

## Expanding the Leadership Team

The recent shift in dialogue about reform calls for reshaping the role of teachers to give them greater autonomy, responsibility, and status.



*Teacher leaders provide potent models of professionalism to other teachers when they share expertise on a consultative basis.*

Although it has been more than four years since the country was shocked by a report declaring the "nation at risk," the pressure for educational reform has continued unabated. Recently, however, a shift in the discussion has become evident. Where earlier reports stressed adding courses, changing requirements, and rethinking curriculum and instruction (particularly in the high school), current reports focus on the teaching force itself. This "second wave of reform" raises issues of fundamental change in the way teachers are prepared, inducted into teaching, and involved in leadership and decision making at the school level. Affecting the very structure of schools themselves, teachers are assuming new roles with far more discretion, autonomy, and responsibility than they have ever had before.

Perhaps the most influential reports are those of the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986). The former raises the necessity for reforming teacher preparation, restructuring the teaching force, and developing professional schools; the latter focuses on the role of "lead teachers," who work

collaboratively with colleagues and principals at the local school level. These reports have moved discussion of the reform movement in a new direction, indicating, among other things, that people in higher education are trying to understand the implications of these reforms for their own institutions as well as for the field (Soltis 1987). It is also of great significance that, perhaps for the first time, teachers themselves are being asked their views (Cohn et al. n.d.). We are just beginning to get reports on what some of the new roles look like, what the changed relationships are, and what organizational arrangements appear necessary to complement these changes (Lieberman et al. in press, Little in press, Rosenholtz in press).

What has caused this shift of attention from more courses, testing, and monitoring systems to restructuring schools and the roles of teachers? What are school districts doing because of it? What tensions and dilemmas are surfacing as a result of changes in the roles and relationships of teachers and principals? What are we learning about the possibilities of expanding the leadership team in schools? Answering these questions will, we hope, move the discussion along so that we can better understand the leap that we must make if we are to go from report to action, from the theoretical possibility to the actual process.

### **Changing Conditions of Teachers and Teaching**

Growing teacher shortages in many areas of the country have helped to cause the shift in discussion about reform to a focus on restructuring the roles of teachers (Wise et al. 1987, Theobald 1987). The reasons for the teacher deficit are complex, including political, social, and economic trends. As teachers hired during the '50s approach retirement, there is concern that there will be fewer competent and talented teachers to replace them (Darling-Hammond 1984). In some areas—for example, New York City—the crisis is already here (Warren 1986). (It is important to note that at a time

when, in urban districts, "minorities" are becoming the majority of students, very few "minority" students are going into teaching.)

Teaching has historically been a female occupation, but the women who were always there are not there anymore. The last two decades have seen more and more younger women move into what were traditionally male occupations, with fewer entering education. Better working conditions, higher status positions, greater recognition, higher salaries, greater autonomy, and more control over working conditions have attracted women to other fields of endeavor. In contrast, those women remaining in schools have seen their own workplaces become even more bureaucratized. They are increasingly feeling the absence of support, inadequate facilities and resources, low status, and the ever-pre-



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sent lack of control over their work. This bureaucratization, mated with paternalism, continues to keep women in subordinate positions (Schlechty 1987). Experienced teachers, the very ones needed to help in the development of new teachers, are leaving the profession in increasing numbers.

In addition, teachers are bearing the brunt of changing family structures and the unwillingness or inability of government and private agencies to respond to these changes. For many teachers, the social and economic changes in our society are sharply felt through the attitudes of parents and students, manifested by apathy on one hand and lack of respect on the other (Cohn et al. n.d.).

Meanwhile, business groups have begun to issue reports calling for many of the same kinds of changes recommended by educators (Committee for Economic Development 1987). Voicing their desire to improve education now to provide an educated workforce later, business groups are promoting changes that go beyond the holding of higher expectations or adding more courses to the redefining of how the work itself gets accomplished.

What we see, then, is the coming together of important and disparate social and political forces with a common interest in reforming the nation's schools: governors making education the number one priority in their states; universities calling for massive reform of teacher preparation in their own institutions; business concerned with reform because of the need for better-educated workers; and teacher associations recognizing that they must play a significant role in restructuring and professionalizing teaching if they are to influence the direction of change. This is an unprecedented, if uncoordinated, coalition of forces calling for structural reforms.

### **Changes Occurring in the Schools**

The reports keep coming, and there is no question that the rhetoric of "restructuring schools" is catching on. Changes are appearing in varied forms. School site management, for

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example, in its most advanced form, shifts control of the money from the district office to the school. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students form a planning group to decide the emphasis for schoolwide goals, the needs for professional development, and the general means for running the school. Some districts provide development activities to help people at the school make such decisions. In South Bend, Indiana, they are replacing retiring district-level content specialists with teacher specialists.

Teacher centers, now in their second or third iteration, have reappeared as a strong vehicle both for professionalizing the staff and working with new teachers. Teachers with specific expertise are now participating in a variety of leadership roles. For example, in a district in Washington, teachers provide professional development for other teachers in their specific subject area; after two years they are replaced by other subject matter specialists and return to their classrooms.

Some schools are experimenting with flextime. In one situation, when husband and wife, both outstanding teachers, decided to quit teaching, the district asked them to share one position; now one works in the morning, the other in the afternoon.

In California, a statewide program funding mentor teachers is expanding the role of teacher to mean not only teaching students but teaching colleagues as well. They teach children part-time and work part-time with other teachers. The powerful appeal of this option is that teachers receive recognition for the help they give their peers while gaining important learnings for themselves. Even the un-touchable element—time—is being negotiated.

In Maine, a principal and his staff are restructuring their school. They have “broken the back of the schedule” and plan to group 80 students with 4 teachers for the equivalent of 4 periods a day. Students will spend the rest of their time in electives in the related arts. Teachers will spend the remainder of their day in preparation, team planning, and staff development.

The New York City Teacher Center Consortium, functioning for over eight years under the leadership of Myrna Cooper, is perhaps the most fully developed model of teacher leadership (Miles et al. in press). In studying the roles of these teacher leaders, we found that they provide powerful models of professionalism for their peers, afford leadership in a variety of content areas, and help create a positive climate in extremely difficult environments. By observing how they actually work in schools, we have produced materials that can be used by others in similar situations (Saxl et al. in preparation). We found that a teacher in an expanded leadership role becomes involved in a comprehensive series of actions, which include:

- building trust and rapport
- making an organizational diagnosis
- building skill and confidence in others
- using resources
- dealing with the change process
- managing the work

Inherent in each of these “skill clusters” are strategies teacher leaders use to build structures for collaborative work with their peers. Finding ways to create structures for teachers to work together, to focus on the problems of their school, to enhance their repertoires of teaching strategies—all are part of the work of teachers who work with other teachers.

Another subject for study has been the development of collegial relations in schools, both what they look like and how to create them. Rosenholtz (in press) found differences between “collaborative” settings and “isolated” ones. In schools characterized by collaborative relationships, teachers seek each other out for help; and principals support the idea that any problem of any teacher can be worked on collectively. Teachers in collaborative settings assist colleagues who need help; in isolated settings, teachers feel that they must learn everything on their own. Because “isolated” teachers turn inward, they have little access to

knowledge of alternative ways of working and little peer support for trying to gain or apply such knowledge.

In her landmark study, Judith Warren Little (1986) documents the process by which norms of collegiality and experimentation were built in some schools. She describes the collaborative arrangements that developed as teachers worked together toward common goals. In time allotted during the school day, shared work on curriculum units made possible the growth of teachers who developed the skills necessary to carry out their plans. Teachers had time to discuss the details of their work with each other and, in so doing, fashioned new ways of working together. Principals in these schools helped by providing resources and support.

Expanding the leadership team in schools, then, means not just creating a few new roles or giving the principal some help, but finding new ways of organizing schools to create an open, collaborative mode of work to replace teacher isolation. Such changes do not come easily.

### **Tensions in Creating Teacher Leadership Roles**

The process of changing the roles and responsibilities of school people will stir up and disturb some deeply rooted beliefs, not because current arrangements are effective, but because "that is the way things are." It will take vision and courage to break clear of these beliefs and engage states and local communities in changing the way schools are organized.

The "egalitarian ethic" (that a teacher is a teacher no matter how experienced, how effective, or how knowledgeable) has long been held by teachers. Part of the norm is that teachers must spend all their time with students in classrooms. A major source of tension, then, comes from the conflict of values in teachers themselves. They do not trust the intervention of other adults (including their own peers), who may come between the

teachers and their major source of rewards—their students. However, working in collaborative situations exposes teachers to new ideas, to working on problems collectively, and to learning from the very people who understand the complexity of their work best—their own colleagues.

Another source of tension exists because principals and teachers often work in a parent-child relationship rather than as peers. As in any large family, some children make it, some children rebel, and some continue to respond dutifully to being told what to do. Parents, like principals, differ too. Some control inappropriately, even when their "kids" are 35 years old. Some parents let go and even learn from their children as everyone in the family grows up together; others hold tightly to some things and are laissez-faire with others. The analogy ends when we realize that, even as relationships change over time, parents will always be parents. It is possible, however, to conceive of principals and teachers moving away from the parent-child relationship to a far more collaborative, shared view in which principals and teachers can all be leaders in the school.

The past decade has exacerbated the growth of adversarial relationships among all levels of the school community. However, organizing to protect one's rights and privileges, although historically an effective vehicle for change, now stands in the way of building the very collaborative structures needed to support teacher leadership. Somehow, a new dialogue must take place; and a new set of organizational arrangements must be created so that all members of the school community can be involved in building a collaborative culture. But those involved in such creations must realize that time, perseverance, and courage will be needed to work out these new forms.

Most of us who work in organizations know that it is easier to do things by ourselves than to work with others. Still, if we are to institutionalize new leadership roles for teachers and build a healthier organization for the adults

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as well as the students, we must learn to take collective responsibility. This will cause tension, too, as it will inevitably make necessary new forms, new time arrangements, and new ways of carrying out the work. The process of organizational change is not well understood by most of us, and learning to do things differently is not comfortable for any of us. Although we read articles about this process (and write them too), threat, discomfort, and uneasiness are not conditions that we happily accept. As teachers and principals renegotiate the terms of their work, creating these new roles and structures will undoubtedly produce conflicts over turf, rewards, and responsibilities. No movement grows without this kind of struggle for a redefinition of rights and responsibilities—nor will this one.

### Possibilities for a Restructured Profession

From the early descriptions of attempts to provide new, expanded roles for teachers, we see that we may indeed have a real opportunity to change the teaching profession in profound ways. The possibilities include:

- building collegiality among teachers who have long been isolated from one another so they can share common problems and collective solutions;
- providing greater recognition and status for teachers, who have suffered too long from mythological and oversimplified definitions of their work;
- enlarging the reward structure to allow for choice, renewal, and opportunities to grow and learn—for teachers as well as students;
- building a school structure that permits autonomy, flexibility, and responsibility, and provides resources for teaching and learning;
- reshaping teaching as an occupation to encourage young people to become teachers and more experienced teachers to share their expertise. (As better working conditions increase teacher satisfaction, education will compete more favorably as a career choice with other professions); and

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- building a professional culture in the schools that will broaden the way they function and enable them to become more sensitive to the communities they serve.

Reform movements are born out of crisis. The so-called second wave of reform in education is no exception. We now have a real opportunity to do more than tinker with a few courses or follow another short-term fad. We have the potential to change the structure of the school itself and, in so doing, the nature of American education. □

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