As for communications between CYC employees who are not YAs, we witnessed very few exchanges; CYC leaders seemed to communicate with only a few key leaders (a weekly meeting between the principal and key CYC leaders, for example).

T-CAP and the Boardroom: Issues of Communication and Control

The boardroom, as used here, symbolizes when, where, and how decisions get made in a school; therefore, issues of communication and control are essential to consider in the implementation and ongoing integration of T-CAP into Taft High School.

Ever since the CYC was formed in the late 1980s, as a response to national attention to school reform, Taft has been the recipient of a great deal of attention. This attention has taken the form of extra personnel, program funding, and ideas for school restructuring. The nature of the CYC's involvement in the over-age problem symbolizes the participation of partners, especially for-profit entities like corporations, in the renewal efforts at the school. The CYC provided money and personnel to hire an on-site liaison at Taft, a district administrator who successfully pushed ideas through and wrote grants to fund many renewal efforts at Taft, especially T-CAP. Of his role, he stated that he wants to push teachers to see that "we had a problem." He tries to "wake teachers up, in a sense, to the problems of their school" (interview, May 4, 1998). The partnership between the CYC and Taft is viewed by many of the staff as both beneficial and problematic. While the funding, extra personnel, and general assistance are desperately needed, some teachers at the school worry about a corporate agenda being thrust upon Taft, without the genuine input of professional educators who work at the school.

As indicated, more than one teacher noted the irony of the implementation of T-CAP. After the CYC spent months of time and funding in helping Taft make the transition into a site-based management school, the leaders of the CYC then proceeded to create and sell a vision of school success in the form of T-CAP. The ideals of democratic self-governance and the professionalism of educators were, in some senses, sacrificed for the perceived higher ideal of efficiency and program implementation. In the end, T-CAP seems to have achieved important goals, and many or most teachers and students find value in it. Its integration is far from complete, however, and it may be that full integration will involve a more open communication and decision-making process than the one that brought T-CAP to Taft in the first place.

When teachers discuss T-CAP in their site-based management committees, it is always from a position of outsider. Teachers do not consider T-CAP something over which they have any control. This is not to say that teachers want to fully control T-CAP; they often express gratitude to CYC leaders and

YAs who help them provide more support and opportunities for Taft students. Yet we witnessed no occasion on which a teacher committee critiqued and requested changes or alterations that were subsequently made in the T-CAP program. This is not to say that no such occasions exist, but teachers usually talked as though T-CAP was a given, a program not under their domain. If the phrase "T-CAP *is* Taft" were really true, more teachers would feel a more genuine ownership of the program than is currently the case.

In a school where resources are always needed, the problem of control and decision making is tied to funding. The presence of corporate Cincinnati is very real and provides genuine help to the school, sometimes through informal channels. One researcher's field notes describe a scenario observed at one of the site-based management meetings.

Field Notes

The talk [at the committee meeting] turned to [Procter & Gamble CEO] John Pepper's visit last Monday. Pepper and one of his vice presidents, Bob Wehling, had toured the school last week and sat down with a group of teachers for a discussion. Mr. Smith, who attended the meeting with his teammate, Ms. McGuire, tells of how Ms. McGuire mentioned needing team money when Mr. Pepper and his vice president, Mr. Wehling, asked her what the school needed. Mr. Wehling gave her his "personal promise" that the $10 thousand she asked for would be given. Mr. Smith finished his story with words of praise for Ms. McGuire, and there was clapping around the room. – November 19, 1997

School partners can provide genuine and unexpected help to Taft teachers. Sometimes, as in the case of this promised sum of money, there are no strings attached. But at other times, partnership help comes with the stipulation that teachers share or even relinquish control over the domain of education. This has caused some problems in the full integration of T-CAP into the school. Communication between partners is made much more difficult when the views or interests of one party are taken more seriously than those of the other.

Another serious question to consider when examining the financial assistance of school partners is the long-term continuation of program funding. While there are no certainties about any type of funding dependent on governmental tax-collection systems, grant-generated funding sources such as the CYC are even more likely to fall prey to the shifting tides of donor and philanthropic interest.

School partners can use their financial power to focus public attention on school issues. The chief executive officer of Procter & Gamble, John Pepper, has helped to do this in Cincinnati. On January 7, 1998, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* published an article reporting that Pepper had written a letter to the editor of the paper urging City Council to begin paying the previously promised $5 million annual payment for school repairs in the district. Pepper had made a copy of his letter available to all city council rep-

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resentatives. In this letter, reported the *Enquirer*, Pepper "emphasized that he was writing in his role as co-chairman of the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, a partnership of Cincinnati schools, city officials, and business leaders that aim to improve educational opportunities."[39] As president of one of the nation's most powerful businesses, Pepper is an important ally for Cincinnati schools. His efforts represent the potential of the partnership efforts at Taft and the promise of successful urban schooling.

T-CAP and Continual Renewal

Those who work most closely with T-CAP have acknowledged some of the problems that relate to lack of integration between Taft classroom and T-CAP curriculum. At a faculty meeting in March 1998, a proposal was described to Taft employees that would attempt to address this problem. Four T-CAP cooperating teachers would be hired to start in September 1998, funded by Ohio's Earn and Learn Program, to teach three classes in their subject area. Two of the four hired were slated to be reading teachers, but each one would serve one of the four core academic departments at Taft. Their first duty was classroom teaching, with the following more specific duties outlined beyond their own classrooms:

> (2) Use the remaining two periods to connect to the employers who are active in the various components of T-CAP, i.e., classroom speakers panel, career exploration trips, job shadowing and internships. (3) Participate in team meetings when working with department members on interdisciplinary units. (4) Become familiar with the operation of T-CAP employers, identifying ways that the classroom academic instruction can be connected to learning occurring at the T-CAP worksite. (5) Work with the department's teachers to infuse materials and experiences from the worksites into the curriculum. This will include developing and writing lessons based on employer's input.... (6) Work closely with the Youth Advocates and the T-CAP Lead Teacher to connect the school-based learning and the work-based learning. – Vacancy announcement, T-CAP cooperative teacher, draft #2

This plan, as introduced during the March faculty meeting, would require the elimination of ninth- and tenth-grade facilitators. Groans were heard around the room as some teachers wondered how they would take on the work currently done by facilitators. As it turns out, the plan was not operationalized in the fall of 1998 because of insufficient funding.

As the proposed introduction of the T-CAP cooperative teachers makes clear, partnership relationships develop over time and continue to change as needs emerge and are addressed through new policies and programs. It is a very positive sign that plans are in the works to make better links between T-CAP curricula and Taft classrooms. It is also a positive sign that, through the over-age proposal, plans are being

discussed to bring the services of youth advocates to more students than simply those who are already experiencing success at Taft. The introduction of cooperative teachers may signal that improved communication between the arms and the body of the octopus is in the future of Taft reform. Without introducing change in the way that decision making takes place, however, these communication links could signal more one-way communication. As the job description for the cooperative teacher notes, employers may eventually have input on teacher-designed lessons, and teachers are to learn about what happens at employer worksites. Many Taft teachers are eager to learn more about how they can connect classroom learning to job learning, but as job-related lessons begin to be inserted into the classrooms, the sphere of T-CAP grows as the professional decision-making spheres of teachers decrease even further than the limits imposed by district standards and testing. How can teachers and partners work together to create fulfilling, directed learning experiences without either party giving up their rights to professional judgment and decision making? Do the arms of the octopus tell the body what to do? Does the body instruct the arms? Or do the two work in harmony, informing and regulating one another as conditions and needs warrant?

Questions for Discussion

1. How can teen pregnancy efforts be made more preventative in nature? How can community agencies and institutions become more directly involved?

2. When school partners introduce new programs into site-based managed schools, how do these programs come under existing school governance? How do the governance structures of T-CAP and Taft overlap? Can site-based management committees have any meaningful input, for example, on the T-CAP program, curriculum, or vision?

3. How can the school continue to work on links between T-CAP internships and school-based learning? How can interdisciplinary work between teachers (including between discipline-based teachers and career-focused teachers) help to make the most of the experiential learning that can happen in the workplace?

4. How do Taft educators balance a focus on academics and a focus on work? How is this balance measured or monitored, and in what forums is it discussed, if at all?

🏛 Further Reading

Some good ideas for helping T-CAP field activities (job shadowing, internship) relate to academic subjects can be found in the following:

Owens, T. R. (1997). On the way: A journey toward work-relevant education. *Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 22 (2), 95-106.

Olson, L. (March 1998). The new basics in school-to-work. *Educational Leadership*, 55, 50-53.

Stasz, C., McArthur, D., Lewis, M., & Ramsey, K. (1990). *Teaching and learning generic skills for the workplace.* Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

Grubb, W. N., Davis, G., Lum, J., Plihal, J., & Morgaine, C. (1991). *"The cunning hand, the cultured mind": Models for integrating vocational and academic education.* Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

Resource for thinking about collaborating and partnerships with community organizations:

Gray, B. (1989). *Collaborating: Finding common ground for multi-party problems.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Teaming at Taft

To me, the most important part . . . of teaming was it helped us because you learned how to know your teachers. You learned what you couldn't do with one teacher, what you could do with another teacher. By our twelfth grade, it was like a family, you know? All of us knew each other. . . . We knew all the expectations. I think that was the most helpful part about teaming. The . . . worst part is that when you get out in the real world, all teachers are not like [the teachers on our team at Taft]. – Taft graduate (interview, July 15, 1998)

Teacher Teaming

Teacher teams are one of a variety of school reform initiatives that have been introduced to urban schools in the past 20 years. Recently, reformers have critiqued the way in which the bureaucracy of urban school systems stifles teacher creativity and professionalism, and they have promoted a bottom-up approach to school reform. These reformers have promoted giving teachers more authority and professional opportunities within schools, thereby expanding the knowledge base of teachers and furthering innovation among those who work closest with students. The general goal is to generate student engagement with learning and provide the opportunity for sustained and meaningful interaction with a core group of respected adults.

This vision of school-based school reform corresponds with critiques of urban schools as inhuman, impersonal organizations that further the alienation of inner-city youth. Drawing on new management theories that call for decentralization, worker-based participation, and democratic organizations, school reformers have called for new management systems of school-based decision making, teacher collaboration, and participatory decision making at the school level. The central assumptions behind these theories is that the people closest to the problem — the teachers — need authority to address problems, and that they need a supportive and collaborative workplace environment in which to do that.[40]

Urban educational reformers in particular have argued for the importance of small schools in big cities where students can be treated as individuals, where teachers can work personally with students, and where the entire school can operate as a collective, flexible, and caring organization. Models draw-

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ing on this theory include the "house plan" and the "school-within-a-school" plan, in which students are scheduled within a smaller unit in the school, sharing teachers, counselors, and other staff with a small group of students. In this way, big high schools are made smaller, with an associative increase in personal interaction. Related reforms include block scheduling, where students attend class for longer, more sustained periods of time, and the school day is essentially simplified and slowed down for more meaningful interaction in the classroom.[41]

Teaming is another popular reform that draws on the same principles of school-based decision making and community. The teacher teaming structure is both a school-based management device, whereby teachers gain more decision-making authority over their classrooms, and a method of creating smaller communities within schools. Under teaming, a group of three to five teachers — usually teachers of core subjects — share a common cohort of students for at least two years. With teaming, teachers can work together planning lessons, comparing notes on student progress, advising students, and creating a cohesive educational program. Teaming inherently includes a component of accountability, since a set group of teachers is held responsible for the performance of students.

Some teacher teaming initiatives have included curricular changes in interdisciplinary work. For the most part, however, the emphasis has been on creating intimate environments that promote personal interaction between teachers and students, ongoing and consistent staff support, and staff involvement in school decision making. Secondary school teaming is typically limited to grades nine and 10. The Cincinnati School Board (in cooperation with the Cincinnati Teachers Union) introduced ninth- and tenth-grade teaming in 1997. There are two main reasons for keeping teams in ninth- and tenth-grade only. First, most certification requirements for science teachers are discipline- and grade-specific, thus restricting science teachers to certain subjects in specific grades only (e.g., ninth-grade biology, eleventh- and twelfth-grade physics and chemistry). Some Taft science teachers hold older comprehensive certificates that allow them to teach across the four grades, but these types of licensures are becoming obsolete. New licensure requirements in the state of Ohio are increasingly restricted to specific grades and subjects. Thus, state regulations create one significant barrier to ninth- to twelfth-grade teaming.

The second reason most teaming systems are restricted to ninth- and tenth-grade is a belief that teaming is more of a middle school model based on caring and community, and that older students need more independent learning and more options in their coursework.

But at Taft High School, teaming developed on a ninth- to twelfth-grade model, in part because teachers organized for that model, and in part because the Taft Career Academic Program required that model. One central idea behind T-CAP was that students needed to be with a team for the full four years in order to take advantage of job training and to coordinate with the youth advocates who would advise students through their years of schooling and internships.

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At Taft High School, teacher-student teams are designed to remain together from ninth grade to twelfth grade, after which the group of teachers takes on a new ninth grade. Teams include four core subjects (mathematics, English, social studies, and science) that share the same cohort of students for the four core subjects. Youth advocates are supposed to coordinate with each team. The students have two electives in which they encounter students and teachers outside of their core group.

In the ninth and tenth grades, there are two regular teams and one special education team, but because of the high dropout rate after ninth and tenth grades, the number of regular teams remains at two in eleventh and declines to one in twelfth grade. In addition, special education maintains one team in each of eleventh and twelfth grades. In the 1998-99 school year, because of cuts in teacher staffing and lower enrollments in the higher grades, there will be two combined eleventh- and twelfth-grade teams.

Team activities have included everything from field trips to the country or a museum, team-building activities like awards ceremonies, team T-shirts, parties and celebrations, field trips related to specific curricular units, parents' nights, college fairs, workshops to fill out financial aid forms for college, team attendance at school athletic events, motivational speakers, and fund-raising activities.

In this chapter, we look at the ways in which teaming makes an impact in classrooms, school corridors, and boardrooms. The experience of teaming for students and teachers in classrooms is used to examine the ways in which teaming makes an impact in the learning environment at Taft. In the school corridors, the ways in which teachers learn and negotiate their roles with other teachers on teams are described. Finally, the boardroom dimensions of teaming — its origins and institutional organization — are discussed in the final section.

Classrooms: How Teaming Makes an Impact

Interviewer: *Do you think your teachers know more about you because they're teaming?*

All students: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *Is that good?*

All students: *Sometimes.*

Interviewer: *Give me an example of what they know.*

Student: *I have older brothers that went here. My brother just graduated from this team, so they know a lot about me.*

— Ninth-grade students (interview, February 1998)

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Teaming provides personal supports and connections that are unusual and meaningful to many Taft students. Many students spoke about how the basic structure of teaming provided them with a sense of guidance, consistent supervision, and support. Students spoke about how their teams of teachers kept tabs on them, keeping them on track and making it more difficult for them to skip class or slack off in school. They noted with wry appreciation and some frustration that because of teaming, students "don't get away with anything" (interview, February 18, 1998). Students often described teams in terms of "family" and their teachers as "second mothers and second fathers." Indeed, the teaching of academic subjects is seen as only part of the work of a team. As one recent graduate of the Gold Team recalled about his team teachers, "They went past teaching long ago. They went five steps past teaching" (interview, December 6, 1997).

The community created by teaming also helps make school more of an attractive place for students. Students describe teaming as "fun because you stay with the people you know." "Those teachers get to know what kind of person you are. Whenever you fall back, they know a little bit why and they can help you more than a person who doesn't know you as well" (interview, February 18, 1998).

The sense of community that teams can create also helps students to show care about each other. A graduate of the Taft Gold Team recalled how her cohort helped their less motivated peers.

> There was a three-step process. First, we would notice a problem with a student and talk with them. Then we'd let the teachers know about it. Then the teacher would step in. There was a lot of trust between teachers and students. – Gold Team graduate (interview, December 11, 1997)

Teachers also emphasize the way that teaming furthers long-term personal relationships, which can create a comfortable and safe classroom environment for students. Teachers and students have to get to know one another and have to learn how to deal with one another. One teacher said that the advantage of teaming was that students "get to know me . . . I don't think they feel threatened in my classroom . . . they feel comfortable" (interview, July 5, 1998).

Teaming can also create a sense of pride within cohorts and an amicable competition between teams. The legacy of the first successful graduating team — the Gold Team, which graduated 86 students last year (an 80 percent increase in graduation rate over the year before) — created a high expectation for all future Gold Teams to live up to. A current Gold Team member said, "Other teams look up to the Gold Team as if we're the leaders. Like last year, we had the most seniors to graduate. They expect more from our team than others." And some tenth graders joked with each other about their team pride.

Interviewer: *What team are you all on?*

Student 1: *They are the Olympians. We're the Shining Stars.*

Student 2: *We're smarter than them.*

> – Tenth-grade students (interview, February 18, 1998)

Some students explain that teaming has also affected the shape of their classroom and the way they learn. Teaming helps some students make sense of school and helps them to understand their studies. Some students appreciate the consistency of the teaming structure, in that it allows them to get an idea of what to expect the following year, because they know the teachers.

Of course, some students also felt a dark side to this experience: that teachers might develop "a certain idea about you ... and some of them carry it over and hold a grudge against you for the next year" (interview with students, February 18, 1998). Teachers, too, recognized this potential problem — if a teacher and student had a personality conflict, if they "can't work through that personality conflict, that can hurt for four years" (interview with teacher, February 18, 1998).

But if some students saw teaming as a powerful structure that supported their experiences at Taft, other students saw teaming as little more than a scheduling scheme. A twelfth-grade student described the importance of teaming as nothing more than having the same teachers for two or three years. Some teachers, too, saw teaming in this functional kind of way: teaming could mean nothing more than meeting with colleagues to check attendance and performance.

Students' emphasis on the personal aspects of teaming are echoed by teachers. Like students, teachers appreciate the increased personal interaction that can come with teaming. Not only do students seem to do better in school, but the experiences of teaching become more meaningful. One teacher's appreciation of the personal aspects of teaming was echoed by many.

> [Teaming] gives us the chance to really get to know our kids. . . . You get to establish more of a personal relationship, and you can do more on a personal level. [Students] might come to somebody with something they would normally not go to a teacher for. You have more of a chance to build trust. I think the teaming has been superb. — Taft teacher (interview, June 19, 1998)

Personal relations work both ways, and some teachers spoke about how students gave back to their teachers. "These kids knew us so well, they knew first thing in the morning if we were in a bad mood, and a lot of times I found a chocolate on my desk from one of them" (interview, December 11, 1997). Some teams resemble close families where teachers nurture, advise, counsel, nudge, and laugh with students, and students respond with affectionate kidding, respect, and improved behavior and school work. There is a lot of close physical contact in this school, with teachers drawing their arms around students, hugging shoulders, and patting them on the back, while students hover around favorite teachers, leaning up against them and draping their own arms around them.

Teachers incorporate this personal emphasis into much of their team planning. One team was considering incorporating the topic of social relations into team classes during Brotherhood Week in February. Another team planned a field trip to the circus, around which each team teacher would build lessons about animals. Teams also strategized ways to encourage good behavior and more regular atten-

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dance by their students, through either informal points or rewards systems. Teachers of a ninth-grade team worried about some of their students' lack of knowledge about personal hygiene, and they brain-stormed ways in which they could incorporate these lessons into the class. One teacher, who had spent much of the year teaching her team the importance of social manners, including thank-you cards, received flowers from her students upon the death of her mother. Each student in the team had signed the card, and true to her own lessons, she wrote each of them a thank-you card.

The emphasis on individual students' social and personal betterment means that team meetings are places where personal concerns about individual students and students as a group are fully expressed. Teachers spend much of their time in meetings talking about immediate student problems, the ways they are trying to deal with them, and the ways their colleagues might help them. They also share good news about students, and compare and analyze different experiences — Why is one student so rude to one teacher and so polite to another?. Much of the talk revolves around attendance issues, with teachers trying to track the location of students who often come to one class, skip two more, and return later in the day. Teachers sometimes mention long-term planning, but it tends to be classroom-based (a group lesson on social relations next February, for example). Questions of curriculum or classroom pedagogy are rarely raised.

Team meetings allow teachers the opportunity to support each other and to help each other make sense out of difficult classroom situations or challenging students. Teams thus work to help teachers' sense of professionalism and self-esteem in the classroom, to dispel loneliness, and to provide personal support on a day-to-day level. In the very challenging working environment of this inner-city school, teams can significantly help teachers simply survive the day better. A new teacher in one team appreciated the way the team offered advice about lesson planning and handling difficult students. Another teacher said,

> If I didn't have the team to fall back on, it's like you're swimming upstream by yourself. At least here, you're swimming upstream with a group, and they tend to be stronger. There is that strength in numbers, and the kids know that we back each other up. —Taft teacher (interview, February 18, 1998)

On the other hand, the feeling of support and consensus in teams might also allow teachers to ignore significant problems or attribute a classroom problem to students' own personal issues. Here again, teachers tend to focus on the individual and personal, and the way that teaming helps individual teachers work with individual students.

> If a child is misbehaving in my class, they're misbehaving in Miss Hall's class, and they're misbehaving in Mr. Myers' class, or they're not doing work, we know it's not us, personally, that is having a problem not reaching a child. There's something else going on in the child's life. Then we have to approach it totally different. —Taft teacher (interview, February 18, 1998)

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The effect of teaming on academic work is raised less often by both teachers and students. In our interviews, some students articulated different types of pedagogy or learning in their classrooms as a direct result of teaming. Students in a special education class reported that in their team they appreciated the experience of learning how to "work together and ask each other's opinions. Just working together as one whole team" (interview, March 11, 1998). But in general, students tend to speak about teaming in a personal, not academic way. It is significant that so many students described teaming in terms of relationships with teachers and not in terms of changes in curricula or learning experiences.

Some teachers spoke about the effect of teaming on the way that they taught and the way that they thought about teaching. According to one experienced teacher,

> Teaming makes it more difficult for me to maintain a wall between me and the student. It's easier to see the student through other people's eyes — like other team members. So it by nature changes pedagogy, because I'm teaching students and not subjects. — Taft teacher (interview, December 6, 1998)

Some individual teachers make efforts to make interdisciplinary links. A social studies teacher had her students use rulers when making charts after hearing from the mathematics teacher in the team that students were having trouble with rulers. When teaching economics, she asked the students to explain compound interest, knowing that the mathematics teacher had recently taught a lesson on the topic. And she sends her students to the science teacher to clarify science questions raised in her class. In another team, the mathematics teacher is working on reading problems to help students develop reading skills and to help the English teacher, who is increasingly frustrated by those low-level reading skills.

Teaming seems to encourage this kind of occasional interdisciplinary work between teachers. But time constraints and the restrictions imposed by the state standards discourage teachers from developing new interdisciplinary curricula, although teachers are interested in the topic. At a teacher inservice in November, a 40-minute session was allocated to teaming and interdisciplinary curricula, specifically because a large number of teachers had expressed an interest in the topic at a faculty meeting earlier in the year. The session was run by two administrators and attended by 14 teachers. This was an afternoon inservice, planned and put on by the Taft staff. Because people arrived late, the meeting started 15 minutes late, allowing barely 25 minutes for the session. After an initial welcome and example of an interdisciplinary lesson using science and African-American history, teachers were divided into groups with one representative from each of the core subjects.

In the groups, each person was to identify three key concepts, issues, or themes that they taught in their subject area, share these themes with the group, and ask questions for clarification. Together, the group was to brainstorm possible projects or lessons that would include all of the themes.

One group of mathematics, science, and health teachers designed a lesson on over-the-counter drugs. Students would develop a chart of drugs, using mathematics skills for charts, and study digestive

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tract and physiological effects. Another group, consisting of a mathematics and chemistry teacher, designed a lesson using decimals to figure out how electromagnets work. A team of English teachers and one science teacher discussed a lesson in genetics and personal identity that would raise the issue of individualism versus social identity. A social studies, science, and health teacher designed a lesson in diseases and individual responsibility.

The teachers worked enthusiastically in their small groups and came up with some interesting ideas. But the limited time of the session limited the depth of their work and effectively prevented any discussion about the purpose or value of interdisciplinary curricula — why it might be helpful or not to students or how teachers might go about conceptualizing these new curriculum ideas. Furthermore, there was no follow-up discussion about how to actually implement interdisciplinary curricula, given the restrictions of time, required curricula, and student ability. Nor was there any follow-up to the administrator's initial comment that the curriculum should keep in mind the school-to-work component of the school. As in many of the discussions among Taft teachers, there was little relation of classroom work with the T-CAP material. Because there were no youth advocates at the inservice meeting, teachers were not reminded of this component of the school.

Corridors

Field Notes

Tenth-grade teacher team meeting in October. In attendance are three teachers and two youth advocates. Topics: traffic in hallways, bathroom passes. An attendance check across classes is conducted, then a variety of individual students are discussed.

- girl who takes multiple trips to the bathroom
- boy who is often high, maybe on crack
- girl with an attitude problem, a terrible temper
- boy who was switched to Double A[42] — a good idea; he has a much better self-image now
- girl who has been to class only three times
- girl who is doing better since she moved out of Double A
- girl in Double A who is pregnant (her mother told a teacher); the father is a student in special education
- the principal's office wants a list of all students who are failing by first quarter
- discussion of some students raises conflicting descriptions: "He's rude to me. He's fine with me." — October 17, 1997

Teachers meet in team meetings three times a week at the end of the day. Sometimes a youth advocate or a grade facilitator visits to discuss a student, but usually it is the team of four teachers who meet in a classroom. Team meetings cover a variety of topics but, for the most part, they center on information about individual students (for example, a student who is failing one class, news that a student is pregnant, significant behavior problems of one student noticed by all teachers, a boy who is harassing the ninth-grade girls). School policy is occasionally raised as teachers track students who were sent to administrators, students who were caught in the hall without a pass, or other issues.

Many teachers were very reluctant to begin teaming: They disliked such a significant change, and, more specifically, many feared the loss of their own independence in the classroom. One long-time teacher who was particularly reluctant to begin teaming was made a member of the Gold Team, which eventually set the standard for team excellence.

> See, I had taught for many years without any help from anybody. I had been observed when I was a third-year teacher by an administrator and had not been observed for the next 20 years. Or 25! So I didn't want to mess with these other people. Go away! But you know, I was curious. And it's wonderful for the kids. – Taft teacher (interview, June 19, 1998)

For some teachers, teaming can successfully challenge traditional notions of teaching as isolated, individualistic work.

While teaming does seem to have significantly changed teachers' relationships with a core of students and other teachers, the school structure remains quite traditional, and teachers still speak of their jobs as being isolated in a classroom. If teaming allows teachers to meet with each other two and three times a week at the end of the day, it did not necessarily help them to integrate their classwork during the day or coordinate and work with their colleagues during class time. Nor has teaming significantly changed the structure, ethos, or purpose of the teachers' work day. A science teacher who was very supportive of teaming and liked her team still described her work in this way,

> You have to remember, we have a very isolated day. . . . When the bell rings at 8:00 [a.m.], from 8:00 to 2:09 [p.m.] I am isolated with students except for my prep bell, when there's no opportunity to see students because they're in another class, or my lunch period, which is 30 minutes uninterrupted, but you have to go to the restroom and have to do all kinds of other things. Essentially, a teacher's day is pretty much set. – Taft teacher (interview, February 18, 1998)

To prepare for the introduction of teaming in 1993-94, teachers were forced to move their classrooms, which had been grouped according to departments. This traumatic physical change also rearranged social arrangements. Physical proximity of teacher teams to one another helps enable teamwork. One teacher talked about how she and her fellow team member frequently popped into one another's classroom across the hall, and how they felt that the fact that students were seeing them communicating together on a regular basis likely contributed to an overall sense of community within the team.

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But new team members and teams that do not work very well might be less likely to experience this kind of exchange. One teacher, who worked in a highly functional team in which teachers shared a lot in the past, is less likely to casually drop in on the classroom of a new teacher, because of a concern that this teacher needs to be established with the student without a senior teacher's intervention.

In the first year of teaming (1993-94), Venture Capital money paid for training in teaming at the Mayerson Academy (see Chapter Six for a more extensive discussion of Mayerson). Currently there is an absence of a systematic mechanism for training incoming teachers in the principles of teaming. This has led to increasing disparity across teams in how they work and how well they work. This is reproduced and increased as new teachers assigned to those teams have no other vehicle for learning about teaming or the norms of the team to which they are assigned. Teachers are not always clear as to why they were assigned to one team. Two teachers reported that they were essentially "thrown into" a team simply to fill vacancies, and that this team did not even share a lot of students; the team was pretty dysfunctional as a result.

Taft teachers do have access to professional development in areas like teaming, cooperative learning, and technology use from the Mayerson Academy. But not all new teachers take advantage of Mayerson. Last year, one team of new teachers sought and got formal training in teaming, but another new group did not.

Teachers and administrators talk easily about teams that are identified as dysfunctional, but there are no formalized efforts to address the problems in these teams. One teacher has suggested that a functional team meet with a dysfunctional one to help the teachers work out their problems. Two teachers are currently discussing writing a kind of handbook for teams to offer advice both about daily functioning of the team and examples of team-building activities and also more formal advice about college guidance, scholarships, and available resources, for example. In general, the feeling seems to be that dysfunctional teams are the result of personality conflicts or the dynamics of individual groups, and that there is little that can be done to address those types of problems.

Teachers in teams that work well together are willing to help each other out when necessary by covering each other's classes or sometimes doubling up classes. Covering for a team member's class is not so daunting, because the teachers on a team all share and know each other's students. Students then are less likely to skip or engage in disruptive behavior, because the teacher knows them and is not a strange substitute teacher.

Teaming also supports the work of T-CAP, because teachers can work together to design extra T-CAP related lessons or connect their coursework to T-CAP issues. This kind of adaptation of the curriculum does not seem to happen very often, however, primarily because of the great pressure teachers are under to prepare students for proficiency tests and to get through the standard curriculum.

Teachers in ninth-grade teams have more of an opportunity to connect to T-CAP because of the Freshman Focus component of the ninth-grade year — an introductory course in careers that is taught

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by the social studies teacher. Ninth-grade teachers attend the Freshman Focus field trip, when students leave the school to visit job sites. Teachers felt that students' experience of teaming both helped them to appreciate the activities of Freshman Focus and was a factor in their good behavior while on the trip. Thus, teachers felt that their consistent involvement in students' lives in the classroom could help outside of the classroom area, too, and that, to some extent, T-CAP programming could not work without teachers.

> I was on the trip where we went to the hospital today . . . and the kids were well
> behaved. What if I hadn't known the kids? If there's only one T-CAP teacher, and the kids
> are going to three or four sites, that doesn't help. You have to have somebody who knows
> the kids on the field trip with them. So it's really a team effort. – Taft teacher (interview,
> February 18, 1998)

Another problem is scheduling. At a department-heads meeting in January, teachers and administrators wrestled with the problem that by meeting three afternoons a week in teams (and every other week on a fourth afternoon for site-based management meetings) they are not able to meet with students at a time of the day when students are on campus and able to meet with teachers.

> The way our school day is set up . . . is not student-friendly. . . . We have meetings every
> day after school. . . . Right after school is when you normally have clubs. Right after school
> is when you normally have things like band. All the things that normally happen right after
> school we never get to do, because we're always running to these meetings. – Taft teacher
> (interview, February 18, 1998)

Furthermore, many eleventh- and twelfth-grade students are also not available after school because they are at their T-CAP internships.

This problem became more critical after an administrator announced that the proficiency test scores for seniors showed that students who had tutoring did significantly better than those who did not and that the school has some outside funding to pay teachers to tutor after school. The group discussed holding a massive tutoring session the weekend before proficiency tests.

But even after agreeing upon this "Crunch Weekend," the group continued to wrestle with the problem that because teachers meet in team meetings after school, they can't meet with students. One administrator commented that the schedule had been built around teachers' needs, not students. People suggested ways of scheduling team meeting in the school day while still staying within the union contract. If team meetings were scheduled during the day, however, teachers might want to use the time for preparation time, grading papers, catching up on paperwork, or meeting with students. For all that teachers seem to like in teaming, it was agreed that time for preparing was the most valuable currency in a teacher's workday. As one teacher said bluntly, "If you don't hold us to our team meetings, we'll use it for prep time."

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🏛 Boardrooms

> I think teaming is great the way it's done. I like teaming, because we have a lot more flexibility. I didn't particularly like the way they were describing how we would work on it in the beginning, and I wasn't really for the way they were pushing it. But I don't think anyone here dislikes teaming at this point and would want to go back to the other system . . . but we never did vote for this. — Taft teacher (interview, February 18, 1998)

The origins of teaming at Taft High School echo some of the earlier patterns of school reform being initiated and implemented from above. The four-year teaming scheme came with T-CAP and was intricately involved with T-CAP. In the spring of 1993, Taft teachers were asked to vote for either a ninth- to twelfth-grade teaming plan or a ninth- to tenth-grade plan. The ninth- to twelfth-grade plan was supported by the designers of T-CAP, whereas the ninth- and tenth-grade plan was part of a city-wide Cincinnati School Board teaming initiative. Teachers voted for the ninth- to twelfth-grade plan after teachers from the Gold Team volunteered to take on a cohort of ninth graders for the full four years. But the teachers were divided about the issues, and two years later, teachers voted for the ninth- to tenth-grade model. According to teachers, the four-year plan was originally adopted and then maintained by the school anyway as a condition for T-CAP. Thus, teaming was essentially proposed and promoted from above, and the T-CAP schedule continues to shape teaming at the eleventh- and twelfth-grade levels.

By offering teaming for all four years as demanded by the institution of T-CAP, Taft was excluded from the Cincinnati Public Schools district teaming plan, which was to offer teaming for only ninth and tenth grades. The Cincinnati school system currently supports teaming for grades nine and 10 at eight schools (12 more will be added in fall 1998).[43] Support by the school system means allocation of monies and time for inser-vice and planning, and significantly more support for redesigning curricula and scheduling and using budgets. This exclusion has hurt Taft teachers to the extent that they are short on special funding and allowances to support teaming initiatives.

On the other hand, being outside the school district's contract as a four-year teamed school gives Taft some freedom from regulations and has allowed Taft teachers to shape teaming to their own vision. For example, some team leaders at Taft change every quarter, whereas in the Cincinnati school system, team leaders are one-year paid positions. Taft teachers opposed this notion of individual paid leadership as contrary to the notion of the shared work of a team, where everybody has the same vested interest in making the team work. Taft teachers have also heard about the extensive meetings and paperwork required of the school district's teamed schools, often expressing their relief that they are free of that type of central bureaucracy.

Because of their independence and unique status, Taft teachers often express pride in their own self-created model, even with its flaws. One teacher recalled a conversation with the teachers' union.

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> They [the union] point-blank told me that I can't do teaming in the eleventh and twelfth
> grade. And I just gave up and I thanked them for telling me that I was doing the impossi-
> ble. . . . They had no idea at that time that it could be done. Now it's not easy, and you
> won't have every child who's in the eleventh grade have all four teachers. But, you will have
> enough of a handle and you will have had the past two years to build on that so that child
> still feels part of the team. — Taft teacher (interview, July 5, 1998)

If teachers differ on the benefits of two-year or four-year teaming, the debate is not a public one, and there has been no opportunity for teachers to formally discuss the philosophy of teaming. But in general, those teachers who promote teaming at only grades nine and 10 give two reasons. First, team- ing is a middle school model that emphasizes nurturing and collaboration, and older students need to develop more independent skills later in high school to prepare for college and the workforce.

Second, by the eleventh and twelfth grade, many factors work to disrupt teams. The combination of the high dropout rate after tenth grade, teacher mobility, teachers' certification restrictions, and stu- dents' involvement in other activities all interfere with the eleventh- and twelfth-grade teams. If stu- dents don't pass all their core subject credits, it might be difficult for them to remain with their original group as it moves up to succeeding grade levels. Moreover, certification requirements, scheduling, and personnel changes mean that the consistency of teachers in a team is not guaranteed. For example, most science teachers are not certified to teach all four grades, so science teachers cannot follow their cohort of students up through the twelfth grade. Teachers might be able to get certification waived, but some teachers see this as unprofessional.

> So you take an excellent chemistry teacher just for the sake of satisfying the require-
> ment of keeping the teams together for this grant proposal and say, "Now you're going to
> teach biology, which you don't really know how to teach, but you can figure it out as you go."
> — Taft teacher (interview, March 18, 1998)

Some teachers complain that these types of problems at the eleventh- and twelfth-grade level defeat the purpose of teaming. If they don't share a majority of students and don't have a common planning bell (planning period of time), teachers and students exist in a team in name only. As one teacher com- mented, "Most of us are teamed, but some of us are at loose ends."

In the spring of 1998, Taft administrators and teachers in the Site-Based Steering Committee again began discussions about Taft applying to the public school system for formal team status, provided that the school remain a nine-to-12 teaming school.

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🏛 Conclusion

Teaming at Taft addresses students' social needs more than their academic or intellectual ones. Ironically, although teaming involves an emphasis on group activities and community building, it is primarily individualistic: the goal of the team is to help each student reach his or her potential. Teaming was introduced to Taft without an accompanying curricular vision. Rather, teaming exists in part because of the demands of T-CAP and in part because of the vision of Taft teachers that, above all else, their students need a consistent group of reliable adults in their lives. Teachers stress the development of personal relationships between teachers and students, team spirit, and symbolic activities that build both personal self-esteem and a sense of group identification with the school.

One possible problem with this approach is that it can allow the general structure of the school and the attitudes of some teachers about students to continue unchallenged. Because team meetings are one of the few places where teachers are able to meet together as adults, they often become places where teachers relax and express their frustrations — a very valuable thing, but something which in effect prevents teachers from taking broader action. Teams are places where teachers often complain about problems in the school, not places where teachers devise solutions.

This situation is by no means the fault of teachers. Teachers have teaming, but teaming does not authorize teachers to do much more than this. The curriculum is set by the state and city, teachers work with required textbooks and guidelines, T-CAP is an established institution with a set schedule, and there is no consistent support for curriculum revision. For all that teaming offers students, teaming does not provide any opportunity for broader structural change, even at the most basic level of scheduling time.

In part because of the limited time available, there is little discussion in teams about curriculum or pedagogy and almost no critical reflection on philosophy, different reasonings or understandings of teaming, or reflections on teaching and learning. Teaming does not extend to the culture of the school as a whole, curricula, discipline policies, tracking, or other structural or cultural aspects of schooling. Teachers' different classroom practices tend to be seen as individualistic and the result of teachers' own personal style, philosophies, skills, and practices. Different types of pedagogical knowledge are not seen as viable options to take on in the school in part because of the lack of significant time afforded that kind of revisionary work. There is rarely any discussion about different practices; disagreements or debates about differences are muted. Teachers essentially stay in their egg-crate model of teaching, except that three times a week they meet together. Teams that do work — like the Gold Team — were the result of the chance matching of people who got along and held like-minded ideas and attitudes about teaching.

Teachers may see the social support of teaming — social support both of students and of each other — as more realistic than challenging the institutional structure set up by state, district, and union regula-

tions, the T-CAP program, and proficiency tests. Furthermore, social needs were so immediately obvious to teachers. Students' family lives, personal worlds, and economic situations are in front of teachers' faces every day. Teachers work hard to not become despairing or pessimistic about their students' capabilities.

Studies of school-based reforms such as teaming highlight the danger of seeing reform as simply structural — such as merely changing schedules, or reorganizing classrooms and teacher assignments. These critics argue that the change process involves more than just changing structures. Participants also have to change their prior assumptions about how schools work, including very basic assumptions about disciplinary boundaries, teacher authority, and classroom pedagogy. School change has to be supported by the institution and district at large and needs to be coordinated with other reform movements. Student and parent needs must be taken into account. There needs to be adequate staffing and administrative support; and funding, space, and time need to be provided. Most importantly, the players need to undergo a significant process of rethinking and re-imagining their work if such change is to involve more than simply organizing students in smaller groups and scheduling teachers in more meetings.[44]

Some Taft teachers have begun raising just these kinds of issues. As Taft begins its sixth year of teaming, teachers talk about the importance of long-term systemic support, both from their building administration and from the school board. Teaming takes time and effort, and teachers are clear about wanting to take on more change only if they have promises of support. As high school teachers trained in subject areas, Taft teachers may not want to take on such innovations as interdisciplinary work or block scheduling unless they are fully trained and the school is fully prepared, from curricula to administration to supplies. At least two teachers mentioned that they would like to see a week-long orientation meeting to teaming, held one week before classes start in September, for full pay, and with full training and time for planning and designing more interdisciplinary curricula.

Discussions about changing the daily schedule to accommodate students and to address the attendance problem need to move beyond the discussion level toward making structural changes in union and board contracts, and a reorganization of T-CAP internship schedules. All Taft teachers need more training in principles in teaming, including conflict management; the administration would do well to play a role in facilitating or advising teams that are having trouble.

The question is: Is teaming merely a changed schedule and organizational unit? Or does it — can it — involve curricular change and changes in the broader structure of the school?

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Questions for Discussion

1. What are the variables of a successful team? How should team members be chosen? Do new or ongoing teams need training? If so, what should be the components of that training?

2. What other aspects of the school could be changed to further the goals of teaming (e.g., block scheduling, rescheduling team meeting times, more money)?

3. Should teaming encourage more interdisciplinary work? How could that happen?

Further Reading

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Chapter Six

Teaching and Learning at Taft High School

Field Notes

During a worksheet activity in the last 20 minutes of class, Mrs. S. encourages and permits the kids to help each other figure out the chemical compound formulas on a worksheet. This is called predicting formulas and is designed to help them practice what they learned today in preparation for a test in a few days. Most kids begin working independently, but within a few minutes, two sets of girls (a group of two and a group of three) are working together. One girl who finishes before the bell turns her paper in and helps another girl finish hers. Two boys ask a girl near them who is finished for help. The teacher circulates, responding to individual questions during this time. – November 19, 1997

In a career exploration class, students work on employability skills. Today, a group of students are working on mastering a particular graphic design function on a computer software program. After the teacher explains how the design tool can be used to give perspective and depth to a picture, she gives them all a picture of an old covered bridge to use as a model to copy. The teacher attempts a few times to get students to stop playing Tetris, but over the course of the period, more and more students will either finish their graphic assignment or abandon it for Tetris or other computer games. Of the 17 kids in the room, I saw around eight complete the assignment, and class was effectively over 10 minutes before the bell rang, as students played computers games and chatted with one another. – October 10, 1997

A teacher administers a short test at the beginning of the period. A boy in the back, who has just returned from a suspension (for "smart-mouthing teachers," I am told later by the teacher), is also handed a test. He says to the teacher that he doesn't know anything on the test, and she replies, "Well, I didn't send you on a sabbatical." He asks her what a sabbatical is, and she tells him it is a period off for studying, and explains to him that it was not a period off for studying, but a suspension. She tells the boy that he should have found out what he missed from classmates while he was out. He tells her he doesn't know anyone in the class well enough to call them at home. She tells him to complete the test. "I hate this class," he says, after he hands over his test moments later. – October 10, 1997

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> In a homeroom period in a special education classroom, Newstime is a focused discussion between teacher and students designed to share current news from the world. Brandon tells a story about a kid who was just killed in a local cemetery near their neighborhood. Then he tells another story about a woman who fell out of the sky through a skylight. People thought she had fallen out of an airplane, he said. Then he talks about the planets which were in special alignment last night. A new girl in the class says that she saw the planets from her rooftop last night. The teacher interjects, "Yes, once a century, the planets align like this. What does 'century' mean?" This is a lively, funny, friendly meeting. The teacher is only stern with people when they speak up out of turn. – February 7, 1998
>
> Four students are hanging around the classroom door when the teacher arrives. The students enter the room with him, and he jokes around with them as he makes preparations for class to begin, e.g., writing the names of chemical compounds on the board. He leaves momentarily to go check in at the office, and I offer to stay and watch the class. He shrugs as if to say it really doesn't matter. When he returns, the bell is about to signal first period, and he greets students by name as they arrive. – November 19, 1997

These snapshots of classroom-based teaching and learning at Taft High School show the range of approaches, styles, successes, and problems used and encountered by teachers and students in the educational process. In this final chapter of the case study, we focus on particular aspects at the heart of becoming educated: teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are the topics of the final chapter of this case study not because they are of least importance to the reform efforts at Taft, but because teaching and learning are at the center of Taft reforms. Discussing teaching and learning in the final chapter allows us to sum up and expand upon concepts or actions described in previous chapters in ways that specifically focus on student and teacher learning.

In the first part of this chapter, the spotlight is on student learning and the ways in which teachers teach and students learn. In the second section of the chapter, we examine the important topic of teacher learning: that is, how, when, and under what conditions do teachers engage in formal and informal learning about their own professional practice? In each of these sections, we look at the ways in which decision-making processes — either by teams, by Taft administrators, by district administrators, or by business leaders — affect what happens in the teaching and learning environment at Taft.

Classrooms: The Environment for Student Learning

Several aspects of the Taft High School environment make a significant impact upon the environment for classroom teaching and learning, and some of these have been alluded to or described more

completely in previous chapters. Teaming, the Taft Career Academic Program, attendance problems, school failure, a test-driven curriculum, and resources for learning all make a positive, negative, or mixed impact upon teaching and learning at Taft.

The reforms of teaming and T-CAP each play an important role in classroom learning, although the potential of neither reform has been fully realized across all classrooms. Because of teaming, teachers and students can know one another over a period of several years. Because many students have histories of school failure and come from families in which members may have had unsuccessful experiences with schooling, these relationships can make the difference between staying in school or dropping out. These relationships between students and teachers set up a collegial environment in many classrooms and add to a collaborative approach to learning. Teachers, too, often rely on team meetings to release tension, solve problems, plan interdisciplinary units, and think creatively about their own teaching; thus, teaming helps both teachers and students be more successful in their respective tasks. Even though by eleventh or twelfth grade, students may have fewer in-team classes than out-classes (classes taught by a non-team teacher), the ongoing presence of the team teachers and team classmates provides a family-like atmosphere which enables teaching and learning to successfully occur in the face of serious challenges posed by the social and economic context of the community. The stronger the team, the more likely that the team atmosphere will be able to challenge the impediments to learning found in the social context. Team strength hinges on teacher commitment, availability of training, commitment of administration to the teaming concept, and other factors.

T-CAP, the reform that was adopted almost simultaneously with schoolwide teaming, has had both a major and a minor impact on teaching and learning at Taft. While many teachers have not changed their classroom practices as a result of T-CAP, students experience the school in a very different way than they did five years ago, before the program was implemented. For those students who end up qualifying for internships, T-CAP signifies an educational experience that provides structured, out-of-classroom learning. The classroom aspects of T-CAP, including the career explorations class described above, provide a range of experiences for students at Taft, from job shadowing to learning about careers and how to prepare for different lines of work. T-CAP, as a whole, places a heavy emphasis on school as a preparation for career, and this vision has an effect, in subtle ways, across the whole school. As a result of T-CAP, teachers and students quite often think about learning in terms of what the student will be in the world of work. Other worlds — civic, political, humanitarian — are not emphasized as uniformly across the curriculum.

Discipline and attendance problems cause difficulties in the construction of a successful teaching and learning environment. Students who have been put out for a suspension, or who have been in In-School Suspension for a day and missed class work, present problems for teachers. The new discipline policy, constructed in the spring of 1998 by the Student Management Committee, seems to put a more punitive bite into some disciplinary procedures. Getting tougher on discipline seems to be the latest trend in

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efforts to cope with disciplinary issues that distract from learning. Attendance problems present similar issues — students may be gone for days or weeks at a time, reappearing again, and presenting teachers with enormous gaps to be filled. Some teachers reported that increasingly they feel trapped by the amount of after-school meetings they have at Taft and how these meetings get in the way of after-school tutoring for their students. Both discipline and attendance problems often involve extra individual time and attention from teachers, who often feel strained to provide these resources. While the ninth- and tenth-grade facilitators ease these burdens (and many teachers commented on the help they receive from facilitators), they do not remove them from the teaching and learning environment as a whole.

As far as the curriculum itself, Taft, like many public schools in Ohio, is increasingly test-driven. Much effort and energy go into preparing students for the standardized tests that they take in ninth and twelfth grades, due in part to the way in which the district and the state use the results of these tests to grade Taft, as well as judge the success of the principal. A city-wide Common Exam, introduced during the 1997-98 school year, adds yet another testing sequence to the lives of Taft students and teachers. For a school like Taft, where students perform poorly on such tests relative to their district counterparts, these tests make a pervasive impact upon the whole school and work of teachers. A great deal of time is absorbed by test preparation and test taking at Taft.

The curriculum itself is designed by the central administration of the Cincinnati Public Schools system with the help of hired teachers from around the district. While we did not conduct a review of the ninth through twelfth curriculum, we did witness the curriculum in action when it was being taught in the classroom — in physics, in the effect of gravity on a bouncing ball; in biology, in the lesson of Watson and Crick; in social studies, in the reading of *Animal Farm*; in mathematics, in lessons on multiplying fractions; in history, in a lesson on the French Revolution. Teachers used a variety of means to engage students with material that is sometimes very far removed from the day-to-day lives of these students.[45] Some teachers relied on personal influence, using the mutual relationship between teacher and student to make curricular knowledge interesting and engaging for students. Other teachers attempted to draw in local events, asking students to connect course texts or concepts with happenings in their city or neighborhood. Less successfully, other teachers presented material in a more strict lecture style, the stand-and-deliver pedagogy that may be successful with some students, and for some types of knowledge, but is difficult to make work with many Taft learners.

Computer-based learning is increasingly used by teachers who have access to the limited computer resources available for Taft students. Venture Capital funding has purchased computers for each department chair to assist in record keeping and the tracking of student credits. IBM-donated computers have also assisted in record keeping, as well as in instruction. In a few cases, teachers have written and received grants to purchase computers in their own classrooms. In the relatively few classrooms that have computer terminals (for example, six terminals in the back of one mathemathics classroom; four terminals in a special education classroom), teachers will have students use computer technology for word process-

ing or tutoring on special subjects, as well as for other purposes. In these cases, teachers use computers as tools for learning, the same way that books, pencils, and calculators are used. More ambitiously, Taft reformers have envisioned a computer-based curriculum as a feature of the Special Pilot Project for at-risk ninth graders as described in the 1997-98 Over-Aged Proposal (see Chapter Three); several school leaders have acknowledged their enthusiasm of this curricular direction. Some veteran teachers, however, are more cautious regarding the promise of computer technology, not only in terms of trusting the promises of donated computers, but in terms of computers as a way to fix Taft's problems. Computer-based learning is only as good as the teacher utilizing the technology, and the knowledge, commitment, and experience of teaching professionals cannot be replaced by computer-based learning.[46]

The impact of recent reforms on teaching and learning have been indirect; Taft has not chosen curriculum or pedagogy as a direct focus for renewal but has, instead, instituted management and work structures (site-based management, teaming), as well as programmatic changes (T-CAP) that have produced important changes in the way that teachers teach and students learn. One measure of teaching and learning success is graduation rates: graduation figures for 1997 (86 out of 120 seniors graduating) and for 1998 (78 out of 95 seniors graduating) tell an important story about the renewal efforts at Taft. The 1997 class improved the graduation rate by over 60 percent from the previous year. Retention of students across four years also improved, with the class of 1997 retaining 120 of its original (roughly) 250 students, while the previous year's class had retained only 80 students of the original 250. Both teaming and T-CAP, Venture Capital and other funding programs, and Taft's community partners have helped to produce these dramatic improvements in graduation rates. Renewal at Taft has been an unusual combination of outside forces using their influence to change the school (the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, the activist business community), as well as inside change agents in the form of teachers and administrators who have sought solutions to the problems encountered in their own work (teaming as an outgrowth of the Silver Team pilot). This unusual combination of inside and outside renewal forces have resulted in some dramatic improvements in student success as measured by graduation rates. We now turn to a separate but related question: What differences have these changes made in teacher learning?

Corridors: How Do Teachers Learn More About Their Own Work?

Teachers are engaged in constant problem-solving as they do their daily work, and thus, teachers must keep learning in order to do their jobs with any degree of success. However, to tackle the serious challenges of teaching and learning at Taft, as well as to satisfy district guidelines for certification, teachers must seek more formalized learning opportunities.

One such opportunity for informal learning can take place in the teaming structure. Team meetings are sites for reflection, discussion, and brainstorming; teachers can learn more about their students, can figure out ways to engage or challenge their students, can plan connections in curricular units with teammates in different disciplines, and can discuss issues of political importance to their work (district policies, union issues, or local community issues), thereby expanding their perspective on their work and world as teachers.

Another opportunity for teacher learning is through the Mayerson Academy for Human Resource Development. Established in 1993 as a result of the partnership between the Cincinnati school system and the CYC, it was funded by a $1 million grant from the Mayerson Foundation and now operates out of its own building, a renovated former middle school. This academy has been held up by the RAND Corporation and the Rockefeller Corporation as an outstanding example of new teacher training programs. Mayerson, which operates as separate from, yet vitally connected to, the CPS system, spends $1.6 million annually to help school personnel learn how to do their jobs better.[47]

Teachers at Taft generally give good marks to the courses and workshops at Mayerson. Most teachers at Taft took a one-week Basics of Teaming course after the school restructured to a team-based model in the early 1990s. Venture Capital funds, in the first year (1993-94) of the grant, helped pay for the substitute teachers so that Taft teams could be trained on school (work) time, as opposed to nights or weekends. During the 1994-95 school year, Venture Capital funds also helped send Taft teachers to Mayerson for a course on cooperative learning. Another teacher took a short course at Mayerson on science methods and brought back some hands-on activities to his classroom. Along with over 3,000 of their Cincinnati public school colleagues annually, Taft personnel make use of Mayerson's resources, though usually on their own time and at their own expense.

Venture Capital money has supported other professional-development opportunities in addition to Mayerson attendance for teachers. During the first year of the grant, a group of teachers used Venture Capital funds to visit various urban centers with schools engaged in renewal efforts similar to the type that Taft was initiating. Teachers visited schools in Missouri, California, Washington State, Texas, and Pennsylvania to bring back information on teaming, school-to-work programs, and other educational innovations. An assistant principal, immersed in graduate work at a nearby university, knew of these renewal sites through her research and helped teachers set up visits to these schools using Venture Capital money. Several teachers believed that these trips not only built individual enthusiasm for teaming and T-CAP, but helped the school at large become more aware of, and open to, new ways of doing things that were actually working at similar schools.

Grant money also played a part in helping teachers learn more about T-CAP when it was in its early developmental stages. CYC officials found grant money to fund teacher internships, in which teachers could spend two weeks going around to different businesses to learn about what life was like in the business world.

Teachers also use inservice programs to learn about their own work. One inservice program was held at Taft after school hours during the 1997-98 year, and our research team was present to observe

this time of teacher learning and reflection. After-school inservice provides a challenging environment for learning. The Best Practices Committee that had organized the inservice program had arranged four different sessions (two run simultaneously in two time blocks of 45 minutes), with each teacher slated for two of the four. The four sessions, presented by Taft teachers from the Best Practices Committee, were on efficacy, site-based management, cooperative learning, and interdisciplinary teaching. These topics were chosen in part from a survey completed by teachers at the beginning of the year and, in part, based on the input of the committee. Each session was to last 45 minutes, with a snack break in between session blocks, although each session ended up being less than 40 minutes long as result of a late start.

Some general themes emerged in these sessions. The first was the constraint of time. Not only were teachers trying to learn new ideas and applications after working a seven-hour day, but they were further restrained by the after-school time due to the necessarily short (45-minute) sessions. Teachers seemed, in general, tired and unenthusiastic in these sessions. The short sessions meant that for each topic, there was time to do little more than introduce the topic by way of lecture, provide some handouts for examples or illustrations, and use the remaining time for some preliminary discussion, demonstration, or participation by teachers. For some topics, this seemed adequate; the site-based management session was designed to make teachers more aware of Taft's site-based management structure, its strengths and its weaknesses, and this seemed to be a realistic goal for a 40-minute time slot. For teachers to learn about interdisciplinary curricula requires that teachers have the time and motivation to do it, as well as the space to negotiate around city standards and proficiency test preparations in order to be more creative in their pedagogy.

An inservice model can provide a starting point where such topics are concerned, but it is limited by the time and scope of these programs as well as by the generalized nature of the model. The inservice model chosen by the committee was a generic overview of several topics believed to be of interest to the faculty, especially new faculty. There was no time for individualized shaping of the learning to fit an individual teacher's or team's particular goals and challenges.

In sum, these three settings for teacher learning — team meetings, the Mayerson Academy, and inservice programs — are the predominant contexts for school-based teacher education and development. Outside resources, such as Venture Capital resources and CYC funding, help teachers take advantage of these and other learning opportunities. While a great many teachers no doubt receive much of their continuing education at nearby colleges and universities (53 percent of the staff have master's degrees or further postsecondary credentials), these three contexts can help a teacher (in the work setting and with colleagues) expand knowledge and mastery of content, pedagogy, or both. Though the professional-development model has some limitations, teachers at Taft can find various informal and formal settings in which to learn and grow. Teacher development and professional growth are absolutely essential to school renewal; teaming and Mayerson especially provide teachers a framework in which they can improve the quality of student learning at Taft. These mechanisms for ongoing learning are especially important for Taft and other city schools which experience high teacher turnover (20 to 25 percent annually).

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Chapter Seven

Moving Forward with Renewal

The school reform literature suggests that most school renewal is tinkering, a gradual modification over time. "It is less common to find stories of bold leaps forward, breaks from the past or ventures into the unknown. . . ."[48] To those involved in Taft's renewal process that was sparked in the late 1980s, it should be rewarding to know that Taft is an anomaly in this regard. Taft educators have taken on bold new restructuring (teaming) and programmatic/curricular (T-CAP) initiatives, changes which require teachers and administrators to rethink how they do their daily work.

Change is a process of inquiry, collaboration, and transformation. Inquiry is the questioning, the study, and the investigation that is needed before one understands the nature of a problem and its context. Secondary teachers in high-poverty neighborhoods have extremely demanding jobs that make time for inquiry quite rare; creating contexts for professional inquiry is a challenge for such schools. Collaboration — the necessary joining of forces across discipline, job description, and clique — is required in any change process. Institutional change does not happen when people are not allied in some common visions of what schooling should accomplish. An unfortunately rare occurrence in many high schools, collaboration goes against the norms of autonomous teachers who have traditionally been comfortable with teaching alone, with their doors closed. Transformation is the intended goal of a change process — the reforming of an institution and its culture, values, and outcomes so as to improve practice, and the results of that practice. To conclude the case study, the processes of inquiry, collaboration, and transformation that have characterized school renewal at Taft High School are examined.

Inquiry

In Chapter Three, detailing the over-age initiatives over the past nine years at Taft, we saw a process of inquiry in a long-range view. We saw how teachers, administrators, and community partners tried to engage in inquiry about the over-age problem, studying statistics, looking at the literature, and exchanging ideas based on professional experience at Taft and in other schools.

There are times, however, when time for inquiry is traded for action, and sometimes this results in programs or plans that could have been improved with a bit more time at the drawing board. The integration of T-CAP, for example, into the whole school might have been better facilitated by letting more faculty become involved in its planning and problem-solving processes. The November 1997 inservice program might have been more energizing for teachers had the committee had time to do genuine inquiry into the learning goals of their colleagues. Time is at a premium at any school, however, and at Taft, where teachers understand the urgency of their work in the lives of many of the students, action is highly valued. Teachers often expressed a willingness to just try something, even if they were doubtful about the complete soundness of the program, because even a poorly executed program or change might save a few kids, and thus seem justifiable.

Professional inquiry requires the least expensive but the most valuable commodity in an adult's day at Taft: time. Time is obviously a commodity that is limited, yet the school and the district can work together creatively to help teachers make more space for inquiry in their work. A good first step might be to ensure Taft the district professional-development days that other Cincinnati public schools receive.

Inquiry also implies that the answers are not already provided; in other words, teachers and administrators at Taft require autonomy in their governance in order for inquiry to be meaningful. Taft currently enjoys a significant amount of autonomy within the district. However, it may be that this autonomy is waning given the current pressure for Taft to join the Cincinnati schools model of teaming (a ninth to tenth model rather than ninth to twelfth). The one-size-fits-all style of governance is not only antithetical to the site-based-management structure but limits teacher ownership. If educators do not "own" their school, they are far less motivated to engage in the inquiry necessary to solve the problems encountered in their work.

Collaboration

Despite many hurdles, a large portion of teachers, staff, and administrators are continually working together on making the school a place where more students can learn and succeed. The sheer daily effort of creating learning environments for these youth is draining enough, but many teachers and administrators give up Saturdays and evenings to address these problems.

Collaboration does not mean people always agree and get along. Conflict, as long as it is not constant or sustained, is a natural byproduct of collaboration. Such conflicts can be over practical matters, such as a team disagreeing over an issue involving a student, or they can be over more philosophical disagreements, such as whether high school should prepare students for college or for the world of work. Educators at Taft may even fight over the meaning and phrasing of a problem, understanding the importance of correctly identifying what is at issue before a program is established to address the problem.

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One of the most tangible benefits of collaboration for change, however, is the spirit of cooperation that is engendered in the professional culture of the school. Taft, at its best, represents a network of adults — facilitators, teachers, youth advocates, administrators, and community supporters — who share bonds of professionalism and mutual respect. They are an extremely diverse group joined by their common concern for the students. While many may disagree over what is best for Taft youth, the shared motivations to help their students make collaboration possible at the school.

Another important project of collaboration relates to the changes brought about by T-CAP. Ever since the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative was formed in the late 1980s, it has been an important partner to Taft and, in this sense, has been a collaborator in the change process currently underway at the school. This partnership has taken the form of extra personnel, program funding, and ideas for school restructuring. The nature of the CYC's involvement with special programs at Taft is complex and can lead into struggles over the mission and work of the school.

Transformation

Two major school-renewal programs were examined in this case study: teaming and the Taft Career Academic Program. Teaming has dramatically changed the ways that teachers and students spend their days at Taft; many teachers report the benefits of learning in increased communication, a growing sense of community, and collaborative problem solving. T-CAP has made significant changes as well. Students spend a portion of their Taft experience in a program that keeps their eyes on the future, helping them to envision what might be possible in their lives after graduation.

The transformation potential of teaming and T-CAP has only been glimpsed, however. Many teams struggle to engage in truly collaborative work; the struggles of teacher licensure and keeping teams together will continue. Commitment to the vision of teaming is required for school leaders to continue the transformation that teaming has brought about at Taft. Similarly, T-CAP has made great progress in its leaps forward on behalf of students, yet its total integration into the life-blood of Taft — into the classrooms, teams, and interrelations between T-CAP and school staff — is still in process.

Taft High School represents an anomalous change story for reasons beyond its nontinkering approach to renewal. Taft has engaged in a transformation process independent of its district, using both insider initiative and outsider activist energy to make changes. Through the assistance of the CYC, Taft has been able to forge a unique path in renewal. In many ways, Taft has been a rebel in this stance: Its resistance of the district's teaming model in favor of its own is a source of pride for many in the school. This relative autonomy from district regulations should be noted by district-level administrators and politicians. Local schools need the power to envision and enact their own reforms, in their own ways (as long as these ways do not trample civil rights or harm students). School-based professionals under-

stand their own practice and students in a way that no Cincinnati School Board member ever can, and providing the autonomy and the time for educators to collaboratively engage in inquiry should be the goal of local districts and state governments.

In a sense, Taft's relative autonomy within the district has been purchased by the CYC, and it often places the school in the enviable position of gaining personnel and other resources desperately needed to help meet its goals. Yet it is unclear whether the CYC, which currently operates as an outside entity in the school, can penetrate school practice without building more bridges with educators across the school. Making T-CAP more relevant to the whole curriculum does not mean that Taft should be focused only on work, to the exclusion of other equally important domains of life. T-CAP and teaming are both initiatives that represent genuine and ongoing transformation in the life of Taft High School, if solid bridges of communication and shared governance — between teachers and T-CAP employers, between teachers on teams, between teachers and students on teams — are constructed and maintained.

Even with such bridges in place, however, Taft will still remain fixed in its context: a neighborhood in Cincinnati's West End, and home to the city's worst problems of poverty, crime, and underemployment. Schools alone cannot solve these problems. School reform, at its most effective, is social reform — expansive and impacting the entire family, from economic-development incentives, to sound welfare policies, to meaningful educational institutions.

This very large reform agenda, however, should not stop Taft educators from also focusing on the smaller, but no less important, daily tasks of caring about students and colleagues in the work of teaching and learning. The commitment to Taft students, shown in these daily, ongoing tasks, has been shown throughout this case study, in long-term efforts such as the over-age problem-solving process, and in smaller moments like teacher-student interactions of engagement and mutual respect. All teaching requires such commitment, but Taft is a context in which this commitment must be fueled by a passion for teaching, a belief in equality of opportunity, and an intelligence that combines practical street smarts with theoretical insights about teaching, learning, growth, and development. This commitment thrives in many places at Taft High School, and it is hoped that renewal efforts at Taft continue to be inspired by such commitment.

Conclusion: Collaboration, Leadership, Persistence

Taft educators are remarkably tenacious. Despite many hurdles, a large portion of teachers, staff, and administrators are continually working on making the school a place where more students can learn and succeed. The sheer daily effort of creating learning environments for these youth is draining enough, but many teachers and administrators give up Saturdays and evenings to address these problems. In

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addition, they often use commendable problem-solving strategies to understand the obstacles they face — looking at their own data, talking to one another, strategizing with their partners, and writing successful grant proposals. As frustrating as this process of reform is for Taft educators, it is admirable for many reasons. It is often inclusive of many people in the school and not the domain of a few leaders; it involves serious inquiry and reflection on the part of professionals directly engaged with the problems (as opposed to top-down initiatives); it is the work of people who seem to have the best interest of Taft students at heart. While many may disagree over what is best for Taft youth, the shared motivations to help their students makes collaboration at the school possible.

FOOTNOTES

1   Stephen J. Simuda, *Race in Cincinnati,* Stephen H. Wilder Foundation, 1994.

2   Zane L. Miller and Bruce Tucker, *Changing plans for America's inner cities: Cincinnati's over-the-Rhine and twentieth century urbanism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), p. 1-71.

3   All Cincinnati statistics from Michael E. Maloney and Janet E. Buelow, *The social areas of Cincinnati: An analysis of social needs: Patterns from three census decades,* 1970-1990, University of Cincinnati School of Planning, Urban University Program of the State of Ohio (1997); and Allen Howard, Inner-city poverty keeps rising, *Cincinnati Enquirer* [hereafter: *CE*], July 21, 1997.

4   Carmen Carter, Agency wants to improve West End housing, *Cincinnati Post* [hereafter: *CP*] 22 November 1997.

5   Miller and Tucker.

6   Phillip J. Obermiller and Michael E. Maloney, Living city, feeling country: The current status and future prospects of urban Appalachians, in Kathryn M. Borman and Phillip J. Obermiller, *From mountain to metropolis: Appalachian migrants in American cities* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1994).

7   Maloney and Buelow, p. 53-54; Howard.

8   Maloney and Buelow, p. 120; Cincinnati Public Schools, *Measuring up: Annual performance report for 1996-97,* p. 8.

9   Julie Raston, Low unemployment puts pressure on businesses, *CE,* 23 May 1996; Cliff Peale, Sign of the times: Help wanted, employers unable to fill, *CP,* 14 July 1997.

10 Miller and Tucker, p. xx-xxi.

11 David Phillips, quoted in Richard Green, Business leaders lend expertise, *CE,* 8 September 1991.

12 William Celis 3rd, Businesslike with business' help: Cincinnati schools shake off crisis, *New York Times,* 20 August, 1992.

13 Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, Prevention of dropouts: Three year plan, *Report to the Ford Foundations,* November 30, 1987, p. 35.

14 Paul T. Hill, Arthur E. Wise, and Leslie Shapiro, Educational progress: Cities mobilize to improve their schools, *RAND Report,* 1989, p. 13-14.

15 Celis.

16 Susan Moore Johnson, Pursuing professional reform in Cincinnati, *Phi Delta Kappan,* 69(10), June 1988:746-751; Julia E. Koppich, The changing role of teacher union leaders, *paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association,* Chicago, April 1991; Susan Martin, The impact of a local teachers' union on educational policy and practice: A case study of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, *University of Cincinnati Ph.D. diss.,* 1992.

17 Cincinnati Youth Collaborative, Prevention of dropouts: Three year plan.

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18   Taft 1996-97 school performance report.

19   Dana DiFilippo, Low scores led to truancy, CE, April 16, 1998; Christine Wolff, CPS seniors outscore '97 class, CE, April 15, 1998.

20   Taft 1996-97 school performance report.

21   Partners, the T-CAP newsletter from Feb. 1998, Vol 5, no. 1.

22   Because she failed the math proficiency test. Rita did not, in fact, graduate in June 1998.

23   Khaula finished her first year at University with a B+/A- average.

24   CYC, Prevention of dropouts: Three year plan, p. 25.

25   Ibid., p. 8

26   Ibid., p. 14. "In 1986, the [CPS] system adopted a working definition for the identification of students at risk based on existing information." Four types of information help classify students as at-risk: (1) students who have achievement scores below the 41st NCE (national 33rd percentile); (2) students who were one or more years over-age; (3) students who were reported as currently in danger of failing on a structured teacher report; and (4) students who had risk factors external to school (return from court placement, pregnant, abused, etc.).

27   Taft 1996-97 school performance report.

28   A Cincinnati-based religious philanthropy which gathered a wide array of resources to make this center the thriving place that it is today, including: private foundation money, a Community Development Block Grant, HUD funds, the cincinnati Department of Neighborhood Services and the United Way-Community Chest.

29   Youth program to guide Taft students to Careers, CE, October 21, 1993, C2:2.

30   Partners, T-CAP newsletter, July 1997.

31   Worksite Mentor Handbook, p. 1, emphasis in original.

32   Ibid., p. 3.

33   The Efficacy program used at Taft is a packaged curriculum brought to Taft by a former Assistant Principal in conjunction with T-CAP, around 1993. The curriculum is designed and marketed by Dr. Jeff Howard, an African-American raised in poverty on Chicago's south side who has, as an adult, designed a self-esteem program based on his belief that school performance problems of African-Americans in schools has to do with images of intellectual inferiority. A key principal of the Efficacy program is, "smart is not something you are, smart is something you get."

34   Worksite Mentor Handbook, p. 2.

35   In the original press release (see footnote 29), there were five pathways; college was the fifth pathway, which was eliminated as a separate pathway and integrated into the other four very early on in the program implementation.

36   Worksite Mentor Handbook, p. 2.

37   Ibid.

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38   What is T-CAP? 1997-98.

39   Council pushed to pay schools, CE, January 7, 1998.

40   Pauline Lipman, Race, class, and power in school restructuring (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 23-40.

41   Deborah Meier, The power of their ideas (New York: Beacon, 1995); Mary Lou McGanney et al., Ninth grade houses: The program and its impact in New York City public high schools, American Educational Research Association, San Francisco 1989; Mary M. Polite, Curricular and instructional decision-making: Snap shots of team innovation at Cross Keys Middle School, (Urbana, IL: National Center for School Leadership, 1993).

42   Teaming at Taft High School is tracked; for example, there are special education teams, and advanced-level teams, e.g., Double A. As this example shows, students can be moved by teachers in and out of different teams as ability and judgment dictate.

43   Mark Skertic, Teachers teaming up, CE, January 11, 1998:B1.

44   Bank Street College of Education, Making big high schools smaller, January 1989; Lynne M. Haney, The role of images in the secondary school change process, Teachers and teaching: Theory and practice, 2 (1), 1996.

45   Working-class and poor children come to school with less middle-class "cultural capital," and this often puts them at a disadvantage when their performance is judged against middle- and upper-class schools (see Jay MacLeod, Ain't no makin' it [Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991]). Cultural capital refers to the habits and knowledge that are part of a culture. Middle-class children come to school with a much wider range of experiences with books, museums, and libraries, for example, than their poorer peers. Also, these students often come to school with the background knowledge valued by schooling (for example, they may understand something about Shakespeare because they had seen it or heard of it in their home; or, they may have seen an exhibit in a children's museum on the effects of gravity). This is not to say that Taft students do not have background knowledge and cultural capital of their own, but that their knowledge is not considered to be especially valuable by school authorities who are attempting to prepare students for the world beyond Cincinnati's West End.

46   See Michael W. Apple, Computers in Schools: Salvation or social disaster? The Education Digest, 57 (February 1992):47-52.

47   For an overview of Mayerson Academy, see A high-tech academy for teachers: Partnership with schools and businesses by Larry Rowedder and Debra C. Pinger, Technos, 6 (3) (1997):30-33.

48   Dennis Thiessen and Stephen Anderson, Transforming learning communities, paper presented at the Transforming Learning Communities meeting, June 19, 1998, Columbus, Ohio.

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APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

The Taft High School case study team (known hereafter as the research team) was made up of three Taft teachers and two Miami University faculty. Sonja Kelley, William Solomon, and Dr. Alonzo Gaston, all experienced Taft teachers who have played pivotal roles in Taft's change story, worked with Kate Rousmaniere and Kathleen Knight Abowitz of Miami University. Associate Professor Rousmaniere and Assistant Professor Knight Abowitz are educational foundations professors at Miami University, and the Taft teachers represent the disciplines of social studies, mathematics, and science.

The case study research and report came together over the course of 12 months. Ms. Kelley, Mr. Solomon, and Dr. Gaston coordinated all on-site research by setting up appointments, gathering school documents, coordinating classroom observations, and answering endless questions about people, programs, and the politics of school change. Professors Rousmaniere and Knight Abowitz conducted field research through the fall and winter of 1997. The research team met regularly after school or over dinner to discuss progress, plan future research activities, and analyze the data being gathered through the observations and document review. Dr. Stephen Anderson of OISE/UT made site visits to Taft on several occasions throughout the year and helped gather information and monitor the progress of a research team. The whole team worked together in writing and editing drafts through the spring and summer of 1998.

To tell this story, the research team used qualitative research methodology. Observations and interviews were chosen over surveys or other quantitative instruments so that a full sense of the culture of the school and its change process could be examined. After introducing the project research team and goals at the first staff meeting of the school year, researchers immersed themselves in a study of the life and culture of the school for approximately one semester. General information about the school was gathered through observations of teacher meetings, classes, faculty inservice sessions, informal school interactions, and school activities. Approximately 60 hours were spent in observation of meetings, classes, and other school functions over the course of the two semesters. Field notes were written up by the field researchers who gathered data. During the second semester, the bulk of the research time was used for individual and group interviews. These interviews were semi-structured and utilized a set of questions shaped by the research team. Informants for interviews were chosen for their diversity in terms of amount of time at Taft High School, role played in the change process, and gender and racial status. Interview subjects signed consent forms and were informed of the nature of the research and the confidentiality of their identities. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and the tapes were subsequently destroyed. Researchers spent in excess of 20 hours planning for and conducting

interviews. Twenty school and community leaders and 22 students (ranging from grades nine to twelve) were interviewed, and over 10 different classroom settings were observed over the two semesters. Throughout the project, a wide array of school documents, including partnership information, documentation, and media coverage, were gathered and analyzed.

Data analysis was an ongoing process. The research team met regularly throughout the 12-month study to discuss data as it emerged in observations, interviews, and daily interactions at the school. Informants in interviews, conducted in the second semester, were asked about trends and themes that had been discerned through observations during the first semester. As the university research fed our observations and ideas back to Taft High School students and faculty, the themes began to solidify and emerge as the foundations of Taft's change story. Through this process of information exchange and collaborative reflection among the research team and research informants, we were able to construct the case study report.

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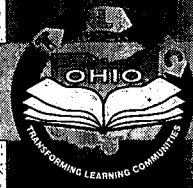
TAFT HIGH SCHOOL
Cincinnati City Schools
Miami University
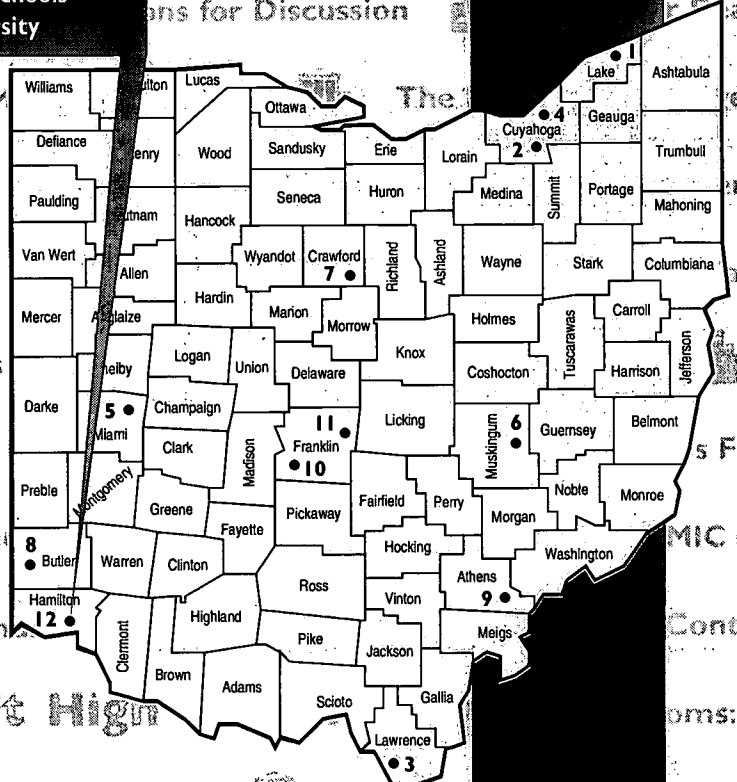
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

1 **Brentmoor Elementary School**
   Mentor Exempted Village Schools
   Cleveland State University

2 **Cranwood Learning Academy**
   Cleveland City Schools
   Cleveland State University

3 **Dawson-Bryant Elementary School**
   Dawson-Bryant Local Schools
   (Lawrence County)
   Ohio University

4 **Lomond Elementary School**
   Shaker Heights City Schools
   Cleveland State University

5 **Miami East North Elementary School**
   Miami East Local Schools
   (Miami County)
   Miami University

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

6 **East Muskingum Middle School**
   East Muskingum Local Schools
   (Muskingum County)
   Muskingum College
   Ohio University

7 **Galion Middle School**
   Galion City Schools
   The Ohio State University

8 **Talawanda Middle School**
   Talawanda City Schools
   Miami University

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

9 **Federal Hocking High School**
   Federal Hocking Local Schools
   (Athens County)
   Ohio University

10 **Franklin Heights High School**
   South-Western City Schools
   The Ohio State University

11 **Reynoldsburg High School**
   Reynoldsburg City Schools
   The Ohio State University

12 **Robert A. Taft High School**
   Cincinnati City Schools
   Miami University

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