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Supervision, Teaching, and Learning in Successful Schools: A Hall of Mirrors

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Abstract

Successful supervision is broad-based and collegial, and positively affects both teaching and learning. Successful teaching is characterized by professional decision making facilitated by supportive supervision. The most powerful type of learning is student-driven, teacher-facilitated learning. Successful supervision, teaching, and learning are congruent and reflect one another, creating a “hall of mirrors.” Supervision, teaching, and learning can both contribute to and flourish across 10 dimensions of successful schools, including care, service, trust, democratic community, equity grounded in equality, justice and peace, symbols and ceremonies, freedom and creativity, holistic development, and school vision. Reviews of literature on the dimensions of successful schools indicate a variety of positive benefits for schools, teachers, and students.

Keywords

successful supervision; successful teaching; successful learning; successful schools

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Introduction

What constitutes high-quality supervision and teaching depends to a large extent on the goal of learning in schools. I define that goal as preparing each student to have a meaningful life, to have positive relationships with others, and to assist others to have meaningful lives—in the present and future. Adopting this goal, of course, does not mean that a school will be successful. I argue in this paper that, for school success, supervision, teaching, and learning must be aligned with one another in promoting 10 dimensions of successful schools.

In the first part of this paper, I discuss the interrelationship of supervision, teaching, and student learning, and the need for those three processes to be congruent with and reflect one another. The second part of the paper describes the 10 dimensions of successful schools and the interaction of quality supervision, teaching, and learning with each of those dimensions. The last part of the paper describes some of the benefits, including academic achievement, for schools that connect quality supervision, teaching, and learning with the 10 dimensions of successful schools. Much of this paper is based on my book *Developing Successful Schools: A Holistic Approach* (Gordon, 2022), which the reader may wish to refer to for more in-depth discussions of the 10 dimensions.

Supervision, Teaching, and Student Learning

In this part of the paper, I discuss how supervision can assist in the improvement of teaching and learning, how teachers—with supervisor support—can improve both their classroom environment and instruction, and the need for teachers to move toward student-driven learning. I also discuss how, for maximum effect, supervision, teaching, and student learning must be congruent, with each process mirroring the others.

Supervision

Broad-based, collegial supervision has strong positive effects on both teaching and learning. Broad-based means that “supervision includes a full array of leadership and organizational policies and practices intended to support and improve a school’s teaching and learning environment” (Anderson & Pounder, 2019, p. 533). Supervision, according to Anderson and Pounder, includes improving both the learning climate and teachers’ instructional capacity. Improving the learning climate involves assisting teachers to create a safe, supportive, respectful environment; develop shared beliefs; and assume collective responsibility for student learning. Helping teachers to improve their instructional capacity encompasses supporting teachers’ professional learning; high expectations for all students; coherent practice across curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and the development of collaborative learning communities.

Collegial supervision is defined by Glickman et al. (2018) as follows:

1. A collegial rather than a hierarchical relationship between teachers and formally designated supervisors
2. Supervision as the province of teachers as well as formally designated supervisors
3. A focus on teacher growth rather than teacher compliance
4. Facilitation of teachers collaborating with each other in instructional improvement efforts

5. Teacher involvement in ongoing reflective inquiry (p. 7)

It is the broad-based, collegial supervision outlined above that I refer to when describing the positive effects of supervision on teaching and learning.

Through assisting teachers, supervision can improve student learning. While there is a body of literature supporting this statement (see, for example, Anderson & Pounder, 2019; Enright & Wieczorek, 2021; Glanz et al., 2007), a larger body of research supports the strong effects of the principal on student learning (Cox & Mullen, 2023; Gordon & Heart, 2022; Grissom et al., 2021; Lam, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2020). Based on multiple studies, Grissom et al. (2021) conclude, “the impact of having an effective principal on student achievement is nearly as large as the effect of having a similarly effective teacher” (p. xiii). Grissom et al. also conclude “principals’ effects on students come largely through their effects on teachers” (p. xiv). If we look deeper into principals’ work to improve teaching and learning, that work very much resembles broad-based, collegial supervision, as the principal builds trust and collaborates with teachers, observes and coaches teachers, facilitates teacher review of and dialogue on student achievement data, coordinates professional development, and provides instructional resources (Cox & Mullen, 2023). Studies on supervision’s and principals’ effects on teaching and student learning, thus, produce overlapping results and support each other.

Teaching

Broad areas of teacher responsibility, according to Ferguson and Danielson (2014), include creating a positive classroom environment (characterized by respect and support, a culture of learning, and effective classroom management) and effective instruction (indicated by positive communication with students, effective questions and discussions, student engagement, and quality assessment). There are myriad studies on effective teaching, and many of them disagree on the specific behaviors of an effective teacher, but there is a broad consensus on the statement by Stronge et al. (2011) that “the common denominator in school improvement and student success *is* the teacher” (p. 3). Indeed, after reviewing 10 studies, Goldhaber (2016) concluded, “teacher quality is the most important school variable” (p. 60).

Although we can identify broad areas of quality teaching, a specific, definitive list of quality teaching behaviors is not possible because what constitutes quality teaching varies, depending on the students, content, learning goals, school climate, and external environment. This reality calls for supervision to foster teachers’ professional decision making. Fry (2019) calls for supervision to assist teachers to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for professional autonomy. Such autonomy “reflects the concept of teachers as ‘theoretical practitioners’ who have the ability to make knowledgeable, thoughtful decisions about teaching and content in order to create the most relevant learning experiences for students” (p. 91).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2019) agree with Fry:

Teaching is a profession, and professions require the expert exercise of learned judgment and skills; therefore, educational leaders who are responsible for supervising the work of

faculties of teachers must appreciate, support, and foster teachers' professional discretion in their daily practice. (p. 210)

Here, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis are not calling for laissez-faire supervision, but rather for the supervisor to cultivate teachers' professional decision making and assist teachers' progress toward professional expertise.

Treating teachers as true professionals is a very different approach than the supervision focused on teacher accountability that has dominated PK-12 education in recent years, but given the failure of the accountability movement, a new approach is in order. Ingersoll and Collins (2019) studied the relationship of teachers' level of control over their work and student achievement and found that schools with higher levels of teacher control had significantly higher levels of student achievement than schools where teachers had lower levels of control.

Teachers' professional growth and improved teaching is supported not only by the supervisor but also by teacher collegiality and collaboration facilitated by the supervisor. Structures for collegiality and collaboration for the enhancement of teaching and learning include mentoring, peer observation, peer coaching, co-teaching, collegial support groups, professional learning communities, curriculum development teams, lesson study, and action research, to name a few.

Student Learning

Although teacher-directed student learning is necessary and appropriate under some circumstances, student-driven, teacher-facilitated learning is far more powerful for students of all ages. Teachers can prepare students for self-driven learning by teaching them skills such as self-motivation, self-assessment, goal setting, planning, organizing, engagement, persistence, self-monitoring, and self-reflection (Singh & Allers, 2022). An engaging learning environment also is important for student-driven learning, with such an environment characterized by student interaction with the teacher and other students, active participation, enthusiasm, and enjoyment (Bond, 2020). There are a variety of specific structures for student-driven learning, with four examples outlined below.

Peer teaching can involve students in fixed roles, with one student teaching another, or can be reciprocal, with students taking turns teaching each other. Both types of peer teaching can improve the learning of students as they share knowledge and reflect on the teaching-learning process. Rather than losing learning time, students serving as peer teachers reinforce their understanding of the content they are teaching and develop leadership skills (Goodrich, 2018). The teacher prepares students for peer teaching by fostering social skills and student confidence in peer relationships, creating opportunities for peer collaboration, and setting expectations for the peer teaching process (Endedijk et al., 2022). During peer teaching, the teacher serves as a facilitator and resource (Goodrich, 2018).

In *near-peer teaching*, students at a higher grade level or in more advanced coursework teach less advanced students. Students serving as near-peer teachers need to review subject matter and learn teaching, problem solving, and collaboration skills (Bestelmeyer et al., 2015). Supervisors can assist teachers with near-peer teaching by providing professional development and providing

time for teachers to meet to discuss content to be taught and coordinate the near-peer teaching (Silverman et al., 2021). Near-peer teaching has resulted in improved achievement for both the students doing the teaching and those being taught as well as the development of leadership skills by near-peer teachers (Bestelmeyer et al., 2015; Silverman et al., 2021).

Collaborative learning “involves groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product” (Laal & Laal, 2012, p. 491). In collaborative learning, students “converse with peers, present and defend ideas, exchange diverse beliefs, question other conceptual frameworks, and are actively engaged” (Lall & Lall, 2012, p. 491). To implement collaborative learning, teachers need to help students establish group and individual student learning goals, monitor and support group work, assist students to consolidate their learning in a culminating presentation or product, and reflect on their teaching and the group’s performance (Patrick, 2022). The supervisor can arrange for professional development to help teachers develop skills for assisting collaborative learning, but other types of support are needed, such as a professional school climate, teachers sharing decisions about collaborative learning, and planning time. Kaendler et al. (2015) note, “Meta-analyses have shown that collaborative learning is highly effective and often superior to individual learning in terms of academic achievement and attitudes” (p. 506). Collaborative learning also is intended to develop students’ social skills. Wyman and Watson (2020) argue, “These social skills are lifelong skills, these lessons are life-long lessons, and these learners become lifelong learners” (p. 362).

Personalized learning involves “customizing learning goals, content, methods, and pace to individual learners’ unique characteristics and needs” (Lee et al., 2022, par. 7). Personalized learning helps students to reflect on connections among their learning experiences inside and outside of school and on themselves as learners (Oller et al., 2021). Student choice, authentic learning, and creativity are hallmarks of this learning mode (Woolford, 2022). Personalized learning often takes the form of a student-selected projects in which students propose a question for investigation, conduct the investigation, develop a final product, and present results to teachers, students, and others (Gosling, 2021; Woolford, 2022). Personalized learning has been shown to result in improved student achievement, agency, self-efficacy, and motivation (Goddard et al., 2019; Woolford, 2022). Supervisory support certainly is necessary for teachers to shift from traditional teaching to personalized learning. Personalized learning is, by nature, differentiated, and Goddard et al (2019) found a significant positive relationship between instructional leadership and teachers use of differentiated instruction.

There are other structures for student-driven learning, but like the four examples discussed above, they all require the teacher to create the environment for and help students develop the skills to engage in such learning, while also guiding and supporting students throughout the learning process. Student-driven learning combines student choice, active learning, and the development of metacognitive skills that students can use for the rest of their lives. Teachers transitioning from teacher-directed to student-driven learning need supervisory support, including professional development, time for collaborative and individual planning, and the freedom to make their own decisions on how to best facilitate student-driven learning.

A Hall of Mirrors

The quality of teaching affects the quality of students' learning, and the quality of supervision (or in some cases, the lack thereof) affects the quality of teaching *and* student learning. Supervision, teaching, and learning are interconnected and interactive, and for optimal student learning need to be congruent with one another. This indicates the need for reverse design, basing our ideas for quality teaching on quality student learning and our ideas for quality supervision on quality teaching and student learning. Reverse design calls for congruent student learning, teaching, and supervision, meaning these three processes possess a variety of common characteristics. Several of those characteristics are suggested in Table 1.

Table 1
Cross Characteristics of Congruent Supervision, Teaching, and Student Learning

• Freedom	• Respect	• Questioning
• Efficacy	• Modeling	• Engagement
• Motivation	• Expectation	• Collaboration
• Reflection	• Relevance	• Inquiry
• Commitment	• Relationships	• Observation
• Agency	• Facilitation	• Dialogue
• Responsibility	• Flexibility	• Problem Solving
• Enjoyment	• Mutuality	• Application

Characteristics like those listed in Table 1, when present across supervision, teaching, and student learning, help to create a hall of mirrors. By this metaphor I don't mean the disorienting hall mirrors you might find in the fun house at an amusement park, but that, when successful, each of the three processes—supervision, teaching, and learning—in many ways reflect one another. We recognize these common characteristics in successful schools when doing long-term observations of supervisors working with teachers, teachers working with each other and with students, and students working together.

Ten Dimensions of Successful Schools

In a recent book (Gordon, 2022) I describe 10 dimensions of a successful school. By *dimensions*, I mean interrelated properties, features, or qualities of a school. Supervision, teaching, and learning are *processes* that can both help to develop the 10 dimensions and interact with those 10 dimensions to yield an array of positive outcomes. The 10 dimensions are care, service, trust, democratic community, equity grounded in equality, justice and peace, symbols and ceremonies, freedom and creativity, holistic development, and vision. In this part of the paper, I suggest ways in which supervision, teaching, and student-driven learning can both promote and benefit from each of the 10 dimensions.

Care

Being cared for and caring for others together make up the foundation of a successful school. All adults and students in a school need to be in caring relationships to grow and develop.

Supervision, teaching, and learning reach their full potential only if based on authentic care, and only if they expand that care.

In successful schools, the supervisor values all members of the school community and demonstrates that value through care. The supervisor promotes a caring school by modeling care in interactions with teachers, students, and families and by setting expectations for care among all members of the school community (Smylie et al., 2016). Hanley's (2017) warning, "those in the teaching professions commonly report above average vulnerability to work-related stress, psychological distress, and burnout when compared to other professions" (p. 255) reminds us of the need for the supervisor to care for teachers' overall well-being as well as their teaching performance.

In addition to showing care during interactions with individual teachers, group meetings can combine supervisor and peer care. For example, Hanley (2017) describes group supervision of 5 to 10 teachers focused on reducing teacher stress by discussing specific cases of stress and its underlying causes and effects, and engaging in practices to release the stress such as discussions, role plays, and expressive activities. Schussler et al., (2016) report on a professional development program that combines practices to develop emotional skills, mindfulness, and caring and compassion. These authors report that teachers completing the program improved their sense of well-being, efficacy, and mindfulness. The teachers' classroom climate and student learning also improved. In a professional development activity focused on care for students (Gordon, 2022), the supervisor asks teachers to engage in dialogue on the values they place on caring for students, to compare the care they typically provide to the values they have expressed, and to identify future actions they can take to bridge the gap between their values and behaviors.

Teachers in successful schools care for students in a variety of ways. Because successful teachers are concerned about students' overall well-being, they are interested in students' lives outside of the classroom and school. In conversations with individual students, caring teachers use active listening to understand the student's point of view and feelings and to display empathy. Teachers recognize and value each student's assets, contributions, and potential. During classroom discussions, teachers seek out students' experiences and ideas. In successful schools, teachers teach students to care for others, their communities, and the environment. Noddings' (2005) popular process for teaching care includes modeling care, teacher-student dialogue on care, students practicing care through planned experiences, and confirmation that care shown by students is genuine.

Student-driven learning about care could involve reading vignettes or cases about the need for care and discussing how such care is provided or withheld and how persons in the case study might have behaved differently. Students also can participate in role plays in which they act out the presence or absence of care, followed by dialogue on the role play. Students can establish expectations for caring relationships within the class and a process for meeting those expectations (Hough, 2014). Most importantly, students can engage in the direct care for others.

Such care might include simple actions like welcoming a new student or giving another student feedback on a project, or more formal activities like peer or near-peer teaching. Students also can provide care outside the school through assistance to a marginalized group within the community, a project to improve the natural environment, or a campaign to increase community safety.

Service

The model for the supervisor committed to providing and promoting service is Greenleaf's (2008) servant leader. According to Greenleaf, the servant leader becomes a leader because of their desire to serve. Greenleaf describes characteristics of the servant leader that can be applied to supervision in successful schools. The supervisor as servant leader is focused on an overarching goal, what Glickman et al. (2018) refer to as "a cause beyond oneself." This goal is a shared one, based on dialogue with other members of the school community. The supervisor makes themselves aware of problems with teaching and learning and works with teachers to gather and analyze data on those problems, reflect on possible solutions, and reach consensus on what actions to take. The supervisor engages in long-term efforts to improve teaching and learning and displays both persistence and creativity regarding those long-term efforts. The supervisor as servant leader seeks to heal damaged relationships in the school, to develop the school as a community, and to work with members of the school community as they serve the outside community.

A supervisor can take a variety of actions to support service learning. The supervisor can provide or arrange for professional development on service learning. They can work with teachers to reach a consensus that service learning will be part of the formal curriculum, will take place on a regular basis, and will lead to rewards for teachers and students. The supervisor also can work with teachers to develop service-learning partnerships with community leaders, groups, and organizations. Another type of supervisory support can involve making provisions for teachers and students to share the results of service learning with other teachers and students, families, and the community.

Teaching, of course, is itself a service, but teachers typically provide much service outside of the classroom, including both formal and informal leadership. Formal leadership includes assigned duties such as department chair, instructional coach, and mentor for a beginning teacher. Informal leadership includes service to individual colleagues, a team of teachers, or the whole school. Informal individual assistance includes such things as sharing lesson plans and instructional materials, assisting other teachers with technology, and simply checking in with colleagues to see if they need assistance. Informal teacher leadership at the team level includes activities like facilitating small-group meetings, assisting a group of colleagues to analyze student data, and working with other teachers to develop curriculum. Informal leadership at the school level might mean leading a professional development session, assisting with a school improvement project, or helping to plan a school event (Gordon et al., 2021).

Successful schools engage students in service as a way of assisting student learning across content areas, but also to prepare students for a lifetime of service to individuals in need, their community, and society. Although the most powerful forms of service learning are student-

driven, the teacher must prepare students for such learning by teaching them prerequisite skills, such as planning, communication, collaboration, and decision-making skills. The teacher also needs to introduce students to tools typically used in service learning, such as information gathering tools, data displays, activity logs, and reflective journals. And, of course, the teacher needs to support, monitor, and provide feedback to students engaged in service learning.

Student-driven service learning can take place inside or outside of the school; however, community service learning holds many advantages, including connecting the curriculum to the world outside of school and helping to meet a local need. Community service learning typically includes several phases (Beason-Manes, 2018; Billig, 2018; Bonati, 2018, Kaye, 2010). First, students *investigate* to identify a community need they are interested in and have the capacity to address. Next, students *prepare* for the project by developing necessary knowledge and skills and by recruiting community partners. Students *plan* the service-learning project by setting goals, developing an action plan, and assigning roles. The students *apply* the action plan while *reflecting* on their progress and making necessary adjustments as they proceed. Upon completion of the project, students *demonstrate* the project's impact on the community and their own learning to an outside audience. Finally, students celebrate the results of their service learning and are recognized for serving the community and for their own learning.

Trust

Trust is the bridge that connects all members of the school community. In successful schools, supervisors, teachers, and students create a climate of trust. Preston (2013) states, "When relationships are rooted in trust, people interact more effectively, honestly, and openly, generating higher levels of collaboration and communication" (p. 428).

The trustworthy supervisor displays the technical and interpersonal skills to carry out the technical tasks and cultural responsibilities of supervision (Glickman et al., 2018). The supervisor earns trust by showing concern for others' well-being, behaving in a moral and ethical manner, openly expressing their ideas and opinions, welcoming the ideas and opinions of others, respecting all members of the school community, and being reliable and consistent in their relationships with others. Equally important, the trustworthy supervisor understands that trust is reciprocal and displays trust toward other members of the school community. Teachers trust supervisors who engage in frequent personal communication with them, display collegiality, are student-centered, and practice democratic leadership. In their interactions with teachers, trustworthy supervisors model the type of trusting relationships they would like teachers to develop with students.

Teachers in successful schools trust one another. Teacher-teacher trust can be developed through ongoing collaboration and dialogue. The supervisor can assist such trust building by providing structures and time for teachers to work together. In addition to fostering mutual trust, teacher collaboration is more likely to result in teachers trusting the school policy, curriculum, or instructional strategies they have worked together to develop.

In successful schools, teachers and students trust each other. Teachers can show students trust by allowing them choice and encouraging their voice throughout the learning process. Teachers earn

student trust by paying attention to individual students, including one-to-one discussions about students' lives inside and outside of school. Teachers also develop trust by communicating to students that they are capable of success, providing them with multiple opportunities to succeed, sharing helpful feedback, holding them accountable, and celebrating their success. Finally, teachers can promote student-student trust by developing a positive classroom climate, structuring opportunities for collaborative learning, and fostering positive relationships among students.

Student-driven learning, if properly supported, can assist students to develop self-trust as they set learning goals, decide on learning activities, practice creativity, monitor their progress, and choose how to demonstrate their learning. Students build trust in one another as they communicate with each other, share ideas, encourage one another, assist each other in problem solving, and celebrate their learning. Paired and collaborative learning are more likely to lead to trust among students if partners and group members change from time to time to enable more diverse and wider interaction during the learning process.

Democratic Community

For John Dewey (1916), democracy meant different groups interacting to identify common concerns and make needed change. Dewey argued that, in a true democracy, individuals considered the potential impact of their actions on others and, if necessary for the wellbeing of others, changed their behaviors. Furman and Starratt (2002) posit that citizens in an authentic democracy recognize the value and dignity of each individual and engage in collective action for the common good. Glickman et al. (2018) maintain that genuine democracy includes civic engagement and equitable treatment of marginalized groups. All these ideas are actualized in successful schools.

Enright and Wieczorek (2021) define democratic supervision "as a relationship among professional equals, where leaders and teachers provide reciprocal pedagogical support aimed to improve students' learning experiences and outcomes (p. 19). The democratic supervisor respects and values all members of the school community. The supervisor understands the interdependence of different groups and individuals associated with the school. All groups that will be affected by a decision on teaching and learning are invited to participate in the decision-making process, and this means not merely giving their opinions, but being involved in the final decision. The supervisor invites and values diverse views on an issue under consideration, with the understanding that consideration of multiple views can lead to new understanding of an issue and a better decision.

Decision making by the supervisor and others is carried out in the light of a collective school vision, which always has the well-being of students at its center. The supervisor encourages teachers and students to engage in inquiry, dialogue, and collective learning, as these processes promote a democracy throughout the school and help prepare students to be citizens in a democratic society. A specific example of democratic supervision involves teacher involvement in the planning and implementation of a teacher evaluation system focused on colleagues assisting each other to assess their needs, establish improvement goals, and develop an action plan to reach those goals (Jebson & DiNota, 2011).

Teachers serve on a variety of faculty groups—school councils, professional learning communities, curriculum development teams, and so forth. All these groups can rely on democratic inquiry as they address issues and solve problems through data gathering, critical reflection, and dialogue to reach common understanding and agree upon collective action. Small-group or schoolwide action research provides teachers with an especially powerful vehicle for democratic inquiry.

At the classroom level, teachers can invite and honor student voice regarding both classroom issues and academic content. At the same time, teachers can ask students to reflect on their behaviors and the impact of those behaviors on others. Teachers can include opportunities for student reflection, dialogue, and group decision-making in almost any lesson. And teachers can design long-range student projects that promote group inquiry and democratic problem solving.

In student-driven democratic learning, students explore issues and problems by critically examining different sources of information; inviting, sharing, respecting, and comparing each other's ideas; and, through continued reflective dialogue, coming to agreement on a solution. Democratic learning activities can take the form of open-ended discussions, debates, role plays, simulations, and so forth, or they can be long-term projects focused on student action research, service learning, or civic engagement. In long-term projects that promote democratic learning, students engage in democratic decision making at each stage of the project as they select a focus area, design and implement a plan, analyze progress and results, present findings or a product, and analyze their learning.

Equity Grounded in Equality

Although some consider equality and equity to be conflicting concepts, for me considering all persons as equal members of the human family is the rationale for equity. Equity grounded in equality demands that all historically marginalized groups—including African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx, English Language Learners, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ+ students, and students with disabilities be treated fairly. Each of these groups has its own culture, and part of equitable treatment means that supervisors and teachers need to be culturally responsive.

In successful schools, supervisors have both a commitment to equity and the capacity to promote equity. Part of the supervisor's work for equity involves developing positive relationships with teachers and students from different cultures. The culturally responsive supervisor also communicates with families and community members from different cultures, inviting them into the school and going into the community to seek input for needed change. The supervisor gathers data on the level of school equity through surveys of teachers, students, and families; classroom observations; examination of the taught curriculum; and review of student achievement and discipline data (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Such data are used to inform improvement efforts.

Supervisors in successful schools make professional development for equity available to teachers. As Ishimaru and Galloway (2021) stress, “efforts to become more equitable as a school first require shifts in individuals' understanding, beliefs, and attitudes—changes to ‘hearts and

minds' ” (p. 471); thus, such change needs to be the first goal of professional development. Professional learning might consist of teachers reviewing and discussing disaggregated student achievement and discipline data. The supervisor can invite teachers to complete readings, attend presentations, or view videos on equity, and then engage in dialogue on implications for their school and classrooms. Professional learning also could involve teacher inquiry in the form of observations of different cultural groups, visits to students' homes, or community learning walks.

Supervisors can work with teachers to develop culturally responsive curriculum. Banks' (2014) highest two levels of curriculum reform are the transformative approach and social action approach. In the transformative approach, the curriculum content is revised to include the perspectives of diverse groups. The social action approach, Bank's highest level, calls for the curriculum to include different cultural perspectives but also involves students identifying social problems and working to solve those problems. Supervisors also can assist teachers to make their daily instruction relevant for students from minoritized cultures by helping teachers to integrate required content with people, places, events, and issues relevant to those students' lives.

Teachers in successful schools practice culturally responsive teaching, defined by Howard and Terry (2011) as follows:

Culturally responsive pedagogy is situated in a framework that recognizes the rich and varied cultural wealth, knowledge, and skills that diverse students bring to schools, and seeks to develop dynamic teaching practices, multicultural content, multiple means of assessment, and a philosophical view of teaching that is dedicated to nurturing students' academic, social, emotional, cultural, psychological, and physiological well-being. (p. 346)

Teachers in successful schools engage in critical reflection to identify and address their own biases. They view the presence of diversity in their classroom as a valuable resource for teaching and learning. They believe that all students can learn and put forth time and energy to turn that belief into reality. These teachers utilize students' funds of cultural knowledge by connecting students' learning activities to students' lives outside of school—to their homes, neighborhoods, and community. Teachers in successful schools provide differentiated learning and assessment activities matched to students' cultural assets. Based on the evidence that cross-cultural learning improves both cultural understanding and achievement for all students, these teachers promote collaborative learning in cross-cultural groups. Teachers in successful schools empower students to be successful in the current world while also working to transform the world (Gay, 2010).

Students in successful schools choose learning activities and products matched with their cultural assets and interests. Their school-supported learning takes place in their school, home, neighborhood, and community. Students learn about each other's cultures through cross-cultural interviews, reading each other's stories about their cultures and life experiences, and observing and participating in one another's cultural activities. Students investigate their own learning tools—books, online learning activities, instructional materials, and so forth, for cultural bias. White students in successful schools develop the capacity to critique the basis of the privilege and entitlement they have been accorded (Ladson-Billings, 2014). In successful schools, students learn how to work for social change in the school, community, and society.

Justice and Peace

Justice and peace in schools are directly related to each other as well as to students' physical safety, emotional well-being, and capacity to learn. Justice and peace in schools also can move us toward a more just and peaceful society. Educators in successful schools realize that justice is a prerequisite for peace. They also realize that punishment is a barrier to learning, and thus are committed to restorative justice as the avenue to peace. Restorative justice asks these questions: Who was harmed? Who was responsible? What caused the harm? Who should participate in addressing the harm? How should the harm be repaired? (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015).

Supervisors in successful schools are committed to and continuously work on developing the skills to promote justice and peace, such as communication, mediation, and conflict resolution skills. These supervisors collaborate with teachers, students, and families to assure justice and peace in the school, and work with organizations and individuals outside the school to support justice and peace in the community served by the school (Miller & Abdou, 2018). Supervisors working for justice and peace collaborate with members of the school community to create written policies on bullying and violence, but also to establish schoolwide cultural norms for justice and peace. Supervisors can assist stakeholders with implementing restorative practices like community building, restorative conversations, mediation, restorative conferences, and restorative circles. Restorative practices like these require specific dispositions and skills, and supervisors can coordinate professional learning for teachers to help them understand the principles of restorative justice, reflect on changes needed both in their behaviors and the school culture, facilitate specific restorative practices, and engage in dialogue with colleagues to assess and improve the quality of those practices.

Teachers in successful schools reject violence, resolve disagreement through dialogue, support social justice, and envision a world at peace (Joseph & Duss, 2009). Teachers working for social justice focus on human relationships, view conflict as resulting from unmet social and emotional needs, and believe that meeting those needs promotes justice and peace. They model justice and peace in their teaching, facilitate restorative practices, and foster students' sense of social responsibility (Hulvershorn & Mulholland, 2018). These teachers do all these things to nurture justice and peace in the classroom and school but also to develop justice and peace leaders in families, the community, and society.

Although some restorative practices require adult participation, others, like community-building circles, restorative conversations, and mediation can be carried out by students with teacher facilitation. Groups of students can conduct research on important issues related to justice and peace, consider multiple views, draw conclusions, develop recommendations, and present results. Students can be prepared as leaders for justice and peace, use their new skills to promote justice and peace in school, at home, and in their neighborhood, and report their efforts and results. Older students who have developed skills for justice and peace can teach and mentor younger students as they develop and practice those same skills. Several different types of community service learning can focus on justice and peace. Students can do community-based research and prepare reports on local conditions leading to injustice and conflict, conduct campaigns or carry out community-based projects for justice and peace, and, for secondary

students, enroll in credit-earning internships focused on justice and peace made possible by school partnerships with community organizations.

Symbols and Ceremonies

Symbols and ceremonies serve as an abbreviation for manifestations of school culture that also include rituals, celebrations, stories, recognitions, metaphors, and artifacts. Symbols and ceremonies are created to change or maintain the school's culture. They have a positive effect on school culture if they are consistent with one another, truly represent the school's vision, and are understood and accepted by the school community.

Supervisors themselves are positive symbols if they embrace and model a collective school vision. In successful schools, supervisors engage in daily rituals (announcements, classroom visits, blog posts) and facilitate formal celebrations (assemblies, family nights, community events) supporting the school vision, teachers, and students. In successful schools, supervisors formally recognize teacher and student success as well as service to others through newsletters, online videos, and award ceremonies. Supervisors tell stories about past and present heroes and heroines (adults and students) who support school values and who inspire others to do the same. Supervisors use metaphors to explain and compare complex ideas, artifacts from the past and present that represent quality teaching and learning, and symbols (school mottos, songs, artistic creations) that support the school's values and vision. By using symbols and ceremonies at the school level, the supervisor not only supports the school vision and enhances school culture, but also encourages teachers to use symbols and ceremonies to support colleagues and promote student learning.

Teachers in successful schools rely on symbols and ceremonies for their own professional development. Peterson (2002) describes professional learning sessions in which teachers told stories about their students and themselves, leading to a more positive school culture. Collaborative autobiography is a more formal type of storytelling in which teachers write and share stories about their personal and professional lives. Brown (2015) found that collaborative autobiography improved educators' mindfulness, self-confidence, empathy, and collegiality. Teacher professional development also can be assisted by teaching artifacts. For example, teachers can view videos of each other's teaching and engage in reflective dialogue to support each other's improvement. Teachers can develop portfolios including artifacts and reflections on their teaching as well as their efforts to improve their teaching.

Teachers can use classroom ceremonies to begin the school year, welcome new students, initiate units of instruction or student projects, observe the success of a student or group, welcome visitors to the classroom, or mark a culminating class experience. Photographs are artifacts that can enhance student learning across content areas. Laman and Henderson (2018) describe how an elementary teacher used photographs as symbols of students' neighborhoods to engage the students in reflective discussions of their community and its culture. The students used the photographs to create a book about their community and its culture and hosted a celebration of their book and community attended by families and other community members. Prins et al. (2017) recount how a high school science teacher used a fictional story about robotic crabs introduced to an isolated island and their journey toward survival of the fittest to help students

understand natural selection. To teach about the conflicting views of different groups in historical, cultural, political, or scientific debates, teachers can ask different students to write stories from the point of view of the different groups, then share the stories and discuss the validity of the conflicting views those stories represent.

Group rituals are an important part of student-driven learning. Goldys (2016) describes *community circles* in which students greet one another, share information, set learning goals, and plan how to assist each other's learning. Goldys also depicts *academic circles*, where students ask and answer questions about learning content, engage in dialogue, and assist each other to develop knowledge and skills. Student-made diagrams, charts, and drawings are symbols that can assist students at all grade levels and in all content areas as they plan for, actualize, and demonstrate learning. Photographs are other symbols used for student-driven learning. For example, Wiseman et al. (2016) report on students taking photographs of each other and their community to integrate visual literacy with reading, writing, oral communication, drama, and art.

Student created stories can be nonfiction or fiction. The ABC process calls for student partners to write *autobiographies*, interview each other, write their partner's *biography*, and then *compare* life stories for the purpose of developing new personal and cultural understanding (Masterson, 2018). Students can write fictional stories that incorporate and demonstrate learning in multiple content areas. Digital artifacts either can be selected by students to assist their learning or submitted by students to demonstrate their learning. Examples of the former include news articles, photographs, data displays, maps, and scientific reports. Examples of the latter encompass student notebooks, logs, student-made videos, daily work samples, projects, and portfolios. Celebrations and recognitions of student-driven learning often are combined in school fairs and other events attended by teachers, families, and other community members at which students display projects, make presentations, and are recognized for their accomplishments.

Freedom and Creativity

For school success, all members of the school community must have freedom *from* things like a negative school environment, inequity, bullying, and violence, and freedom *for* things like inquiry, collaboration, critical thinking, debate, and risk-taking. Freedom also is necessary for creativity, which is a strong indicator of success in school and in life. Indeed, Erez (2004) argues that freedom is the *primary* condition for developing creativity: "freedom to raise original unorthodox ideas, freedom to deal with complex issues even when the student's body of knowledge is insufficient, and most importantly, freedom to fail" (p. 133). Freedom and creativity are inextricably intertwined (Alfuhaiqi, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Clement, 2018).

Supervisors themselves need freedom to practice creative leadership, but they also need to develop their freedom and creativity by taking risks and expanding their leadership beyond what is required and expected of them in the typical supervisor's job description (Drysdale, et al., 2016). A supervisor's freedom and creativity call out for the supervisor to support freedom and creativity for teachers and students. Supervisors should foster teacher and student

- Freedom of choice in teaching and learning activities
- Freedom to choose what they will create and how they will create it

- Freedom of expression
- Freedom to ask questions, identify problems, consider alternatives, and test out potential solutions
- Freedom to take risks, fail, and learn from failure
- Freedom to associate with those with different backgrounds, perspectives, and talents
- Freedom to self-assess one's growth and choose how to demonstrate that growth.

The supervisor's support of freedom and creativity has multiple effects. Encouraging teachers' freedom and creativity leads teachers to develop improved curriculum, teaching, and assessment, and also leads to increased student freedom and creativity, with related positive effects on students' learning in school and their lives beyond school.

Students' needs and interests change from school to school, class to class, and student to student, thus it is important for a curriculum supporting freedom and creativity to be flexible and open-ended. In the classroom, teachers need to model freedom and creativity as they dialogue with students about their learning needs and interests and assist them as they work to meet those needs and pursue those interests in creative ways.

Many teachers are not used to promoting student freedom and creativity, and these teachers can be assisted to make the transition through professional learning. Discussions with teachers who foster student freedom and creativity are a good start. Teachers wishing to increase their students' freedom and creativity can observe teachers having success in this area, co-plan lessons with those teachers, and invite successful teachers to coach them as they try out new ideas with their students. Aylett (2020) describes several ways for teachers to share creative teaching, including exhibitions of creative work, teacher fairs in which small groups of teachers present ideas for creative teaching, and classroom clinics in which a teacher presents a problem to a group of teachers who then conduct an open discussion of the problem and suggest a creative solution. In a "night of teacher creativity" discussed by Feldmann (2011) teachers share creative teaching strategies with families and other community members, gaining stakeholder support for such practices.

In successful schools, students are free to explore nontraditional content. In separate or interdisciplinary content areas, students have the freedom to explore topics like cultural change, community development, peace, the environment, and the future. Students develop their creativity as they choose interesting problems, explore controversial issues, propose innovative solutions, and envision a better future. Students engage in both independent and collaborative inquiry and have the freedom to revise that inquiry as problems arise, conditions change, and new information emerges. Free and creative learning often extends beyond the classroom, to the home, neighborhood, community, natural outdoor settings, and, through the internet, to other parts of the nation and world. Examples of structures for student self-assessment that provide freedom and promote creativity include reflective folders, digital learning maps, student videos, student portfolios, and senior exit presentations. The overall focus in successful schools is on developing a sense of freedom and creative skills that students will take with them into their adult lives.

Holistic Development

A holistic view of school life is consistent with systems thinking, which includes seeing the whole beyond the parts and seeing the relationship of those parts (Senge, 2006). Supervisors in successful schools are concerned with the holistic development of the school's instructional program as well as the holistic growth of each individual member of the school community. For example, because such supervisors understand that teachers' social, emotional, and physical well-being affect the quality their teaching, they support teachers in these areas as well as with their instructional practice. Successful supervisors take what Shaked and Schechter (2014) refer to as a multidimensional view; for instance, they understand that a significant problem a teacher is dealing with has multiple causes, can be interpreted in multiple ways, and has multiple implications.

As Bukor (2015) details, a teacher's personal life and professional life combine to form their teaching identity. One example of holistic professional learning is teachers reflecting and engaging in dialogue on the relationship between their personal and professional lives and how they can make changes that will improve both. In a professional development program described by Edwards-Groves and Hardy (2013) teachers shared teaching strategies and products, asked questions, and engaged in reflective dialogue on each other's teaching. Professional learning like this helps teachers understand that students too benefit from reflection and dialogue. For example, in the Edwards-Groves and Hardy study, as a result of their professional learning the teachers changed their teaching, asking more open-ended questions, allowing time for student reflection, and encouraging student conversations. These changes in teaching led to the students speaking more openly, becoming more reflective, and participating in dialogue with their peers. Edwards-Groves and Hardy concluded that in this program professional learning, teaching, and student learning had become different dimensions of the same whole.

Teachers in successful schools are concerned with the holistic development of students, including their "intellectual-cognitive, emotional, social, physical, aesthetic-artistic, ethical-moral, and spiritual development" (Gordon, 2022, p. 9). Because these areas of growth interact with one another, growth in one area contributes to growth in the others. Also, teachers work to make learning content, process, and products congruent with each other.

In successful schools, students' self-driven learning integrates the different areas of holistic development listed above (intellectual-cognitive, emotional, social, etc.). Self-driven holistic learning can take place within a single content area but is more compatible with interdisciplinary projects. This type of learning incorporates individual, small group, and whole-group learning, and combines action with reflection. Holistic learning takes place "not just in classrooms but also in public spaces, in homes, outdoors, and workplaces" (Ishimaru, 2022, p. 54). Holistic assessment in student-driven learning includes self- and peer as well as teacher assessment and uses multiple measures of student learning, including student-chosen measures.

School Vision

Although it is typical for school districts and schools to display vision statements, many educators do not embrace and cannot even recall those vision statements (Gurley et al., 2015).

There are several possible reasons for such low impact. Vision statements often are written by one person or a small group without input from other members of the school community. Equally damaging is the situation in which a group charged with writing the vision statement *does* ask stakeholders for input but then all but ignores that input. Vision statements often take the form of glittering generalities that sound very positive and are easy to display on walls and websites but carry insufficient meaning to guide efforts to improve teaching and learning. Given the potential for a vision to inspire and guide the school community, often an insufficient amount of time and energy is devoted to creating a school's vision.

Glickman et al. (2018) propose *SuperVision* as “a term that denotes a common vision of what teaching and learning can and should be, developed collaboratively by formally designated supervisors, teachers, and other members of the school community” (p. 8). According to this definition, students, their families, and community members also need to be represented on the vision-building group. Older students can attend some, all, or parts of vision-building meetings. Younger students can provide input through class discussions, surveys, small focus groups, and so forth.

The process I have proposed for developing a school vision calls for a vision-building group including teachers and representatives of other stakeholder groups to write a separate section of a vision statement for each of the other nine dimensions of successful schools. The group holds an introductory meeting, a separate meeting for each dimension, and an additional meeting to describe relationships across the different dimensions. The vision statement includes what students will learn within each dimension and how that learning will be achieved.

Prior to each meeting, individual participants write their own ideas on what should be included in the section of the vision statement to be considered. At the meeting, the vision-building group divides into small teams, and team members share their individual ideas on what should be included in the dimension under discussion. After considerable dialogue, the team agrees on and submits a set of ideas they propose for the dimension being considered. Lists of each team's ideas are displayed for the entire vision-building group. In a whole-group session led by designated leaders, teams ask questions about and provide explanations and rationales for the ideas proposed. Dialogue over proposed ideas leads to ideas being combined, withdrawn, and modified until consensus is reached on a set of ideas to be included in the section of the vision statement under consideration. The vision-building group's leaders write a draft of the relevant section of the vision statement and submit it to the vision-building group at its next meeting for review, discussion, revision, and approval. This process continues until the entire vision statement is approved. The vision statement then is distributed to the entire school community.

Although we typically think of developing visions at the district and school level, teachers can facilitate students developing their own class or classroom vision consistent with the school vision but also reflecting the unique experiences and aspirations of the student group. Although the vision-building process needs to be adapted for a particular group of students, the supervisor's facilitation of schoolwide vision-building can serve as a general model for teachers' facilitating students developing a class or classroom vision. Creating this type of vision begins with a discussion of the school vision. The student group then breaks into small teams. Individual students on each team develop ideas for the vision and share their ideas with their

team, which then engages in dialogue on team members' ideas before agreeing on a set of synthesized ideas that is submitted to the larger student group. Whole-group dialogue facilitated by one or more teachers then leads to decisions on the class or classroom vision statement.

Benefits of the 10 Dimensions for Schools, Teachers, and Students

The aforementioned book (Gordon, 2022) includes separate summaries of the literature on the benefits of each of the first nine dimensions of successful schools (care, service, trust, democratic community, equity grounded in equality, justice and peace, symbols and ceremonies, freedom and creativity, holistic development). Multiple dimensions of successful schools have been shown to be associated with many of these benefits. Space does not allow a full review here, but I will share some highlights. Schools possessing several of these dimensions tend to have a positive culture and learning environment. A sense of community in the school extends to positive school-family and school-community relationships. Regarding effects on teachers, most of the nine dimensions contribute to increased professionalism, collegiality, and collaboration. Teachers in such schools are more likely to be student-centered, reflect on their teaching, demonstrate effective teaching, and be culturally responsive.

Students in schools that manifest the dimensions of success tend to possess a positive self-concept, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-discipline. They are more likely to be motivated to learn, be engaged in the learning process, display problem-solving skills, and exhibit higher-order thinking skills. Students in successful schools tend to develop social skills, demonstrate pro-social behaviors, and experience positive relationships. They are more inclined to have sense of well-being, a positive attitude toward school and learning, and a sense of belonging. Students in schools where the dimensions of success are present are more likely to feel empathy for others, display a commitment to others, and be culturally responsive. Separate literature on the first nine dimensions of successful schools indicates that *each* of these dimensions improves student academic achievement.

Conclusion

The 10 dimensions of successful schools do not magically appear; they are created, in large part by supervisors working with teachers, teachers working with each other and with their students, and students, facilitated by teachers, working with one another. In successful schools, adults and students live out the 10 dimensions as they lead, teach, and learn to reach the positive outcomes associated with those dimensions. A primary focus on the 10 dimensions rather than external standards or high-stakes achievement tests would mean a radical change for many schools, but the future of our educational system, and our society, may well depend on making that change.

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