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ABSTRACT

The thesis of this paper is that when a reform is initiated in the public schools, it is vitally important to understand the interplay between the culture of the specific reform model used and the school and classroom cultures. The paper reviews the literature covering many facets of school and classroom culture--including literature on school reform-and includes the author's experience of implementing one prominent school-reform initiative: the Accelerated Schools Project. The paper concludes that where a match between the cultures exists, or is desired by the majority, the reform is more likely to be successfully implemented. On the other hand, where the culture of the initiative and that of the school or that of many classrooms differ greatly, it is unlikely to succeed. This perspective points to the importance of developing tools to help school communities understand cultural compatibility, and it explains why one model may be appropriate for some schools while another model meets the needs of other schools. (Contains 58 references.) (DFR)

Implementing School Reform Models: Why Is It So Hard for Some Schools and Easy for Others?

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Implementing School Reform Models: Why Is It So Hard for Some Schools and Easy for Others?

Awareness of comprehensive school reform has increased dramatically since the U.S. Department of Education released funding through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD). Many schools that want to do a better job educating students are attracted to the wide array of reform models available. The school reform models approved for CSRD funding are very different in philosophy and process even though all seek to improve student achievement. Some, like Success for All, are quite prescriptive, training teachers in specific curriculum and instructional strategies, while others, like the Accelerated Schools Project, do not prescribe a curriculum, rather, they provide a decision making process and criteria of powerful learning that schools use to select appropriate curriculum and teaching strategies.

All of the models approved for CSRD funds are able to supply data on the model's effectiveness (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1998). Although models highlight their successes, none claim to be successful in all schools. Across the country reform models are flourishing in some schools, while they have failed in others. Implementation of school reform models carries a heavy cost both in district, state and federal funds, and in people's time and energy. Considerable research has been done on why reforms fail during the implementation process, such as principal turnover, lack of district office support, and changing demographics of the school (Tyack and Cuban 1995; Sarason 1996; Fullan and Hargreaves 1996). This paper asserts that many of the

implementation failures are avoidable if schools are able to ascertain the compatibility of the assumptions underlying the reform model with those underlying the culture in their school and classrooms. Before investing time and resources into a reform model, school community members should be able to discover if the gap between the assumptions underlying the reform model and those of the school are too wide to overcome and have information available to select another reform model that may be more compatible.

Information does not currently exist on why schools choose one initiative over another. Guides to models (Education Commission of the States 1998, Educational Research Service 1998, New American Schools 1998, Northwest Regional Laboratory 1998, Ross, Phillipsen, Evans, Smith & Buggey 1997), written and internet program descriptions, and design fairs held in different states help schools narrow their choices. Through careful examination of this information, schools obtain some understanding of each model's philosophy, approach to improving student achievement, training and other services provided, materials, research on effectiveness, and cost.

Schools use these resources to look for a fit between the initiative and the needs and resources of the school. Beyond a fit between the initiative and the school's strengths, needs and resources, however, is a less tangible fit -- that of the culture of the school and what is essentially a "culture of the initiative." Given that most people looking for comprehensive school reform models are concerned with results, not with cultural compatibility, they may choose a reform model that promises results but is not a good fit with the culture that exists in their school.

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Model designers recognize that implementation of any school reform model is difficult and requires the commitment of many people in the school and district to making it work. Before working with a school, model designers require the following from the school:

- Engage in a thorough investigation of the initiative prior to joining
- Obtain a vote of a vast majority of the faculty (usually 80-90%) to join
- Assess the commitment of the building leadership
- Obtain support from the district office
- Agree to participate in all training and coaching

However, these controls are often not enough. Faculty may not have truly explored the model before voting; they may not have actually voted. Too often, districts sign off on applications without thoroughly understanding the implications for the district.

Even when these conditions are met, many school communities still struggle to implement a reform because they underestimate the complexity of school change. School change involves changing the institution, but more importantly, it involves change within the people in the institution. Each person in the school holds a set of assumptions that shape and are shaped by his or her values and actions. The interaction of assumptions, values, and actions determine the responsibilities a person is willing to take to change the school (Finnan and Swanson 2000). Involvement in school reform models requires that people be willing to take on new responsibilities; this is easier to do if the new responsibilities are compatible with their assumptions and values.

Each of the reform models supported by CSRD has what can be described as a culture of its own. The model is built on a set of assumptions; it supports certain values and actions. The model provides a way of seeing schools and schooling. Thus, the implementation process becomes an interaction between three cultures –school culture, classroom culture, and the culture of the reform model. The cultures interact as assumptions, values and actions come together. In many schools, the culture of the reform model unifies members of the school community by making assumptions, values, and appropriate actions explicit. The model facilitates communication among likeminded people in much the same way as sororities, fraternities, and civic clubs provide a comfortable place for people to come together.

In some cases the interaction between the cultures of the reform model, school and classroom create a synergy that stimulates positive school and classroom change, while in other cases, assumptions collide and the school struggles to implement the model or teachers resist changing their classroom cultures. When schools have difficulty implementing a reform model or teachers resist changing classroom practice, they rarely attribute problems to cultural incompatibility, and even less frequently realize that such problems could have been anticipated by examining the fit between cultures prior to implementing the reform model.

This paper examines the importance of understanding the interplay between the culture that exists in a school and in each classroom when a reform is initiated and the culture of the reform model[1]. It synthesizes a review of

[1] Portions of this paper are drawn from Finnan and Swanson (2000).

literature covering many facets of school and classroom culture, literature on school reform, with the author's experience implementing one prominent school reform initiative – the Accelerated Schools Project. The paper concludes that where a match between the cultures exists, or is desired by the majority, the reform is more likely to be successfully implemented. Where the culture of the initiative and that of the school or that of many classrooms differ greatly, it is unlikely to succeed. This perspective points to the importance of developing tools to help school communities understand cultural compatibility, and it explains why one model may be appropriate for some schools while another model meets the needs of other schools.

Background and Methods

This paper builds heavily on the author's ten years of experience working with schools to implement the Accelerated Schools Project as well as on an extensive literature review examining all aspects of school and classroom culture (Finnan and Swanson 2000). I have worked with nearly fifty schools as they explore and implement the Accelerated Schools Project. In some cases there is clear compatibility between the project and the school (Finnan and Swanson forthcoming). Administrators, teachers, and parents embrace the project as a confirmation of what they believe about education. In other cases, schools struggle to implement the project, sometimes limping along only marginally internalizing the project; other schools merely drop the project. My experience in South Carolina is shared by Accelerated Schools Project satellite centers across

the country[2], and undoubtedly by other model developers. At satellite centers and nationally, the Accelerated Schools Project developers have explored reasons for uneven project implementation and are continuously working to address identified problems.

The literature review supporting this paper was conducted to examine research on conditions that facilitate and hinder efforts to accelerate the learning of all students. As part of a larger literature review (Finnan and Swanson 2000) I reviewed the literature on school, classroom and individual contextual features that help and hinder efforts to accelerate the learning of all students. The literature review focused on key aspects of school and classroom cultures and the role individuals' assumptions, values and actions play in the process of change.

Culture as Reflected in Schools, Classrooms, and Reform Models

The concept of culture, whether used to describe schools, classrooms, reform models, or larger societies is not easy to define, but it provides a useful framework for understanding the interactions within schools and classrooms that influence student learning. Culture surrounds us, gives meaning to our world, and is constantly being constructed both through our interactions with others and through our reflections on life and our world. Culture is so implicit in what we do that we really do not know it is there. Anthropologists say of culture that it is like fish and water -- fish will be the last creatures to discover water (Kluckholn, 1949). We do not know it is there, but it is the lubricant of our lives.

There are many characteristics of culture that help explain why implementation of reform models is easy in some schools and hard in others

[2] The Accelerated Schools Project supports a network of regional satellite centers to provide

(Finnan and Swanson 2000). An important feature of culture for the purpose of this paper is that culture shapes and is shaped by the assumptions held by people within the culture. Assumptions are those things we take for granted, that we accept as true without proof. We assume that the sun will rise in the east and set in the west. We assume that our hearts will beat and our lungs fill with air. We do not spend a lot of time thinking about these things, we just take them for granted. We also make assumptions about people, about learning, and about schools that also go unchallenged. These assumptions shape our values, which in turn shape our behavior (Evans 1996). For example, if a teacher assumes that university professors are too theoretical and removed from day-to-day challenges in the classroom, he or she typically does not value advice given by university professors. The teacher acts on this belief by sitting sullenly through mandatory in-service sessions offered through the local university.

The relationship between these components of culture (assumptions, values, beliefs, and actions) is not clearly understood to most people. As Patrick McQuillan writes, "Culture is something of a paradox: People create culture, but their cultural values predispose them to perceive the world in particular ways. Culture does not determine social action, nor is it predictive; but it defines the possible, the logical" (1998: 3). It is assumptions that define the possible and the logical.

The assumptions are made manifest in the belief systems evident in schools and in the tangible, visible signs of a culture. The school culture supports the teachers' and principal's decisions on how to set up classrooms, how to

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training and technical assistance to schools in their region. Satellite centers also conduct research

schedule classes, how to group children, what to display and where to display it, and many other aspects of the school that are easily seen by a casual observer. It also influences less tangible features of school life such as, what is considered beautiful, what is considered functional, what is considered worthwhile. The school culture also influences the processes, rules and procedures that guide work, play, and social interactions of adults and students both within the school, and to some extent, beyond the school.

Each school reform model essentially has a culture that is based on sets of assumptions. Unlike school and classroom cultures, these assumptions are stated explicitly in written materials, videotapes, and training materials. People who work for the reform models have internalized these assumptions, and see schools and classrooms through the lens of the reform model. Their job is to help schools meld the culture of the reform, the school, and the classroom so that all members of the school community work toward common goals made explicit by the reform model.

The following sections identify sets of assumptions that underlie school and classroom cultures. The same sets of assumptions underlie the culture that shapes the Accelerated Schools Project. Examples of compatibility and incompatibility between the Accelerated Schools Project and school and classroom culture are provided.

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and revise and refine materials provided to schools.

Assumptions Underlying the Accelerated Schools Project and School Culture that Influence Project Implementation

The following are sets of assumptions underlying the Accelerated Schools Project and the culture of schools that influence the success of project implementation:

- Assumptions adults hold for students
- Assumptions about leadership and decision-making
- Assumptions about adult roles and responsibilities
- Assumptions about best practices and structures for educating students
- Assumptions about the value of change.

The Accelerated Schools Project makes these assumptions explicit in its philosophy (the project's commitment to challenging all students, its three principles, and set of nine values), in its democratic governance structure, in its research-based decision-making system, and in its commitment to providing powerful learning to all students (see www.acceleratedschools.com; Hopfenberg, Levin and Associates 1993; Finnan, St. John, McCarthy and Slovacek 1996 for a more complete description of the Accelerated Schools Project). Assumptions that fall into these sets also exist in school cultures, but they are rarely made explicit. School communities hold assumptions that may or may not be compatible with the assumptions underlying the Accelerated Schools Project. Table 1 summarizes the assumptions underlying the Accelerated Schools Project and provides examples of assumptions residing in school cultures that are either compatible or incompatible with the Accelerated Schools Project.

Table 1
Compatibility of Cultures – Accelerated Schools and School Culture

Cultural Component	Assumptions Underlying the Accelerated Schools Project	Compatible School Culture Assumptions	Incompatible School Culture Assumptions
Assumptions adults hold for students	• All students have strengths, gifts and talents • Students are not "at risk" they come from "at risk situations"	• All students can be held responsible for their learning • All students have strengths and can learn challenging material	• Students are irresponsible and must be controlled • Students have deficits in basic skills that must be mastered
Assumptions about leadership and decision-making	• Values of participation, school as center of expertise, equity, communication and collaboration underlie commitment to shared decision-making • Governance structure and decision making process designed to promote democratic governance	• The principal encourages shared decision-making • Teachers, staff and parents are interested in participating in shared decision-making	• The principal makes most important decisions • Teachers, staff and parents are unwilling to devote time to shared decision-making
Assumptions about adult roles and responsibilities	• All adults have strengths • Adults at the school level must be empowered and take responsibility for making decisions about students • Values of trust, equity, participation, professionalism, communication and collaboration, guide all interactions among adults	• Teachers and staff are highly effective working with students and each other • Administrators facilitate a learning community • Parents love their children and will do what is best for them	• Teachers lack the skills and disposition to be effective working with students and making decisions • Administrators are "compliance officers," carrying out district policies and keeping order • Parents do not support the school and do not provide a good learning environment at home
Assumptions about best practices and structures for educating students	• All students have access to challenging learning environments • All students benefit from gifted and talented strategies or powerful learning	• Little time and effort is devoted to labeling and sorting students • Teaching is geared to increased understanding not acquisition of facts	• Students and subjects are sorted and separated • School is structured for maintenance of order
Assumptions about the value of change	• Commitment to unity of purpose, empowerment coupled with responsibility, and building on strengths puts change in the hands of school • The values of trust, equity, risk taking, participation, reflection, professionalism, experimentation, school as the center of expertise, and communication and collaboration build school-wide support for change • Systematic inquiry process and governance structure result in research and consensus based decisions that facilitate change	• Change leads to improved achievement for all students • Positive changes are possible when they are supported internally and externally • Personal change is challenging and invigorating	• Change is usually bad • Systematic change is impossible • Student achievement would improve if other people changed

The first set of assumptions concerning expectations adults hold for students are clearly outlined in the Accelerated Schools Project. The project builds on the expectation that adults (administrators, teachers, staff, parents) assume that all students have strengths, gifts and talents. The project considers that students are not "at risk" but come from "at risk situations." Some school cultures encourage adults to hold similar assumptions, such as that all students, given the opportunity, will act responsibly and try to learn (Wasley, Hampel and Clark 1997), while other school cultures foster assumptions that students are irresponsible and must be controlled (Fine 1991; McQuillan 1998). Adults in one school may assume that students have strengths and can learn challenging material (Knapp, Shields and Padilla 1995; Newmann 1996), while adults in another school assume that students have deficits in basic skills that must be mastered before they develop higher order skills (Swadener 1995; Ladson-Billings 1994; Darling-Hammond 1997).

The second set of assumptions concerning leadership and decision-making are made explicit in the Accelerated Schools Project's values of participation, school as the center of expertise, equity, and communication and collaboration. The project provides a governance structure and decision-making process that are designed to promote democracy in the school. These assumptions are compatible in schools in which the culture is built on assumptions that administrators in the school and district share decision-making and that teachers, staff and parents welcome the opportunity to be involved in decision-making (Christensen 1996; Evans 1996). Schools in which administrators

make most decisions and parents, teachers, and staff are reluctant to devote time to shared decision-making are unlikely to find the Accelerated Schools Project compatible with their school culture (Murphy and Hallinger 1992; Christensen 1996; Evans 1996).

The third set of assumptions involving adult roles and responsibilities are made clear by the Accelerated Schools Project's assumptions that all adults (administrators, teachers, staff, and parents) have strengths and the desire to be empowered to take responsibility for making decisions about students. The Accelerated Schools Project builds on the values of trust, participation, professionalism, communication and collaboration as part of its guiding philosophy. Where schools find the Accelerated Schools Project compatible with their school culture, they assume that their teachers and staff are highly effective in working with students and with adults (Darling-Hammond 1997; Finnan and Swanson forthcoming; Sizer 1992). In these schools, the administrator's role is to facilitate a learning community (Evans 1996; Peterson and Deal 1998), and everyone in the school assumes that parents love their children and want the best for them (Payne 1998; Swadener 1995). In schools that are likely to find these assumptions incompatible, teachers are assumed to lack the skills and dispositions to be effective working with students and making decisions (Metz 1989; LeCompte and Dworkin 1991; Darling-Hammond 1997). Administrators act as "compliance officers" (McQuillan 1998), and parents are seen as a problem (Lubeck 1995; Moles 1993; Chavkin 1993).

The fourth set of assumptions includes beliefs about best practices and structures for educating students. The Accelerated Schools Project assumes that

all students should be provided access to a challenging learning environment. This is done through a school-wide commitment to powerful learning and using gifted and talented strategies with all students. Schools that embrace the Accelerated Schools Project spend little time and effort labeling and sorting students; decisions on how to structure time and space in the school are based on how to best educate all students (Wheelock 1992; Sizer 1992; Lee, Bryk, and Smith 1993; Newmann and Associates 1996). Schools that spend considerable time and effort testing and sorting students and providing different learning experiences for students of varied ability struggle to implement the Accelerated Schools Project. Those that assume that it is best to structure a school to maintain order also have difficulty implementing the project (Wheelock 1992; McQuillan 1998; Knapp, Shields and Padilla 1995).

The value of change is at the heart of the fifth set of assumptions shaping school culture and influencing project implementation. The Accelerated Schools Project assumes that purposeful, data driven change is positive. The project's commitment to the principles of unity of purpose, empowerment coupled with responsibility, and building on strengths provides a framework for guiding change at the school level. Support for school-wide change builds on the values of trust, equity, risk taking, participation, reflection, professionalism, experimentation, school as the center of expertise, and communication and collaboration. The Accelerated Schools Project also provides a systematic inquiry process and governance structure that guide research and consensus based decisions.

The Accelerated Schools Project is a good fit for schools that already assume that change can lead to improved student achievement (Fullan 1997; Finnan 1996), and that personal change is challenging and invigorating (Fullan and Hargreaves 1996; Evans 1996). These schools realize the importance of support from the principal and district office (Driver 1995; Evans 1996). In many other schools, however, change is actively avoided because it has never resulted in anything positive in the past (Tyack and Cuban 1995; Sarason 1996; Fullan and Hargreaves 1996). In the context of these schools, people are unwilling to examine their own assumptions, believing that problems exist because of shortcomings of other people, not themselves (Evans 1996; Schlechty 1997). In many of these cases, change is usually imposed from the district or state, rarely reflecting the needs, desires and capabilities identified in the school (Sarason 1996; Fullan and Hargreaves 1996).

Assumptions Underlying the Accelerated Schools Project and Classroom Culture that Influence Project Implementation

Since the Accelerated Schools Project guides school-wide transformation it is important to understand the compatibility between the project and a school's culture. However, the important work of educating children occurs within classroom walls and within the context of the classroom culture. The Accelerated Schools Project, like other reform models, is successfully implemented only when compatibility exists between the project and the culture of most classrooms. As is the case with school culture, sets of assumptions form the foundation of classroom cultures. These sets of assumptions include:

- Assumptions about student learning and behavior

- Assumptions about communication and discourse in the classroom
- Assumptions about the role of adults in the classroom
- Assumptions about appropriate educational practice

The compatibility between the assumptions underlying the Accelerated Schools Project and classroom cultures is critical to successful project implementation. Table 2 illustrates how these assumptions are reflected in the Accelerated Schools Project and in classroom cultures that are compatible and incompatible with the project.

In relation to assumptions about student learning and behavior in the classroom, the Accelerated Schools Project is committed to active learning for all students. Classrooms are structured so that all students have the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths in interactive learning situations. Teachers who embrace the Accelerated Schools Project are apt to negotiate a positive, active learning environment that challenges all students to meet high standards (Meier 1995). These teachers expect students to act responsibly in class (Haberman 1995; Marks, Doane and Secada 1996). They know what their students' lives are like and use this knowledge to find ways to challenge them to learn (Phelan, Davidson, and Cao 1992; Sizer 1992; Wasley, Hampet and Clark 1997). Diversity to these teachers is inevitable and welcome (Ladson-Billings 1994; Haberman 1995; Delpit 1988).

Teachers who are unlikely to embrace the Accelerated Schools Project assume that they must control the material learned and the behavior in the classroom (Ladson-Billings 1994; Shields 1995). These teachers assume that students are best served by identifying weaknesses and focusing instruction on

Table 2
Compatibility of Cultures – Accelerated Schools Project and Classroom Culture

Cultural Component	Assumptions Underlying the Accelerated Schools Project	Compatible Classroom Culture Assumptions	Incompatible Classroom Culture Assumptions
Assumptions about student learning and behavior	• Students are active learners and take responsibility so that other students can learn • All students are given an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths • Students learn best when learning is interactive	• A positive, active learning environment is negotiated between the teacher and students • Teachers develop a deep understanding of their students, knowing both strengths and weaknesses • Student diversity is accepted and built upon • All students are expected to meet standards	• Students cannot learn challenging material and lack self control • Student diversity is seen as a deficit • Students are expected to be passive recipients of knowledge • Some students can never meet challenging standards
Assumptions about communication and discourse in the classroom	• The values of communication and collaboration and participation permeate every classroom • Powerful learning involves multiple forms of communication and is inclusive of different dialects and languages	• Discourse is communally developed • Language is used to demonstrate understanding and thought processes • Diversity of communication is built upon as a strength	• The teacher directs all discourse and communication • Diversity of communication modes is discouraged
Assumptions about the role of adults in the classroom	• The teacher's strengths are celebrated and strengths of parents and colleagues are incorporated • All adults in the classroom demonstrate the values of participation, communication and collaboration, experimentation and discovery, trust, risk taking, and classroom as center of expertise	• The classroom invites involvement of other educators, parents, and community members • The teacher facilitates the creation of a positive learning environment • The teacher ensures that the classroom is known as a center of expertise • the teacher is a "learning leader" in the classroom, transmitting passion for ongoing learning	• The teacher expects to work alone • Control of the classroom rests solely with either the teacher or the students • The teacher controls what is learned and how it is learned • The classroom reflects little ongoing adult learning
Assumptions about appropriate educational practices	• Powerful learning characterizes the learning environment – learning is interactive, inclusive, learner centered, continuous, authentic • Strategies developed for use with gifted and talented students are used with all students • Standards are best met through powerful learning strategies	• All students engage in active exploration of relevant material • All students have the opportunity to develop basic skills and higher order thinking skills • Students learn to work productive with each other • Learning activities are geared to challenging standards	• Memorization of facts and drill are the focus of teaching • Emphasis is placed on order; students work alone in their seats • Emphasis is placed on acquisition of basic skills

remediating the weaknesses; these teachers believe that they would be more effective teachers if their students were more like them (Haberman 1995; Spindler and Spindler 1982; Ladson-Billings 1994).

The second set of assumptions involves communication and discourse in the classroom. Communication and collaboration are important components of the Accelerated Schools Project. Powerful learning, a key feature of the project involves multiple forms of communication that are inclusive of different dialects and languages. Many teachers are attracted to the Accelerated Schools Project because they believe that communication in the classroom should be a two-way street, that discourse flows freely among students and between the teacher and students (Florio-Ruane 1989; Newmann, Secada and Wehlage 1995; Jennings 1998). They encourage children to use language openly and frequently because it provides students an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and thought processes (Jennings 1998; Darling-Hammond 1997; Meier 1995). Finally, teachers who embrace the Accelerated Schools Project believe that language diversity is a strength to be built upon (Tharp and Gallimore 1988; Delpit 1988).

Teachers who resist the Accelerated Schools Project are apt to believe that they should direct all communication in their classrooms; they believe that they have so much material to cover that they cannot allow students time to talk, especially since they assume that students are often off topic and waste time (Florio-Ruane 1989; 1994; McLaughlin and Talbert 1993). They also actively discourage use of any language in class other than standard English or assume that some children will never learn standard English (Delpit 1988, 1995).

The third set of assumptions concern the role of adults in the classroom. Within accelerated schools many adults are seen as having strengths that contribute to a positive learning environment in the classroom. Teachers, staff members, parents, and other professionals share values of participation, communication and collaboration, experimentation and discovery, trust, and risk taking, and they see the classroom as the center of expertise. Teachers who welcome the Accelerated Schools Project invite other educators, parents and community members into their classrooms (Elmore, Peterson and McCarthey 1996). They see themselves as a "learning leader," transmitting a passion for ongoing learning (Ladson-Billings 1994; Darling-Hammond 1997), and they view themselves as facilitators, willing to make it clear to students that they care about them (Phelan, Davidson and Yu 1998; Wasley, Hampel and Clark 1997). Many other teachers, however, prefer to be the only adult in the classroom. They prefer to close the door and control all that happens in the classroom (McLaughlin and Talbert 1993; Hale 1994). They believe that they are effective in the classroom and that professional development is a waste of time; they feel they have little to learn from other teachers or from "so called experts" (Elmore, Peterson and McCathey 1996).

The final set of assumptions focus on appropriate educational practices. The Accelerated Schools Project encourages all teachers to provide powerful learning experiences in their classrooms. Powerful learning is characterized as interactive, inclusive, learner centered, continuous and authentic. Teachers build on strategies developed for students identified as gifted and talented; they are committed to meeting standards through powerful learning.

Many teachers feel the Accelerated Schools Project validates their beliefs that all students should have the chance to engage in active exploration of relevant material – that such exploration develops students' basic skills while building higher order thinking skills (Newmann, Secada and Wehlage 1995; Knapp and Associates; Cohen, McLaughlin and Talbert 1993; Spillane and Jennings 1997). They know the standards adopted by their state well enough to recognize the higher order skills underlying the standards. These teachers encourage students to work together, believing that children encourage each other to learn (Sizer 1992; Wasley, Hampel and Clark 1997).

Other teachers reject the assumptions underlying the Accelerated Schools Project because they believe learning is a sequential process from basic to higher order skills (Metz 1978; Oakes 1985; Darling-Hammond 1997). They fear that their students will be left behind if they do not drill on basic skills; considerable time is devoted to test taking skills and to basic skills tested on standardized tests. These teachers focus on maintenance of order – assuming that their students are incapable of working productively together (McCollum 1995; Hale 1994).

Conclusions

The above discussion illustrates the importance of understanding the relationship between the assumptions of a reform model, and school and classroom culture. In many cases, the compatibility between them is clear and the reform model provides the needed structure, resources, and philosophical base for the school to make desired changes. In other cases, such compatibility does not exist and the reform is not implemented as designed, if it is implemented at

all. After a period of struggle and frustration both the members of the school community and the reform model staff ask themselves why this school ever started down this road.

If these schools had looked closely at what their school and classroom cultures were like when they began implementing the reform they would have a better understanding why it did not take hold in their school. In some cases, the reform was compatible with the assumptions of a few members of the school community, and they hoped that they could use the reform to change the assumptions of the majority.

In other cases, members of the school community may not have recognized the lack of fit between the reform model and their school and classroom cultures. Either they did not explore the model adequately or they did not recognize that the changes promised by the reform call for deep personal reflection on assumptions, values, and actions.

In still other cases, schools fail to implement reforms because they began the process for the wrong reasons. Some schools have essentially been forced to agree to implement a reform. Although reform models call for a 80 — 90% vote to join, it is clear that teachers and staff occasionally sign the agreement because they feel they have no other choice. In other cases, schools are more attracted to start-up grants than they are to the actual reform model. CSRD funds have provided much needed support for many schools that truly want to participate in a reform model, and the application process is sufficiently rigorous to discourage many schools that are only seeking additional funding. However, it is

still too early to know if schools will sufficiently internalize the model to continue to implement it once funds are no longer available.

These explanations for unsuccessful implementation of reform models apply only to failures that occur because of a lack of compatibility between the reform model and the school and classroom cultures. Reform models are in a position to help school communities make more informed choices about the fit between the model and the school. The information provided in Tables 1 and 2 can be made available to schools as they explore the Accelerated Schools Project. It would be helpful if other reform models would develop similar displays of compatibility between the assumptions underlying their model and those existing in school and classroom cultures. These displays will illustrate to schools during the exploration process how the model's process and philosophy are actually manifested in schools. By providing illustrations of assumptions that are compatible and incompatible with a model, teachers, principals, staff and parents have a better idea of what a school implementing the model is really like. In addition, displays of this kind encourage all members of a school community to reflect on their assumptions, values and actions. School communities rarely have the opportunity to think about the assumptions and values that shape their actions. It is preferable for people within a school to think about their assumptions prior to implementing a reform model, rather than discover too late that their concepts of teaching and learning are incompatible with those of the reform model. For schools to truly improve, they must select a compatible reform model that will help them achieve their goals.

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