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ABSTRACT

This paper describes findings from a study of school capacity, defined as the ability of schools to improve their practices and to sustain those improvements over time. Two schools in the San Francisco Bay Area (California) that have sustained success with distinct, though opposite, pedagogical approaches were examined to determine what makes a school's approach coherent and what enables a school to develop and maintain it. Research methods included interviews with school personnel, parents, and other school participants; visits to schools, observing classrooms and attending open houses; and examination of school documents. Findings show that cohesive relationships, commitment to the school, and an understanding of the school's identity are key aspects that enable these schools to sustain their pedagogical approaches successfully. Organizational identity is particularly important because it provides a sense of what the school stands for and promotes; it can act as a resource to schools by providing a framework for the adaptation of environmental contingencies that may threaten a school's approach; and it can provide a place to which schools can return for guidance after periods of upheaval. Appendix A describes Jefferson Elementary School's core values and Appendix B contains Hillside Community School's commitment sheet. (Contains 30 references.) (RT)

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Keeping Up the Good Work:
Developing and Sustaining Capacity for School Improvement

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Abstract

This paper describes findings from an ongoing qualitative study of school capacity. Capacity is defined as the ability of schools to improve their practices, and to sustain those improvements over time. Rather than defining capacity hierarchically, as resources or knowledge received by schools from districts, states, or support providers, it is defined as the ways in which schools develop and use their own resources. Two schools in the San Francisco Bay Area, each with a coherent pedagogical approach and record of success, are described and compared in terms of their internal structures and external relationships that contribute to their capacity to sustain improvements. The organizational identity of the schools, which communicates what is important and appropriate, is found to contribute to their abilities to sustain their approaches successfully over time. Their identities provide a basis for commitment on the part of teachers and parents. They also contribute to their autonomy from district policies, which further enables them to sustain their coherent approaches. Implications for theories of school capacity and school reform programs are discussed.

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Introduction

The drive to reform public schools has been one of the most compelling trends in education and public policy in recent decades. Since 1983, after the publication of the highly influential report *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), the number of reform programs used in schools across the country has increased by 50 percent (NWREL, 1999). Most of this growth has come from whole-school reform programs, which have increased by 130 percent since 1983.[1] Schools now have available to them more options for improving their practices than ever before.

Yet with this increase in expertise and options for school improvement come increased requirements, theories of action, and confusion. Schools often work with several different reform programs as they seek resources and assistance for their improvement efforts. These programs come with requirements and implementation criteria that often overlap or conflict with each other, creating disorder and demands on time. Improvement programs also bring with them specific theories of learning, schooling, and change that drive the strategies and structures that they recommend. When these theories conflict, the priorities of schools can become uncertain, and their practices incoherent (Hatch, 2000).

At the same time, schools often struggle with how to make their improvement efforts more consistent and efficient. When districts or states mandate programs, schools have little choice but to comply. Voluntary programs can be equally difficult to eliminate because of the loss of funding or resources that can result. In many cases, though, schools continue participating in, and adding on, improvement programs because they lack adequate knowledge or wherewithal to initiate improvements on their own. Without their own developed theories of learning, schooling, and change to guide actions, schools are unable to select those programs that fit their needs, and to eliminate those that do not. Consequently, schools face a paradox: the

[1] These figures were derived by examining the inception dates of school improvement programs. There are currently 63 improvement programs eligible for federal funding through the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program. Twenty-five of those were established before 1983; of those, 15 were content, or curriculum, programs, and 10 were whole-school programs. Thirty-eight improvement programs were established after 1983; of those, 23 were whole-school programs, while 15 were content programs.

effectiveness of their improvement programs depends, in part, on their own capacity to use those programs effectively (Hatch, 2001).

In this paper, we present findings from a study of the development and maintenance of schools' capacity for improvement. We argue that capacity for school improvement is a complex issue that is not easily resolved by simple policy mandates or programs. The first section of the paper examines various definitions of capacity. The way in which capacity is defined, and where it is located within the educational system, influences the factors and conditions identified as necessary for its development and enhancement. Next, we present our findings from two case studies of schools that have developed and sustained successful approaches to teaching and learning. These case studies provide insight into the nature of capacity, as well as the conditions and practices that support its development and continuation. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings on research and theory on schools' capacity to sustain improvements.

Capacity for School Improvement

In the current climate of educational reform, school capacity has become a prominent issue. Standards-based reform efforts, in particular, have brought questions about the ability of schools to achieve new testing and accountability standards. Decentralization reforms, such as charter schools and site-based management, have also brought concerns about the knowledge and skills required for teachers and principals to assume greater administrative control. These different issues lead to differing definitions of capacity, and different theories of its development and maintenance. Whether capacity is located at the level of the teacher, school, or system influences how it is defined and which factors contribute to its development.[2]

Defined at the level of the teacher, capacity refers to knowledge, skills, attitudes, and efficacy (Massell, 1998; O'Day, Goertz, & Floden, 1995). Increasing teachers' capacity involves

[2] The capacity of students to learn has also been widely examined, particularly in terms of parents' background, motivation, intelligence, and other individual-level variables. However, since our research is focused on schools as units of analysis, a discussion of student capacity is beyond the scope of this paper.

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aligning these factors towards achieving a set of goals for student learning as defined by the school, the district, or the state (O'Day et al., 1995). Providing ongoing support for professional development and training, and school-based inquiry into practice can help to maintain capacity (Darling-Hammond, 1994). While schools play an important role in building teachers' capacity by providing opportunities for training and development, responsibility for providing the necessary supports and resources is placed on the district or state, which have administrative authority over schools.

Capacity at the school level has received considerable attention in studies of school effectiveness and school organization. Research on school effectiveness has identified such factors as principal leadership, clear goals for student learning, a climate of discipline, and parent involvement as contributing to successful student outcomes (Purkey & Smith, 1983). Subsequent research on private schools and restructuring public schools has focused on the broader, underlying conditions that contribute to school success. In their study of Catholic schools, Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) examined the ideological and cultural influences on school missions and pedagogy. They specifically identified shared values, a communal climate, and strong leadership as contributing to Catholic schools' effectiveness in achieving high academic outcomes. Newmann and Wehlage (1995), and Bryk and his colleagues in Chicago (1998) similarly found that shared decision-making, collaboration among teachers, and clear goals for student learning were critical to the success of restructuring public schools. While these studies emphasize the internal processes that lead to school capacity, they have also identified autonomy in setting goals and agendas, and governance structures that involve parents as important external conditions.

At the system level, discussions of capacity focus on creating conditions that will enable schools to successfully respond to reform efforts, and that will increase the abilities of schools to perform at higher levels in the future (McDonnell & Elmore). Capacity is generally defined as the resources and materials needed by schools to achieve some set of standards, which may be defined by schools (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995), or by states (Massell, 1998; O'Day et al., 1995). Strategies for building capacity within a school system include ensuring adequate funding and materials (Darling-Hammond, 1994), specifying clear

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learning standards (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; O'Day et al., 1995), aligning instructional materials and professional development to standards, and giving schools authority over decisions regarding classroom instruction (Massell, 1998).

Definitions of capacity can differ greatly depending on the unit of analysis. However, at each level, building capacity is dependent on receiving resources of some sort from organizations at another level in the system. Teacher capacity is dependent on training and development opportunities provided by states, districts, and schools. School capacity is similarly dependent on states and districts for resources and authority over decision making. Only at the system level is capacity created rather than received from elsewhere. Defining the development of capacity in this way implies a hierarchical structure in which resources and opportunities are given to teachers and schools by the state, which has ultimate discretion over the goals and strategies those teachers and schools will pursue. This type of centralized structure may enable schools to carry out programs more effectively, but might not lead to long-term, sustained success.

Defining capacity hierarchically minimizes the role that school communities (teachers, principals, and parents) play in developing the ability to improve their practices, and in sustaining those improvements. Receiving adequate resources and supports from external organizations is crucial to implementing effective practices and outcomes, but schools must be able to utilize those resources capably towards their goals.[3] Therefore, we argue that questions about capacity for improvement are more appropriately focused on the ways in which schools use their resources, and on the processes they develop for obtaining and sustaining the resources they need. Rather than asking what schools need to be given in order to improve, a more fundamental question for reformers is how schools can create and maintain their own capacity for improvement.

In order explore these questions, we have begun a research project to study the practices and contexts that enable schools to develop capacity. The purpose of this study is to develop a

[3] The term resources is used here, and elsewhere in the paper, to refer to the tools, materials, knowledge, and relationships that enable schools to continue implementing their particular pedagogical approaches. We use the term loosely so as not to specify one set of materials or conditions that are useful to all schools. Rather, schools can make use of different resources depending on their goals and approaches.

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framework for understanding school capacity and its role in developing coherent pedagogical approaches in schools. Coherence is a goal of many reform programs, but is difficult to create in schools, where there are a multitude of programs and policies vying for the attention of teachers and administrators. At least in part, the problem with promoting coherent reforms may stem from the fact that the nature and character of coherence are not well understood. While some have argued that coherence can be achieved by aligning policies at the state and district levels (Smith & O'Day, 1990), others believe that coherence should be reflected in the coordination of practices at the school level (Clune, 1993). Furthermore, whether a school's approach is coherent, or a set of policies aligned, depends on how people at different levels of the system experience that approach or those policies.

We have identified a number of essential questions that need to be examined in order to begin to address these questions about coherence and capacity. First, at the school level, what makes a school's pedagogical approach coherent? How widely understood among school personnel and community members does such an approach need to be? Secondly, what enables a school to develop and maintain such an approach? In other words, how do schools develop and use capacity to implement coherent approaches? Lastly, when considering the contexts of schools, what kinds of interactions between schools, districts, and support providers promote capacity and coherence?

Our study explores both the internal activities, and the relationships with outside organizations that help schools to develop and maintain coherent approaches. We are making several assumptions about the nature of school improvement in approaching this research. First, it takes capacity to build capacity (Hatch, 2001). Focusing on strategies and methods that can induce change in schools ignores the knowledge, theories, and flexibility needed to sustain those changes powerfully over time. Our study addresses the development and maintenance of that type of capacity. Secondly, capacity is not specific to one particular approach to teaching and learning. Schools exist within an institutionalized system of bureaucracies, yet they are highly individual organizations, each with its own unique set of needs, values, goals, and concerns. They are attended by constantly changing student bodies, and operated by teachers and administrators who form their own norms and cultures. To think that there could be one set of

guidelines that will encompass all of this diversity may be naïve. Rather than simply implementing a model for whole school reform, schools may be more successful in sustaining reforms by developing their own approaches out of their goals and the knowledge that improvement programs can provide.

Methods and Sample

In this paper, we describe and compare two schools in the San Francisco Bay Area that have sustained success with distinct, and quite opposite, pedagogical approaches for an extended period. They provide an interesting comparison from which to examine our questions regarding coherence and capacity. We also have the most complete data on these sites. Thus far, we have a sample of four schools in the Bay Area. The sample includes two K-5 schools, one K-8 school, and one high school. Two schools are located in affluent suburban areas, and two are located in an urban area with a range of economic and racial diversity. One site is a charter school, and three are district alternative schools. We are structuring our sample to provide for variation in economic and racial diversity, both within and between schools. We are also creating variation in pedagogical approaches, with two schools implementing more progressive approaches, and two implementing approaches that are more structured or oriented on traditional academics. This variation will enable us to examine the processes for building and maintaining capacity that cross pedagogical or ideological boundaries. Our future research will include district-level data collection to examine the relationships of the schools to their external communities. We also plan to expand our overall sample to give greater breadth and generalizability to our data and findings.

We have used several criteria in selecting the schools for our sample. First, we have identified schools that have demonstrated success in student achievement, using standardized test scores as the primary measure (specifically California's STAR examinations). Our selection of standardized test scores as a measure was based on several factors. First, test scores are widely accepted by the public as an indicator of a school's success in student learning. Secondly, adequate test scores increasingly contribute to the legitimacy of public schools, particularly in the context of accountability schemes such as California's Immediate

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Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program. These types of state programs use test scores extensively to mete out rewards and sanctions, and the scores are reported widely as indicators of school success or failure. For these reasons, it is important to take performance on standardized tests into account when selecting "successful" schools. However, we have not selected schools solely based on their test scores, nor have we limited our sample to the highest performing schools. Rather, we have selected schools that have above average test scores.[4]

We have further selected schools based on their reputations in their communities among parents, educators, and other community members as successful, desirable schools. Finally, we have selected those successful schools that are pursuing distinctive approaches to teaching and learning. We are not looking for a particular type of pedagogy or curriculum, but for schools that base their practices on some identifiable philosophy or ideology. In other words, we have selected schools that seemed successful and coherent. Our research task is to understand how they came to be that way, and how they are able to sustain those types of practices.

It is notable that all of the schools currently in our sample are schools of choice. Again, we did not specifically select schools on this basis. Rather, in seeking schools with coherent approaches and records of success, we have found these particular schools. This has proven to be an intriguing occurrence, which we are taking into account in our analysis and interpretations.

Because our research questions focus on the processes by which schools develop the capacity to create and maintain their own pedagogical approaches, we have used qualitative methodology for our data collection and analysis. Our methods consist of interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and other key players in the schools' activities. We visited schools, observed classrooms, and attended several open house events. Additionally, we examined

[44] We examined the Academic Performance Index (API) rankings of each school to determine "above average" performance. California's API ranking system compares schools' performance on the STAR examinations (a version of the SAT-9) to a standard based on a national average. Schools are also compared to other schools in the state that serve similar student populations, so that each school has two API rankings annually. The rankings range from 1 (low performing) to 10 (high performing). The schools in our sample scored at least 6 on the overall API rankings, and typically scored higher on the similar schools API rankings. The range of scores in the sample is from 7 to 10 on the overall API, and 2 to 10 on the similar schools API.

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documents pertaining to the schools' curriculum, instruction, staff selection, and professional development activities.

Hillside Community School

Hillside Community School is a K-8 alternative school located in an economically disadvantaged neighborhood of a large Bay Area city. It was established in the early 1970s as one of the city's first alternative schools. The founding group of parents wanted to be able to actively participate in their children's education, and lobbied the school board to establish a school that would provide a voice for parents and create a sense of community among families. From its beginnings, Hillside has emphasized progressive, constructivist teaching, utilizing multi-age classrooms divided into developmental rather than grade levels, project-based learning, and a rotating head teacher in place of a permanent principal. Their approach is focused on creating an inclusive school community in which diversity is valued.

The school has a diverse student population, both racially and economically. Approximately 36% of the student body is Hispanic, 20% are Asian, 19% are white, and 17% are African-American. About 37% of students participate in the free or reduced lunch program. Their diversity has had a tremendous influence on their instructional practices and goals. Currently, the school is focused on diminishing the achievement gap that exists between white and minority students, and has implemented a variety of strategies to meet this goal, including employing a culturally relevant curriculum and focusing on specific content areas. These goals and strategies have arisen out of the school's extensive staff development structure, which encourages inquiry, reflection, and collaboration. The school's involvement with several well-known local and national reform organizations enhances these practices, and provides the faculty with further opportunities for professional development and inquiry. These organizations have also provided support for the school in their often contentious relationship with the district. The district has attempted to close Hillside on numerous occasions, but was thwarted by parents and teachers who successfully lobbied the school board for its continuation. These efforts have subsided over the past several years, but the school continues to have disagreements with the district from time to time.

Jefferson Elementary School

Jefferson Elementary is a K-5 alternative school located in an affluent Bay Area suburb. The school was founded in the early 1970s as a traditional "alternative" to more progressive teaching practices being implemented in other schools in the district. The parents who founded the school wanted clear academic and behavioral expectations for students, and a rigorous program of study. Jefferson is described as a structured school that emphasizes academic skills, with individual classroom teachers having primary responsibility for instruction. Classroom teaching is supplemented by programs taught by specialist teachers in science, physical education, and expository writing, but each classroom teacher retains primary responsibility for the learning opportunities provided his or her students. The school's approach is focused on creating an orderly, focused environment in which all students can learn and achieve at high levels.

Jefferson has an affluent, educated, and well-informed body of parents that actively participate in the school. Approximately 80% of parents have attended graduate school, and only about 4% of students participate in the free or reduced lunch program. The student population is primarily Asian and white (representing 48% and 44% of students, respectively). The school is particularly popular among Chinese and European families, who are more accustomed to . Jefferson's structured environment. Jefferson has had very high turnover among principals in the past few years, one of whom was forced to leave under suspicion of financial misconduct. The current principal is new to the school this year. Despite these problems, students continue to perform at very high levels (Jefferson is one of the highest-performing schools in the state on the STAR tests), and the school continues to maintain a waiting list for enrollment of some 400 families.

Findings

The framework we have used in our analysis is one that incorporates the themes and factors found in the literature on school capacity described earlier. This framework includes

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such organizational features as shared values and missions, collegial and collaborative working relationships, parent involvement, and school autonomy and authority. We have also drawn on organizational behavior research, which identifies such factors as organizational culture, selection and socialization, and person-organization fit as key to understanding the actions of people within organizations. At this point in our research, we are focusing on the processes and structures within schools that help them to develop and sustain capacity. Therefore, our analysis here emphasizes the actions and perspectives of teachers, principals, and parents. Data on district administrators and support providers will be the focus of the next phase of our study.

Four main questions were addressed in our data collection with Hillside and Jefferson. (1) To what extent is a common understanding of the school's pedagogical approach shared among administrators, teachers, and parents? (2) How is that approach manifested in their daily activities? (3) What efforts are made to articulate, examine or share that approach? (4) How have relationships and interactions with district administrators, state personnel, and support providers affected that approach?

We have organized our findings into two main areas. First, we examine our data in relation to previous literature on school capacity and organizational behavior. Second, we identify some themes regarding the sustainability of school capacity that have emerged from our analysis. Lastly, we discuss implications for our future research, as well as broader considerations for school reform.

Organizational Structures Affecting Capacity

We have found that the experiences of the Hillside and Jefferson communities differ from the literature on school capacity in important ways. In particular, the ways in which these schools define their missions, organize relationships among their faculties, and select and socialize new members into the school culture problematizes the current literature on school capacity and coherence. While this literature offers important observations on the practices and organizational structures that enable schools to perform effectively, it remains unclear as to the processes by which they are built. Hillside and Jefferson, as schools that have sustained distinct

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approaches effectively for over 25 years, offer unique insights into the practices and characteristics that underlie some of the important features of effective schools.

Values and Missions

One of the most important features identified in studies of effective or successful schools is a clear mission for student learning that is shared by all members of the school community (e.g. Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993; Bryk et al., 1998; Chubb & Moe, 1988; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Purkey & Smith, 1983; National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). A shared mission refers to more than "buy-in" for a particular program. It incorporates a "set of ideas about what students should learn, what specific experiences the school must arrange for students, and how the school must organize the work of teachers and other adults to ensure that students have those experiences," (Hill & Celio, 1998, p. 31). A unifying ideology or purpose serves to guide curriculum and instruction, professional development, and relationships with parents and other external actors. The implication of discussions of values and missions is that these are specific principles and philosophies that explicitly guide curriculum, instruction, and other organizational structures and practices. A certain specificity and alignment of vision and practice is assumed.

What we found, however, is that the missions and values of both Hillside and Jefferson are rather ambiguous, at least in how they are communicated and perceived by members of the school communities. Jefferson's handbook, for example, describes such things as high standards, open communication, shared responsibility, and encouraging the love of learning as important aspects of their core values. The full list of Jefferson's core values is included in Appendix A. Materials used to describe Hillside to parents and others consistently emphasize that the school is a democratic community, that they encourage participation among parents and students, and that they celebrate diversity. Remarks from interviews at Hillside echo these values.

> "I feel like you have a staff that's quite unanimous on the mission of making the school feel like it's a place (where) all children belong, and making sure that all

children are learning here and meeting standards, and making sure that we have equity. Those are major things that unite everybody." – Hillside teacher

"(Hillside) is about being a place where everybody feels like they belong. It's about challenging everybody where they are. It's about teaching children how to be learners, not just about content but about to be a learner and how to know what it feels like. I think it's also about how to be a good member of a community, because we spend a lot of time working on that. What does it look like to be a community and what does it look like as an individual member of a community, to be a part of a community? We spend a lot of time talking about that." – Hillside teacher

These values describe broad beliefs and ideologies, and could incorporate a wide variety of teaching practices. Yet it is clear from their curriculum and instructional programs that Hillside and Jefferson are using distinct strategies to pursue their goals. While academic excellence could be achieved through a variety of methods, Jefferson employs a structured, sequential curriculum and teacher-directed instruction. Hillside uses student-centered instruction to achieve their goals of equity and community, even though these goals could also be pursued through more traditional pedagogy. In fact, they are very similar to many of Jefferson's core values.

Members of these school communities appear to have an understanding of their schools as distinct places. They understand what their schools are, and what they do. However, the missions and values they describe do not lead directly to the specific sets of practices and concrete goals on which they choose to focus. Rather, they function more as organizational identities that communicate what is important and what is acceptable to members of those communities. An organizational identity refers to the aspects of an organization that are central, distinctive, and enduring (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Just as an individual's identity provides a sense of self that guides actions and attitudes, organizational identity is a collectively held framework through which organizational members conduct their work and make sense of their environments (Weick, 1995). However, while individual identity is constructed largely

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subjectively, organizational identity "has a reality independent of individual observers although it is subjectively arrived at," (Scott & Lane, 2000).

The organizational identities of Jefferson and Hillside are shared by faculty and parents, and provide a sense of boundaries that determine which strategies and practices are and are not appropriate for their schools. Curriculum and instructional programs are thoughtfully planned, but decisions about the *types* of strategies to be employed are often made based on judgments about what fits with the school's identity. For example, a teacher new at Jefferson suggested that she team with the other teacher at her grade level, with each teacher taking responsibility for teaching specific subject matter. At the staff meeting in which she brought up the idea, another teacher replied, "We don't do that kind of thing here," to which others on the faculty agreed. The teacher subsequently dropped the proposal. Clearly, team teaching did not fit with the image of Jefferson that was shared by the faculty and parents, although there is nothing in their core values that would prohibit it. Hillside teachers have used similar criteria in deciding whether to involve themselves with particular reform networks. One teacher remarked on the nature of the debates the faculty had about joining one network:

> "They seemed to encompass all the important things that we felt like we were doing here. So it felt like a really good fit, and it also felt like (their philosophy) provided a framework for the different aspects of school life that we want to be thinking about, that we want to have in our consciousness." – Hillside teacher

Bryk and his colleagues (1998) discuss the importance of building a theory of school development that will guide efforts toward improvement. This type of theory should be powerful enough to meaningfully engage teachers and parents, but sufficiently flexible to allow for individual freedom and expression. The concept of organizational identity encompasses these features without stipulating the pieces that must be included in it. Bryk et al.'s definition of a theory of school development emphasizes leadership, professional development, community outreach, and strategic planning as areas on which schools should focus their efforts. However, these areas may not apply equally (or at all) to all schools, and can easily become too specific to solving current problems rather than providing a focus for the long run. An organizational

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identity, on the other hand, is broad enough to apply to a variety of situations, and can be interpreted somewhat differently by members of the organization without disrupting its collective meaning. As Jefferson's principal noted, "(E)verybody's got a little bit of a different twist as to what Jefferson is about and what needs it provides for the community." While they have somewhat different interpretations of the school's mission, the Jefferson community is united around the school's identity as a structured school that emphasizes academic performance. Similarly, those at Hillside emphasized community and inclusiveness in describing the school, but discussed different types of practices and goals as being particularly important.

Professional Communities

In their study of schools engaged in a variety of restructuring efforts, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that organizational capacity was enhanced when faculties were shaped into professional communities in which teachers shared a purpose for student learning and engaged in collaborative activity focused on that goal. A professional community consists fundamentally of shared responsibility for working collaboratively toward the school's goals as set out in its mission. In sharing a purpose and values, individuals in a professional community experience a sense of belonging to the school, which influences their desire to contribute to it and to its members (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Creating a professional community involves reinforcing shared responsibility and activity by increasing the quantity and quality of interactions among members of the school. Collaborative work structures, such as team teaching, site-based decision making, and staff planning and development widen the knowledge and expertise of individual teachers, and help to focus instruction on school goals (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). As teachers share their practices and experiences, access to knowledge both within and outside the school is enhanced, resulting in greater expertise for the faculty as a whole.

Accordingly, we expected to find collaborative work structures at both Hillside and Jefferson. However, this was not exactly the case. Hillside fits well with Newmann and Wehlage's description of a professional community. The faculty collaborates extensively in

their teaching, since nine weeks of each semester are devoted to project-based "challenges," in which students may select any project taught by a teacher in their developmental level. This means that teachers share students for eighteen weeks a year, so they engage in extensive planning of projects to ensure that certain standards will be met and content taught. This collaboration extends to other areas of school planning as well, through an extensive staff planning structure at both the whole school and developmental levels.

> "(A)t the whole staff level there's a high level (of) collaboration, thinking together, brainstorming, committing to certain practices that we think are really effective for all students. At the developmental level is where that kind of stuff gets hammered out into what (it's) going to look like at our grade level." – Hillside teacher

They also participate in professional development activities offered by the reform networks in which they participate, and have staff retreats annually. Collaboration among the faculty is extensive, and is highly emphasized as a crucial aspect of the school culture. As one Hillside teacher noted, "We collaborate on everything with the school."

By comparison, Jefferson's faculty works together very little. Teachers attend one whole staff meeting and one grade level meeting each month. Hillside teachers, by contrast, attend one staff meeting and one developmental level meeting each week. Jefferson is not involved in reform networks, although several teachers conduct district planning and professional development. In addition, teachers do not formally collaborate in their instruction. Instead, each teacher is wholly responsible for his or her students' learning. Judging from the lack of formal mechanisms for interaction at Jefferson, one might expect that their teachers are isolated and seek little feedback from one another on their work. However, teachers at the school interact and share their work frequently.

> "We (share our work) unofficially. I think teachers do that on their own because it's an important part of the way you keep your program going, but at the same time we haven't had formal meetings. But see, at a traditional school like this,

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> every teacher goes on their own, teaches their class and that's it. So I think it happens, but not (in) a regular or official capacity. I think there's a real camaraderie here that way, to kind of help each other and work together." – Jefferson teacher

While Hillside uses a formalized planning structure to increase interaction among teachers, Jefferson relies on informal interactions, which fits well with their identity as a structured school. The more visible, formal approach of Hillside also fits well with their identity as a community.

The professional communities of these two schools differ widely in their implementation, but both are characterized by a sense of mutual respect, cohesiveness, and unity.

> (T)he people genuinely like each other. There's no cliques, so that there's no sort of 'ins' and 'outs.' I think people are pretty good about talking and sharing stuff. (P)eople are willing to help each other. Everybody appreciates that we're working hard." – Jefferson teacher

> "I know that we have a unanimity that is quite ... it's encompassing. It's supportive. It's collegiality at the most supportive and solid that I can ever imagine it. So I think that's something that keeps the school running really well, and keeps the school solid." – Hillside teacher

The faculties of both schools view themselves as groups that are committed to similar purposes, and who have great respect for one another. At Hillside, this is created through formal collaboration and planning that brings the faculty together. At Jefferson, relationships are developed through informal interactions and respect for individual decision-making. This is not to say that teachers at Hillside have no independent authority in their classrooms, or that teachers at Jefferson never collaborate on curricular or instructional matters. Neither of these schools can be fairly described in those extreme terms. The point is that the differing work structures of these schools implies that professional community can be achieved in a variety of ways, and that interdependent work structures can be useful, but are not absolutely necessary to achieve a cohesive culture. A professional community is perhaps more accurately described as group

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cohesion rather than as a particular set of practices and structures that may describe only one way among many to foster community. This definition fits well with organizational studies that find that commitment among members of organizations is greater to the people within them than to the organizations themselves (Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996).

It is important to note that the group cohesion found at Hillside and Jefferson does not apply to the same extent to relationships between parents and teachers. Parents are frequently noted as important influences in both schools, and they were certainly influential in shaping the schools at the times of their establishment. They still play important roles in defining the schools, particularly at Jefferson, where the last principal was fired in part due to charges by some parents of financial misconduct. However, they play a largely symbolic role when it comes to defining goals or strategies. Even at Hillside, where community is emphasized as an essential aspect of their identity, parents play mainly a support role.

> "Parents are involved but they're not involved in the major decision-making with the school really. (T)here are still parents on hiring committees, (but they) help with more traditional things in terms of just coming into the classroom." – Hillside former teacher and head teacher

Jefferson parents, although more influential in guiding instructional practices, are similarly uninvolved in school policy making. For example, a current conflict in the school is over whether parents should be allowed to visit classrooms. Currently, parents are only allowed to visit classrooms in kindergarten. Some parents want this policy changed, and have had many discussions with the principal over the issue. To the faculty, the policy is seen as an important part of Jefferson's identity as a school that values teachers' authority.

> "(I)f part of your values are (that) you trust and support the decisions around curriculum and instruction (made) by staff members – because that really isn't a decision that parents ought to be making – that needs to be written into the (core) values. It needs to be a statement that says that we value decisions that are made,

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final decisions that are made, (by the faculty) about curriculum and instruction." – Jefferson principal

Therefore, for the faculty, a change in that policy would result in a change in the school's core values, their identity. Ironically, the conflict that has arisen over this and other issues has served to bring the faculty together.

"The staff is very cohesive here and very unified this year. I think this issue of conflict with the parents has brought the staff together, because it doesn't feel good when the parents are trying to take over." – Jefferson teacher

In this context, group cohesion may be serving to create an in-group and an out-group between the faculty and parents that could eventually harm those relationships. On the other hand, the number of parents voicing strong opposition to the classroom policy is small. The majority of parents are either unconcerned about the policy, or are willing to accept it. As one Jefferson parent noted, "I think (parents) are reasonably flexible here. You know you can't get everything you want."

Selection and Socialization

While much research on school capacity has focused on organizational and institutional contexts that support strong cultures (e.g. Fuller & Izu, 1986), managerial practices of selection and socialization are also influential in the development of staff commitment and organizational identity. Although the ability of schools to select whomever they please is constrained by district hiring policies and union contracts, they usually have quite a bit of discretion in hiring new teachers. This discretion is an important way to create a culture in which there is widespread agreement and commitment to the school's values and goals.

According to Schneider's (1987) theory of attraction-selection-attrition, people are attracted to certain organizations based on their interests and values. Organizations, in turn, seek out people who share their common values and behaviors. People who do not "fit" into the

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organization leave or are removed. Organizations then become more homogeneous in terms of beliefs and values as the people who comprise them come to be more similar in those areas. Once in the organization, employees participate in various formal and informal activities that socialize them to the organization's particular norms and goals, creating an even better fit between the individual and the organization (Schneider, Smith, Taylor, & Fleenor, 1991). The importance of correspondence in beliefs among the school community about teaching and learning to the ability of a school to sustain a given pedagogical approach seems apparent. Selecting teachers who will be committed to a school's approach, and then training those teachers in their implementation of that approach should enable schools to integrate their values into the practices of their teachers and ensure continuity over time.

Just as with our examination of missions and professional communities, we have found that the selection and socialization processes at Hillside and Jefferson both differ considerably, and are more ambiguous than most literature on the subject would suggest. While selection is an important mechanism for maintaining the identities of both schools, it is not always purposely used as such. Teacher candidates are often attracted to the schools with little knowledge of their approaches. One of the teachers we interviewed at Hillside, for example, knew only that it was a K-8 school when she interviewed there. Others understand the schools' identities, but have little knowledge of their specific practices or cultures. One Jefferson teacher noted that the school seemed to "fit more of my approach from my East Coast background. So I came over and I looked at the philosophy and read it and talked to the principal."

As a result of their limited information and reliance on images of the schools, new teachers are often uncertain about the school's practices.

> "The theory is that when the principal is interested, they'll bring the teachers over, have them take a look at the school and talk to them about what it is that makes this school different. And if they're not interested in teaching in a school like that, then they have an option of going someplace else. So that theoretically when they come in here, they know what it's about. And of course, then once you get in the middle of it, you find out it's different." – Jefferson teacher

Even though they may go through several discussions and visits, new teachers often come to the school with a limited understanding of its specific practices. A parent commented that, "I think sometimes when teachers come, they're not always exactly told what the deal is here." Hillside faces similar discrepancies between what new teachers are told, and what they face after being hired. In their case, the disparity is particularly problematic because of the time commitments expected of teachers at the school, and its atypical practices, to which many teachers are unaccustomed. In the past, Hillside was quite flexible in hiring teachers with diverse beliefs about teaching and learning. Now that their program has become more standardized, with a stronger focus on data-driven inquiry, they are more careful in their hiring practices.

> "There's people who don't believe in (our philosophy), you know, and so now when we hire, we have a lot more questions that open up to that. (W)e try to really get nitty-gritty with what we're actually talking about." – Hillside teacher

Part of the "nitty-gritty" is a set of formal interview questions that explicitly discuss the school's approach, and the candidates' potential to fit into it. Candidates are asked to describe ways in which they would develop interdisciplinary projects, incorporate parents and other community members into their teaching, and approach the achievement gap. These are all prominent aspects of the school's pedagogical approach. New hires are also required to sign a "commitment sheet" that describes in detail expectations for teachers in terms of school planning and ideology, curriculum and instruction, and time to be spent at meetings and school events. It is unclear whether teachers can be dismissed for violating these commitments, but it is certainly a very clear symbol of the importance that Hillside places on establishing a fit between teachers and the school. Items contained in the commitment sheet are included in Appendix B.

The same mechanisms that are used to create cohesive relationships among teachers in the schools also serve as socialization structures for teachers selected into them. While Hillside's extensive staff planning structures promote interactions among teachers that build respect and agreement, they also communicate to teachers how things are done in the school.

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> "(W)e really realized that we needed a lot of staff development because of the fact that some people were not prepared to do all the things that we wanted them to do." – Hillside teacher

That development takes place during staff meetings and professional development activities, which provide useful forums for teachers to understand the school's ideology and identity. The socialization process can be lengthy. One Hillside teacher noted that she had taught at the school for two years before fully understanding their approach.

> "I'd go to staff meetings and I'd listen and participate, and I knew what was going on, but it wasn't until I went to (a summer professional development workshop) that it was solidified in my mind what's going on here, and how all these things fit together and what we're doing."

Conversely, socialization of teachers at Jefferson happens largely through informal discussions. "You just sit around and talk," noted one teacher, who also takes new teachers to lunch before the school year begins to "talk about what it (is) that (makes) Jefferson, Jefferson." Another teacher noted that district training events provide opportunities for her to learn about the school. However, she emphasized that her learning comes mostly from informal discussions during those events. "(W)hen we're training the teachers, we can also sit around and have lunch together and talk about (the school)," she noted.

The common theme that runs through these socialization structures is that teachers learn about the schools through building relationships with other teachers. This echoes some organizational research that has found that informal relationships and social functions are more powerful socialization mechanisms than formal structures, such as mentoring or training (Chatman, 1991). However, it differs from much literature on school capacity, which emphasizes more formal venues for new teachers' learning and inquiry (e.g. Meier, 1995). What this suggests about school capacity is that relationships between teachers play an important role in developing and furthering the identity of the school. The Hillside teacher who realized "what

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we're doing" after two years at the school seemed to be coming to a complete understanding of the school's identity. She learned this not through training or a particular relationship, but by interacting with many people in the school, in many different contexts, over time.

Since both Hillside and Jefferson are alternative schools, selection processes also apply to parents, although they are not selected by the schools (admissions to both schools are done by lottery). Although we did not intend for this project to be a study of school choice, we have explored the knowledge that parents have of the schools, and their reasons for selecting them. Many proponents of market theories argue that under school choice systems, parents will choose those schools that best fit their needs and interests (e.g. Chubb & Moe, 1988); conversely, opponents of school choice argue that parents will simply choose schools that have desirable student populations (e.g. Wells, 1996). We have found that both of these theories apply to Hillside and Jefferson. In both schools, some parents choose because of their agreement with the school's approach or the needs of their children. Others choose because the students who attend the school are perceived as high achievers, or are part of the parents' racial or ethnic group. Jefferson, for example, with its high population of Chinese students, attracts many Chinese parents who hear about the school from their friends in the community. However, the school's philosophy also fits well with their preferences for traditional classrooms and curriculum. As one parent commented, "I think Asians, being Chinese myself, I know they really stress academics for their kid."[5] The school also attracts many European families who see the school as being similar to those they attended in their native countries.

In any case, parents, like new teachers, select the schools with little information about their specific practices or ideologies. They are provided little information by the schools themselves, and that information tends to be selective. Hillside's information packet for prospective parents is filled with accounts of the school's successes and innovations, and its community atmosphere. However, the school is quite different from the norm, and, according to one former teacher, "we get people who've heard about us who sign up for us and then get there

[5] In all of our interviews with teachers and parents at Jefferson, emphasis on "academics" was cited as a common value among the school community. Given Jefferson's structured curriculum and teacher-directed approach to instruction, we took this term to refer to basic skills or disciplinary rigor. Subjects seemed to be implying that there

and find out that we don't look anything like other schools, and they're not always happy there." Jefferson provides a formal handbook and holds two open houses for parents each year. However, at the open house we attended, the principal was off campus and few teachers spoke to the parents touring the classrooms. These mechanisms seemed to provide little information about the schools, yet both Jefferson and Hillside continue to be oversubscribed. This is likely due, in part, to the schools' above average performance, but also to their reputations and parents' beliefs that those environments will help their children succeed.

Whatever their reasons for choosing the schools, both parents and faculty see those choices as contributing to commitment to the school. Jefferson's principal commented, "Our parents, coming from all over the place, have to make an effort to get their kids here, which is great, because they're very committed to coming here." These sentiments were echoed by both parents and teachers in both schools. Whether making a choice to attend a school increases parents' commitment is unclear, but the parents of both schools do seem to put in efforts, such as lobbying the school board or raising substantial funds, that contribute to the schools. They also provide support and approval for the schools' identities and practices, which helps them sustain their approaches.

Discussion and Implications

Our findings about what constitutes capacity at Hillside and Jefferson indicate that cohesive relationships, commitment to the school, and an understanding of the school's identity are key aspects that enable these schools to sustain their pedagogical approaches successfully. Organizational identity is a particularly important feature, because it provides for the community a sense of what the school stands for and promotes. The concept of identity is advantageous for thinking about sustainability because it allows for greater flexibility than does the idea of a mission or a set of goals, which is more prescriptive. In the long term, schools should be able to adapt to changes in their environments without completely altering the basic philosophies and ideologies that have always informed their practices. An organizational identity, which guides

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was a preference for curriculum focused on traditional subjects taught sequentially, as opposed to a more flexible curriculum that incorporates a wider variety of content.

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what is important, what is appropriate, and what is effective, is a broad framework that provides flexibility for adaptation and change, while constraining choices so that practices and goals remain relatively consistent.

Framing sustainability around an organizational identity has several implications for school capacity and coherence. First, an identity can act as a resource to schools by providing a framework for the adaptation of environmental contingencies that may threaten a school's approach. Stability is key to sustaining a pedagogical approach over time, and selective adaptation of new knowledge and directives can help schools stabilize their environments. This type of adaptation is often seen as a problem for policymakers and reformers, but can be beneficial to schools in that it allows them to continue their practices somewhat consistently (McLaughlin, 1987). Hillside has adapted well to the district and state emphasis on standards and testing by incorporating those assessments into their inquiry process on the achievement gap. A district writing test, for example, that is mandated for two grade levels is given to all students so that the staff can compare performance across developmental levels and maintain their focus on equity.

Second, an organizational identity can provide a place to which schools can return for guidance after periods of upheaval. Jefferson, for example, is currently revisiting their core values as a community (i.e. through public meetings held by a committee). They are doing this to regain and recreate a shared understanding of what the school values and promotes. This endeavor was begun by the school's new principal, who felt that the community needed to revisit their common values after a tumultuous few years in which several principals had been hired and fired, and in which parents had agitated for access to classrooms. According to him, "If you've got some core values, then you can use those core values to help resolve differences or challenges that arise." Similarly, the Hillside faculty has begun to revisit their history after realizing that their staff was increasingly new to the school, and that their more experienced teachers were leaving. At their recent staff retreat, the veteran teachers discussed the school's history to "show (new teachers) how change has come about in the school and how they are entitled to and expected to put their input into how things change." For both of these schools, the

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identities embodied in their histories and ideologies provide a measure of stability that the communities can draw on when facing uncertainty.

Developing an Organizational Identity

A basic condition for developing an identity is distinguishing oneself from others (Albert & Whetten, 1985), and Jefferson and Hillside describe themselves in part by distinguishing themselves from other schools. Jefferson, in particular, locates some its identity in its contrast with another alternative school in the district, which has a developmental, student-centered pedagogical approach. On several occasions, teachers, parents, and the principal described Jefferson's practices by distinguishing them from those of that school. This comparison may partly be a historical artifact since the schools were founded at about the same time, and Jefferson was meant to be an alternative to their approach. They are also the only two alternative schools in the district. Nevertheless, it appears to make up an important aspect of Jefferson's identity in terms of how people perceive the school. Hillside, while it doesn't have one particular comparison school, also seems to have a strong identity as an outsider. The school was founded through political pressure from a group of parents, and has often been cast as an odd "hippie school." Their current head teacher noted that, "(T)his is a school that (has) sort of prided itself on its individuality."

This sense of being outside the mainstream can be both a blessing and a burden. On the one hand, Jefferson and Hillside have a bit of mystique to outsiders, which gives them some flexibility as places that are expected to be a little different or experimental.

> "(P)hilosophically at least, there is a sort of common understanding that Jefferson is different. There is a common understanding that something makes us special. We may not have totally pinpointed it. (W)e know that people don't understand us. We understand us but there are a lot of misperceptions about who we are." – Jefferson teacher

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Distinguishing themselves from other schools serves as a common bond between faculty members (and possibly parents) that helps to unify them as a collective. The more people distinguish themselves as part of a group, the more they identify with that group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). On the other hand, being different can become problematic if the schools operate too much outside the normative expectations of their environments. Jefferson has been experiencing some conflict because of its policy prohibiting parents from visiting classrooms, which is quite unusual for an elementary school. Hillside's administrative structure, which replaces a principal with a rotating head teacher, has been questioned by district and state officials throughout the school's history. These practices fall quite outside the expectations of public elementary schools, and can threaten their legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Accordingly, the schools often have to spend considerable effort to assuage outsiders and maintain their credibility. Even a school like Jefferson, with its high status in the district, must continue to differentiate itself in order to maintain its identity and credibility as an alternative school.

> "Right now as a staff we're revisiting our philosophy because we want to maintain our alternative status. With the fact that most of the regular neighborhood schools (are) shifting over to a more traditional, more structured approach … we have to find what makes us still different from that." – Jefferson teacher

Implications

We have attempted here to identify some of the fundamental processes that underlie the features of schools commonly cited as contributing to success or effectiveness. While our findings call the descriptions of some of these characteristics into question, they also support some of them. In particular, Hillside and Jefferson both appear to benefit greatly from having substantial authority over their decision-making. Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) describe the benefit to Catholic schools of their highly decentralized governance structures, which enables them to make decisions in the interest of their schools rather than in the interest of bureaucracies. Although Jefferson and Hillside are public schools, they also operate rather autonomously from

their districts. Jefferson is a star school in the district, which gives its faculty a certain amount of freedom in their practices. The fact that they have a distinct identity, though, also prompts the district to give them some leeway in implementing practices that differ from those required of other schools. According to one teacher, "(B)ecause we became the force in the district and a model program, they haven't dumped as much new stuff on us."

Hillside, on the other hand, has traditionally been an outsider in the district. "(W)e were left-over people, kind of treated like that. So for a long time we were left alone to just do our own thing," said one teacher. While not having the same type of top-notch reputation in their district as Jefferson, Hillside is given some autonomy from the district by operating "below the radar screen". Their district is often so disorganized and preoccupied with other matters that they rarely even notice the school. At the same time, Hillside has become aligned with high profile reform groups (with whom they enjoy an excellent reputation) that legitimize their practices and give them some authority to draw on. In both cases, the schools are given a certain amount of latitude from their districts to implement practices that are appropriate for their approaches, but which may differ from district initiatives.

This latitude is important for the sustainability of their organizational identities. It allows them to select the practices and resources that fit with their approaches, instead of going through wholesale changes every time a new school board is elected. This not only makes it easier to sustain consistent practices, it also contributes to a sense of satisfaction among the school community. As one Jefferson teacher noted, "Nobody's forcing you. Nobody's coming in and observing and checking which math lesson you're doing. I just do it because it feels good for me."

It is important to note that these two schools enjoy other circumstances that may contribute to their senses of identity and autonomy. As we have discussed, they both have active, knowledgeable parents, who contribute to the schools in a variety of ways. Both schools have access to resources. Jefferson is located in an affluent community, and is attended by families with high incomes and access to other resources. Hillside does not have a particularly affluent student population, and is underfunded by their district. However, their connections to

reform networks and involvement in professional development outside the district gives them access to grant funding, which they are able to obtain fairly consistently. While reliance on grant funding creates uncertainty and constraints on uses, it nevertheless provides a source of additional funds and opportunities that might not otherwise be available to the school. Both schools are also small, and have low rates of teacher turnover. These structural features undoubtedly contribute to the abilities of the faculties to interact and build relationships with one another. Lastly, both schools benefit from their success, which gives them legitimacy and authority to outsiders and parents.

While these conditions are important to take into consideration, it is unclear whether they contribute to Hillside's and Jefferson's capacity to sustain their approaches, or are created by it. The relationship actually seems to be reciprocal, with identity contributing to enabling structures and performance, which in turn reinforce the school's identity and its capacity to continue its success. What this implies for the study of school capacity is that it may be best defined as a self-reinforcing process, wherein capacity builds on and sustains capacity. Our research on these issues has just begun. There are many questions that remain unanswered. For example, what is the starting point of this capacity-building process? For Hillside and Jefferson, their unique histories seem important, since they were both established by parents specifically to pursue the types of approaches with which they are still engaging. If so, what does that imply for "regular" public schools that may not have such backgrounds? Additionally, what types of circumstances can hinder a school's identity and capacity? Thus far, we have studied only successful schools. Our research could be strengthened by including schools that are attempting to find an identity alongside those that already have one. We also plan to collect data from district administrators and support providers, which should provide useful insight into the external conditions that enhance or inhibit schools' capacity-building process.

At this point, though, it may be useful for those of us concerned with school reform to reflect on the current approach to effecting change in schools. Our previous work has shown us that the requirements and theoretical assumptions inherent in school improvement programs often results in more confusion inside schools than was there beforehand (Hatch, 2000). It may certainly be useful for improvement programs to provide schools with more information about

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what is involved in their implementation, and to offer more flexibility to schools. However, it may be just as useful to consider that schools need to develop their own theories, identities, and approaches that will have meaning for them over time. They may be better off developing their own models rather than implementing someone else's. In this context, support providers may be most useful doing just that, providing support and guidance rather than constraints and demands.

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Appendix A

JEFFERSON ELEMENTARY CORE VALUES

1. We believe that high standards for learning are necessary for all children to maximize their potential.
2. We believe in encouraging the love of learning.
3. We believe in shared responsibility for the success of each child by parents, staff and child.
4. We believe that open and honest communication is a key element in our school.
5. We believe that the basic skills of reading, writing, math, science and social studies are the foundations for higher levels of thinking and problem solving.
6. We believe that every child brings to the classroom a diversity of background which enriches the learning environment.
7. We believe that a structured program serves as a foundation for developing creativity and contributes to the learning process.
8. We believe in providing a safe environment that encourages learning through the taking of risks.
9. We believe in providing an orderly environment that facilitates focus on teaching and learning.

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Appendix B

HILLSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOL COMMITMENT SHEET

Hillside Community School is an exciting place to teach; it is also demanding in ways which other schools may not be. We emphasize collaboration, innovation and shared decision-making. Our curriculum, structure and governance require all teachers to accept responsibilities beyond the responsibilities of classroom teaching. Each year we revisit these responsibilities and recommit to them. We make these commitments to each other, to our students and to the families of our students. We work as a community to honor these commitments with integrity, compassion and joy.

General Commitments
Teachers at Hillside Community School commit to:

- Work towards achieving equity for all students in our school
- Collaborate with parents and welcome them into the classroom as partners
- Resolve issues as they arise
- Use conflict resolution when needed or requested
- Share our limited resources
- Participate fully in working towards our school goals
- Take an active role in pursuing professional development
- Take responsibility for student behavior
- Treat everyone in our community with respect and kindness

Program Commitments
Teachers at Hillside Community School commit to:

- Develop curriculum for 2-9 week challenge-based projects each year
- Teach agreed upon curriculum and standards
- Implement two service learning projects each year
- Use inquiry to inform practice
- Plan standards-based lessons with particular focus and specific strategies to improve the achievement of identified low-achievers
- Work on the school's focused effort by collecting student work for school-wide reviews, using the agreed upon teaching strategies, and giving assessments
- Use and analyze data about student achievement and attitude
- Keep a portfolio for each student
- Provide outdoor education for our students

Time Commitments
Teachers at Hillside Community School commit to:

- Attend meetings (weekly staff meetings, weekly developmental meetings, two parent committee or School Site Council meetings, other committee meetings)
- Spend seven hours on site
- Participate in student progress meetings
- Fulfill weekly yard and bus duty requirements
- Attend an overnight staff retreat
- Attend summer orientation before school opens
- Participate in two Project Open House evenings and one Back to School night
- Participate in some district events/requirements and network events
- Plan and go camping with students in the spring
- Plan and go camping with students every other fall

I understand these commitments and I commit to honor them to the best of my ability in school year ___. I commit to communicate with my colleagues if it becomes difficult for me to live up to one or more of these commitments. I commit to support my colleagues as we all strive to honor these commitments in our efforts to provide an excellent and equitable education for all the students at Hillside Community School.

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