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Actual Schools, Possible Practices: New Directions In Professional Development

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Abstract There is increasing recognition that school reform and staff development are integrally related. Yet, despite a rich literature on adult learning and human development which supports teachers' need for a wide array of opportunities to construct their own understandings and theories in a collaborative setting, top down mandates have frequently left teachers out of the reform process. It is argued here that effective staff development should be tied directly to the daily life of classroom and grounded in the questions and concerns of teachers. Both a theory of pedagogy that advocates teaching for understanding and learning as understanding and a model of staff development based on practical knowledge enriched by critical reflection are discussed.

Education is about learning how to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity. It is about learning how to savor the journey. It is about inquiry and deliberation. It is about becoming critically minded and intellectually curious, and it is about learning how to frame and pursue your own educational aims. It is not about regaining our competitive edge (Eisner, 1992).

Ever since the authors of *A Nation at Risk* (1983) warned that a rising tide of mediocrity in our educational system was compromising our nation's ability to be competitive in the world economy, education reform or restructuring has been proposed, not only to improve schooling, but as the solution to our nation's ills. Yet there is considerable agreement that these sometimes conflicting waves of reform have produced disappointing results (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). And although it is commonsensical that good schools need excellent teachers, teachers have often been excluded from the process, both of planning reforms and the professional development opportunities necessary to implement them (Lieberman, 1995). As early as 1957, the National Society for the Study of Education recommended that schools and entire staffs become collaborators in providing inservice

education. However, Sykes (1995) points out that over 40 years later, "teachers are frequently the targets of reform, but they exert relatively little control over professional development" (p. 465).

In the *1988 Annual Report of the Carnegie Endowment for the Advancement of Teaching* (Boyer, 1988), Boyer reported that morale within the teaching profession had substantially declined since the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, that in fact, teachers were "demoralized and largely unimpressed" by the reform actions taken in the previous five years. Since that time, the tension between old and new waves of reform (Hargreaves, 1994) and the "policy collisions" between them (Darling-Hammond, 1990) have, in Darling-Hammond's words, sometimes "created an Alice in Wonderland world in which people ultimately begin to nod blithely at the inevitability of incompatible events" (p. 344). In such a climate of confusion and contradiction, and with little input into the reform process, it is not surprising that many teachers have opted to close the classroom door and wait for it all to go away.

Recently, however, there has been increasing recognition that teachers and teachers' knowledge gained from and embedded in their everyday work with children should be at the center of reform efforts and professional development activities (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Lieberman, 1995). It is that model of professional development which is advocated in this paper. At the heart of the dialogue regarding school reform and professional development are questions regarding the nature of learning and the purposes of schooling. In the next section, these questions are explored.

Learning In Our Nation's Schools: Simple-Minded or Muddle-Headed?

Legend has it that during a heated philosophical argument, Bertrand Russell announced to his protagonist and teacher, Alfred North Whitehead, "This issue cannot be resolved. The problem is that I am simple-minded and you are muddle-headed." In many ways, the dialogue over school reform and the role of teachers in such reform has reflected this dilemma.

Our educational system has drawn heavily on theories of behaviorism and the scientific management ideas of Frederick Taylor. The positivist assumptions of objectivity, rationality, efficiency, and accountability have exerted a strong influence on our curriculum, assessment, and classroom climate. Skills are regarded as the sum of their component parts, often taught directly and practiced in isolation from their use before being brought back to the whole (Crawford, 1995). In the "transmission" or behaviorist approach to education, the teacher's job is the direct instruction of information and rules.

Implicit in this view is the image of the learner as passive, a vessel to be filled with knowledge by the teacher. Because our educational system frequently reflects the assumption of hierarchical intelligence (Darling-Hammond, 1994) in which, as Meier (1995) notes, the top does the critical intellectual work and the bottom is left with doing the daily 'nuts and bolts' or 'how-to' (p. 369), teachers are often viewed as technicians, purveyors of a "canned curriculum" provided by a very powerful knowledge industry (Goodman, 1994). In the best tradition of scientific management, the classroom has been frequently portrayed as a factory and children regarded as products to be produced as efficiently and systematically as possible.

Interacting with and complementary to this approach is a psychometric philosophy of education, which posits that the learner possesses measurable abilities; individual differences in performance are regarded as reflecting differences in amount of ability (Elkind, 1991). In a psychometric approach, education is seen as imparting quantifiable knowledge and skills which can be measured objectively on standardized tests. Answers are either right or wrong. and subjects are autonomous, with each discipline possessing its own scope and sequence of skills. Learning is viewed from this very linear perspective, "much like a train racing along a railroad

track" (Wills, 1995).

The course is predetermined and no detours are allowed. The only variable is the speed by which the journey is made. An unusually quick trip denotes a child whose learning ability is above grade level; an on-time arrival denotes a child at grade-level. All educators are familiar with the many labels for those who arrive late. Of course, many of those late arrivals never complete the trip, eventually choosing to jump from the train (p. 262).

Development as the Aim of Education

Over the last half century, research from a variety of disciplines has provided support for other approaches to education that are responsive to how children learn and develop. Variously referred to as "teaching for understanding" (Cohen, McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993), culturalism (Bruner, 1996), developmentally appropriate practices (Bredekamp, 1987; Bowman, 1994), and the transactional model (Weaver, cited in Braunger, 1995), these approaches draw on the theories of Piaget, Dewey, and Bruner, and Vygotsky.

Representing the disciplines of education, cultural anthropology, and psychology, these theorists propose an integrated, holistic approach in which learning is viewed as an active process, driven by the innate need of children to make meaning of their experiences. Children, rather than receiving meaning from expert adults, construct and negotiate knowledge and understanding through interaction with the social and physical environment. Thus, learning is regarded as a process, the personal discovery of the learner of the meaning of events for him or her. Each new discovery changes or refines prior knowledge, building a complex network of interconnected concepts (Kostelnik, 1992).

Young children, in particular, need to establish a rich, solid conceptual base from which all future learning will proceed (Kostelnik, 1992). Such a base enables children to make sense of their experience by forming connections between what they know and understand and the knowledge and concepts encountered in the new environment. Without this base, learning facts and isolated skills may resemble nonsense-syllable learning, often quickly mastered and just as quickly forgotten. Early childhood educators are concerned that children have the capacity and opportunities to use their knowledge and skills within the context of meaningful activities, both inside and outside the classroom. As Doris Lessing has observed, true learning is understanding something on deeper and deeper levels.

Although followers of Piaget have emphasized the child's individual construction of knowledge, due to increasing attention to Vygotsky's theoretical framework, educators are beginning to understand that "making sense" is a profoundly social process, one in which culture and individual development are mutually embedded (Bowman & Stott, 1994). Because the child is viewed as intrinsically motivated, self-directed, and actively involved in the learning process, the role of the teacher, rather than dispenser of information, has been described as a planner of possibilities, a guide, ethnologist, researcher, and co-constructor of knowledge (Malaguzzi, 1994; Phillips, 1993).

In this view, although "teaching as telling" (Lieberman, 1995; Meier, 1995) is still a part of the educational process, it is only a part. As Bruner (1996) observes, "Even if we are the only species that 'teaches deliberately' and 'out of the context of use,' this does not mean that we should convert this evolutionary step into a fetish" (p. 22). Rather, learning is regarded as an adventure in which both teacher and children are engaged in joint inquiry, with teachers facilitating children's learning through "posing questions, challenging students' thinking, and leading them in examining ideas and relationships" (Cohen, McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993, p. 1). Children are encouraged to learn from and with each other in classrooms and schools that help children learn, in Eisner's words (1991), "to develop an ethic of caring and create a community that cares."

Dangerous Dichotomies

While behaviorist approaches are characterized by teacher-controlled learning, instructional technology, quantifiable predetermined outcomes, and predictability, the transactional philosophy is characterized by following the child's lead, a "constant interchange of thoughts and ideas" (Kostelnik, 1992) and ambiguity. According to Elkind (1991), "The developmental approach tries to create students who want to know, whereas the psychometric approach seeks to produce students who know what we want" (p.9).

Polarized in this way, the dichotomies between traditional educational approaches and transactional approaches seem clear: product versus process, skill versus meaning, objectivity versus subjectivity, a passive versus an active learner, parts versus wholes, simplicity versus complexity, and accountability versus fuzzy-mindedness. In short, to return to Russell and Whitehead's argument, often the debate can be seen as offering a choice between being simple-minded and muddle-headed.

The reality, of course, is more complex. If education was originally instituted to meet the needs of the work place for a well-disciplined, homogeneous, semi-literate work force to "man" the factories and assembly lines, the employee of the twenty-first century, will be expected to be adept at finding, using, and making sense of information, problem-solving, thinking critically and imaginatively, resolving conflict, and understanding diversity. Clearly, in order to "produce" such a citizen and worker, skills and meaning, process and product, and parts and wholes are essential to the learning process. Students must be able to read, understand, and enjoy literature; be adept at solving math problems, and develop a positive attitude toward math, work collaboratively to solve problems and develop caring relationships.

Teaching, then, addresses all four components of learning identified by Katz (1988): knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings. The role of teachers, rather than as purveyors of a canned curriculum, is to start where the learner is, helping the learner to build new knowledge and understandings. When students are encouraged to ask meaningful questions and formulate alternative solutions, appreciate multiple viewpoints, and develop multiple intelligences, a certain amount of uncertainty and ambiguity are not only inevitable, but necessary for good teaching. A major goal of staff development activities must be to help teachers find their own balance between "coverage and making sense of things" (Meier, 1995), between getting children ready for next year" and encouraging what Malaguzzi (1994) refers to as "the hundred languages of children."

Yet, as Tyack and Tobin (1993) point out, our idea of a "real school" is remarkably resistant to change. The literature on school reform has focused on two issues in particular which challenge educators' ability to make education responsive to the needs of children and their families: evaluation practices and the marketplace metaphor of schooling (Eisner, 1992).

Evaluation practices. The belief that our faltering educational system is putting our nation at risk economically has gained popular appeal, resulting in the promotion of national and/or state standards and assessments as a means for improving curriculum and student performance in school. A number of educators and researchers, however, have raised serious concerns about "top-down specifications of content linked to tests" (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 478). For example, many educators argue that such attempts to "stamp a uniform education" (Bowman, 1994) on students leaves the learner out, making it hard for him or her to build new knowledge and new understandings (Goodman, 1994; Meier, 1995; Nieto, 1994). A 1992 study by Poplin and Weeres (cited in Nieto, 1994) concluded that students became more disengaged as the curriculum, texts, and assignments became more standardized. This is particularly true for poor and minority students, who often start out farthest from the standard and for whom "turning standards into simple yardsticks can be devastating" (Goodman, 1994, p. 39).

As long as our educational system considers coverage of a prescribed curriculum, mastery

of discrete skills, and increase of achievement test scores of paramount importance, implementing a "mindful" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992) and "thinking" (Darling-Hammond, 1994) curriculum will remain problematic. Teachers striving to implement such a curriculum will often struggle to meet the requirements of two incompatible systems based on widely differing philosophies of education.

But how do we know that we are meeting valid educational goals? Whereas a number of educators are concerned that standards, based on in industrial model of schooling, with an emphasis on uniformity, can be harmful to teaching and learning, well-conceived curriculum standards can be used as "tools for informing curriculum building, teaching practice, and assessment" (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 488). According to Bredekamp & Rosegrant (1995), "well-developed national content standards would be advantageous for at least five reasons. They have the potential to provide the curriculum with important content, conceptual framework, coherence, consistency, and high expectations" (p. 9). Rather than creating a wall around the curriculum, such flexible standards can provide a framework for local educators to reflect on and evaluate their own efforts to change their teaching practices to better meet the needs of children and families in their own communities

Nation at-risk or children at-risk? Perhaps equally problematic for school reform efforts is the tension between the concept of education as a means to improve academic performance to make our country more competitive in a global economy and education as nurturing children's intelligence and ability to make sense of their experience. Tyack (1992) describes two current conceptions or versions of educational reform: a "nation-at-risk" model, or a "children-at-risk" model. In a nation-at-risk model, education is conceived, in Eisner's words, as "a competitive race, the front lines in our quest for international supremacy" (1991, p. 10). In a children at risk model, rather than increased competition between children and schools, the goal becomes meeting the health and social needs of an increasing number of children who are experiencing behavioral, emotional, and learning problems (Tyack, 1992).

Arguing that schools and communities are adversely affected by nonacademic problems among students and families, proponents of this view advocate for schools to establish links with community service providers as an essential component of restructuring schools to meet the needs of children and their families. In addition, schools are encouraged to create caring communities of learners and often, in Garmezy's words, "to serve as a protective shield to help children withstand the multiple vicissitudes that they can expect from a stressful world" (Garmezy, 1991). This view is in sharp contrast with the "back-to-basics" movement which seeks to reduce a school's purview to the instruction of children in the traditional "3-Rs," with a heavy emphasis on skill acquisition and memorization of facts.

If school reformers are to avoid the pitfalls both of Russell's and Whitehead's arguments and the Alice in Wonderland world described by Darling-Hammond (1990) in which conflicting mandates and expectations create confusion and stress for teachers and children, professional development activities will need to help teachers balance the inevitable tension between preparing children for the world of work and viewing education as lifelong learning and inquiry. To do so requires time for observation, reading, reflection, dialogue with colleagues, and support for these practices at the district, state, and federal levels. Wilson and colleagues (1996) note:

> If visions of reform hold any prospect of influencing American schools, new learning will need to occur at multiple levels. Policymakers will have to learn, as well as children; teachers, as well as parents. Administrators, curriculum developers, school board members - everyone will have to learn (p. 469).

Professional Development and School Reform

Researchers on school restructuring have identified a number of commitments and competencies which lead to improved outcomes for children, including: (a) high expectations for all children (Newmann, 1993; Benard, 1993; Nieto, 1994); (b) a commitment to learn from and about children, building on the strengths and experiences which children bring to school (Bowman, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Meier, 1995); (c) "giving wider choices and more power to those closest to the classrooms" (Meier, 1995, p. 373); (d) working collaboratively with families and the community; and (e) development of schools as caring communities (Lewis, Schaps, & Watson, 1995; Meier, 1995; Newmann, 1993), defined by Lewis, Schaps & Watson as: "places where teachers and students care about and support each other, actively participate in and contribute to activities and decisions, feel a sense of belonging and identification, and have a shared sense of purpose and common values."

But, as Joyce and Calhoun (1995) point out, "if a major dimension of schooling is creating caring communities for children, much less attention has been directed at how to develop schools as organizations that nurture the professionals who work within them" (p. 55). Despite a rich literature on adult learning and human development which supports teachers' need for a wide array of opportunities to observe, read, practice, reflect, and work collaboratively with peers, the "one-shot workshop" remains the primary method of providing inservice professional development. As Miller (1995) puts it," The old model of staff development survives in a world where everything else has changed" (p. 1).

Institutions providing training and certification for teachers do not usually prepare them to create schools where dialogue, reflection, and inquiry are valued and practiced. Rather, teacher-preparation institutions typically use a model in which experts impart technical skills and knowledge to teachers in a context that is divorced from the classroom. Courses are organized according to academic disciplines, with scant attention paid to examining the problems of actual practice (Cohen, McLaughlin, and Talbert, 1993; Little, 1993). Not only are practicums and student teaching seldom supervised by the same people who teach the courses, but there is little institutionalized support for making the connections between what it means to understand a subject and how it can be taught and learned (Cohen, McLaughlin & Talbert, p. 45). When teacher preparation is based on a transmission model of learning, a central dilemma for teachers becomes how to teach in ways one has seldom or never experienced (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Little, 1993; Meier, 1995).

Inquiry Based Professional Development

> A new kind of structure and culture is required, compatible with the image of "teacher as intellectual" rather than teacher as technician. Also required is that educators enjoy the latitude to invent local solutions rather than adopt practices thought to be universally effective (Little, 1993).

New approaches to professional development have emerged from the Weberian tradition that emphasizes "verstehen," the interpretative understanding of human experience and information (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The "interpretative turn," which began in the last half of the nineteenth century, first expressed itself in drama and literature, then in history, then in the social sciences and epistemology, and finally in education (Bruner, 1996). This influence is reflected in the increased appreciation for practical knowledge enriched by critical reflection. Bruner notes, "The object of interpretation is understanding, not explanation; its instrument is the analysis of text. Understanding is the outcome of organizing and contextualizing essentially contestable, incompletely verifiable propositions in a disciplined way" (p. 90).

Teaching for understanding. Proponents of a transactional approach are firmly committed to both teaching for understanding and learning as understanding. As early as 1967,

Schaefer proposed that schools should be centers of inquiry "where faculties continuously examine and improve teaching and learning and where students study not only what they are learning in the curricular sense, but also their capacity as learners" (cited in Joyce & Calhoun, 1995, p. 51). If the preferred pedagogical mode of behaviorism is skill and drill, in the transactional approach, collaboration and dialogue provide a large part of children's and teachers' learning opportunities.

In such schools, teachers, often in concert with parents and children, engage in inquiry into curriculum, instruction, and assessment in efforts to improve teaching and children's outcomes. As teachers collaborate to develop and evaluate new practices, such as authentic assessment, a literacy program, or multiage classrooms, the inquiry process itself becomes an important component of staff development, providing opportunities for teachers to articulate goals, address questions and concerns, and find solutions together (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1994).

Unlike standardized curricula, which provide certainty and predictability, new approaches to teaching require teachers to weigh conflicting demands and reflect on their own practices. Researchers have consistently found that in order for teachers to facilitate higher order thinking in children, they too must have ample opportunities to construct their own understandings and theories. As Joyce and Calhoun (1995) point out, "staff development must not be offered as, "Here is stuff that has been researched, so use it!" (p. 54). Rather, effective staff development requires opportunities to be enriched by what Meier (1995) refers to as "the power of each other's ideas." In a study of nine Northwest schools, (Novick, 1995) a consistent theme was the need for curriculum review and collaborative study at the building level. All sites found that, as the research shows, simply implementing what others have deemed as "best practices" does not lead to a sense of competence, purpose, or commitment, essential to the implementation of a "mindful" curriculum. As Fullan (1993) observed, "It's not a good idea to borrow someone else's vision." Thus, a certain amount of "reinventing the wheel" was considered a vital part of staff development by these educators.

Peer coaching and mentoring. Peer coaching provides additional avenues for teachers to share expertise perspectives, and strategies with each other. Cohen, Talbert & McLaughlin (1993) point out that "understanding teacher-thinking involves understanding how teachers respond to an ever-changing situation with knowledge that is contextual, interactive, and speculative" (p. 55). For this reason, they advocate that teacher development programs be structured around peer coaching or mentoring in which the relationship between learner and coach is grounded in actual classroom practice. Learning new practices often involves changing old habits that have made teaching comfortable and predictable. Because teachers have to both *learn* new habits and *unlearn* old ones, as one teacher put it, "The comfort is for *not changing*" (Cohen, McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993, p. 93). This teacher contrasts ongoing peer coaching with the typical inservice workshop experience:

> I think you need the support of people with new ideas. The only way we change our teaching is to talk to people who are also changing. And you need time to talk to one another. But not on just a one-time basis, for it's got to be reoccurring. If Suzanne (a teacher educator) had come into my room and done a couple of lessons and said, 'Okay, this is the way you teach,' I would not have changed. But because this has been ongoing for several years, I really am seeing changes in myself - in the way I think. It is because of that support of talking with her and Carol Miller (a fellow teacher) (p. 93).

Such mentoring relationships in which both teacher and coach view themselves as learners can be set up both inside and outside the school. For example, since the late 1980s, more than 20 Professional Development Schools (PDS) have been created for the purpose of enabling veteran

and novice teachers to work together. Many of these partnerships are connected to major reform networks such as the Coalition of Essential School and the Comer School Development Program, noted for their innovative and successful practices. In such partnerships, both novice and experienced teachers benefit from the relationship as they engage in discussion, joint inquiry, and action research (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995).

The types of networks and partnerships in which schools engage are determined by the changing needs of teachers and children. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) suggest: "What does need to be a permanent addition to the policy landscape is an infrastructure or "web" of professional development activities that provide multiple and ongoing occasions for critical reflection and involves teachers with challenging content" (p. 600).

School/university partnerships. University/school partnerships can provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to discuss research and practice and to engage in professional development which is grounded in teachers' experiences. In addition, these partnerships can provide opportunities for teacher-educators to teach in ways that encourage inquiry into educational practice. Goodlad (1994) notes, "It is unrealistic to expect teachers to create schools for inquiry when the settings in which they are prepared are rarely reflective" (p. 18). Reciprocal school/university relationships can help solve the riddle posed by Meier (1995): "We cannot pass on to a new generation that which we do not ourselves possess" (p. 146).

In Oregon, Portland State University, in partnership with three selected local school districts and Education Service Districts, has developed an off-campus masters program for practicing teachers designed as critical inquiry into educational practices and their relationship to school reform. Co-taught by a Portland State University staff member and an instructor from the district office, teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own personal experiences and issues and concerns regarding their own teaching in group discussions and in a learning log or journal.

Portfolios with scoring guides provide the major evaluative tool; and the masters thesis consists of an action research project conducted by teaching teams. In this way, as one district staff development coordinator who has served as instructor for one of the three programs put it, "You're not just piling up courses and when you get to the end, you're just relieved to get your degree." Instead, the educational program utilizes a constructivist approach in which "teachers reinvent curricular theory for themselves."

Over a two-year period, teachers participating in the program meet over 40 outcomes in four major content areas, including teaching and learning, inquiry for school improvement/change, social and cultural issues, and interpersonal skills to effect educational change. In order to create an integrated curriculum, all four content areas are woven through all courses. According to the district staff development coordinator quoted above, "Every quarter consists of collaboratively inventing a course of study that is unique. It has been exhausting, but is the most exciting staff development I have ever been involved in."

Teacher networks. In Montana, three school districts have formed a partnership in order to provide "ongoing professional development that is an integral characteristic of schools as communities of learners" (Mission Valley Consortium, 1995, 96). Based on the premise that "conversation, reflection, and continuous improvement" are essential for effective staff development, the consortium offers staff development opportunities that "provide a common direction, yet allow individual building staffs to design professional development plans unique to their own needs and interests" (Mission Valley Consortium). Parents are invited to participate in individual schools and with the Consortium at large.

Study groups, workshops, and courses for credit sponsored by the Consortium have included the following areas of study: Assessment; Children and Society; Cognition; Cooperative Learning; Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum; Inclusion; Integration of Curriculum; Renewal and Leadership; Teaching and Learning; and Technology. Not only have standardized test scores improved, but, as the Consortium Catalogue notes, the consortium acts as a "positive

persistent disturbance" in the process of change:

> Despite the many challenges of improving schools, we are seeing our faculties move toward a more constructivist approach to teaching and authentic forms of assessing learning. Without a doubt, all of us have increased our conversation about curriculum, learning, and children, and we believe that it is through this increased conversation and collaboration that significant and sustaining change will occur.

Lieberman (1995) cites two examples of teacher networks: The Foxfire Teacher Outreach Network and the Four Seasons Network. The Foxfire Network is an example of a network created by teachers for teachers, having grown out of one teacher's struggle to interest his students in learning in his English class. Initially, teachers were invited to participate in classes over the summer where they learned strategies such as encouraging students to choose their own topics and identify their own learning needs with teachers serving as guides. Currently, more than 20 groups of teachers meet throughout the school year to reflect on practice.

The Four Seasons Network brings together teachers from three reform networks: The Coalition of Essential School, the Foxfire Network, and Harvard University's Project Zero. Organized by the National Center for Restructuring School and Teaching (NCREST), the purpose is to support and encourage teacher participation and leaderships in the area of assessment (Lieberman, 1995). After initially participating in two summer workshops, year-round support is provided through the use of an electronic network. Through on-going access to new ideas in a supportive community, teachers are able to serve as catalysts for change in their school and classrooms.

Collaboration with early care and education providers. Collaboration with early care and education providers is an important aspect of providing continuity for children as they make the transition from preschool to kindergarten. In addition, engaging in collaborative professional development activities can be mutually beneficial to elementary school teachers and preschool and childcare providers: early care providers bring a rich experience with active, engaged learning, collaboration with families, and cultural pluralism (Phillips, 1994); elementary teachers draw on a more formal education in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Yet, due in part to our strongly held beliefs that the early care and socialization of children is not only the right, but is also the responsibility, of the family, our child care and preschool systems have never been integrated into a comprehensive educational system (Kagen, 1991). Isolated from the educational mainstream, as well as from each other, there is typically little networking between preschool and kindergarten programs (Love, Logue, Trudeau, & Thayer, 1992). Differences in status (teaching versus babysitting) and remuneration (child care providers often receive poverty-level wages) may militate against open communication.

During the last 10 years, however, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has engaged in a number of activities to foster professional identity and visibility for the field of early childhood, including publishing guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987), and more recently, a conceptual framework for the professional development of early childhood educators (NAEYC, 1994). Kagan (1994) noted:

> Professionals in the field of early care and education have begun to take stock of their own situation: fragmentation of services; competition with colleagues for scarce resources, including space, staff, and children; discontinuity and isolation from mainstream services, often including schools; less than optimally effective training and advocacy; and inequitable and unjust compensation and benefits (Kagan, p. 186).

Increased communication between these two distinct realms and opportunities to engage in

joint staff development activities can do much to help children and their families build on the positive aspects of their experiences as they make transitions (Regional Educational Laboratories, 1996). In addition, teachers/caregivers for early care and education can apply lessons learned from the struggle of elementary educators for professional status and adequate remuneration to their own efforts to achieve recognition and equity (Phillips, 1994).

Schools as Caring Communities

Collaborative inquiry can only thrive in a climate of mutual respect, interdependence, and trust. The factory-model school, with an emphasis on competition, hierarchical authority, and a view of teachers and principals as interchangeable parts, still exerts a strong influence on our educational system. However, based on a synthesis of literature about human growth and development, Argyris (cited in Clark & Astuto, 1994) concluded that hierarchical, bureaucratic work environments are more likely to lead to immature behaviors, such as passivity, dependence, and lack of self-control and awareness.

In contrast, schools organized as caring communities have been shown to foster a shared sense of responsibility, self-direction, experimentation, respect for individual differences, and high expectations (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Lewis, Schaps & Watson, 1995; Newmann, 1994). When school staff (including principals, certified staff, counselors, and family advocates), parents, and children build on their own experiences and knowledge in an atmosphere that is psychologically safe (Espinosa, 1992), everyone's learning is enhanced. Deborah Meier, former teacher/director of the highly effective and innovative Central Park East Schools, notes that "although trust takes a long time to build, it is the most efficient form of staff development" (p. 130).

Key to the establishment of a community of learners is a principal who encourages teachers to examine teaching and learning and implement ideas and programs that result from reflective practice (Reitzug & Burrello, 1995). Just as the role of the teacher is changing from dispenser of knowledge to children to "co-constructor" of knowledge with children, the role of the principal is evolving from direct instructional leaderships to the role of facilitator of group inquiry, "collaborative leader," liaison to the outside world, and orchestrator of decisionmaking (Wohlstetter & Briggs, 1994). A Northwest principal observed, "I no longer believe in school restructuring. I believe in changing adults. And adults change when they feel secure and can personally make decisions to do so" (Jewett & Katzev, 1993).

Issues of social justice and equity are at the center of this vision of school reform and professional development. Opportunities to engage in reflective analysis of practice should include encouragement of staff to examine their attitudes toward different ethnic, racial, gender, and social class groups (Banks & Banks, 1995; Delpit, 1995). Creating a democratic school community in which everyone is regarded as both a teacher and a learner helps all concerned develop the habits of mind and heart necessary to build a more just and caring society. Meier (1995) argues, "Public schools can train us for such political conversations across divisions of race, class, religion, and ideology. It is often in the clash of irreconcilable ideas that we can learn how to test or revise ideas or invent new ones." (p. 7).

Barriers to Effective Professional Development

Time and funding. The process of changing one's practice is difficult and slow (Cohen, McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Espinosa, 1992), even when there is adequate time for ongoing peer coaching, self-reflection, and colleagial inquiry. Yet, time -- arguably one of the most critical elements of staff development -- is usually in short supply for teachers whose typical day, in Eisner's words, "isolates them from their colleagues and gives them scarcely enough

discretionary time to meet the needs of nature" (p. 723). Cohen, McLaughlin & Talbert (1993) documented the partnership between two teachers and a college professor who taught part time in their classrooms:

> For years, Miller and Yerkes (the teachers) had had no time to breathe during their typical workday. Half serious, half joking, Yerkes told Wilson (the college professor) that the biggest delight of having her teach every afternoon was that there was time to go to the bathroom, to get a glass of water, to make a phone call. These little luxuries had been unknown to her, and were no small reward for the decision to collaborate (p. 92)

Because teaching is defined as "time on task" in a classroom setting, teachers in the U.S., compared to most European countries, have very little "released time" for staff development (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Darling-Hammond cites a 1986 study which found that schools spent less than one percent on professional development, a figure that is declining even further in the current climate of budget cuts for education and social programs. For example, in some Oregon school districts, cuts to professional development budgets of 50 percent are planned for the coming year. Meier (1995) compares the four weeks of staff development time that a Saturn plant in Tennessee provides for its workers to the one or two days a year of professional development that most teachers enjoy. Given the inevitable complexities encountered in the reform process and the inadequate time for staff development, it is no wonder that school reform has been variously compared to "driving while changing the tires (Meier, 1995), "the swamp" (Schön, 1987), "grinding down a glacier's mountainside of living ice" (Santa, 1995), and a "tidal wave" (Sykes, 1995).

Isolation. The egg-crate elementary school, where children are moved in batches through prescribed curriculum, still provides the framework for our educational system (Tyack & Tobin, 1993). In what has been popularly described as "the second most private act," teachers teach approximately 30 children in classrooms that are typically isolated from each other. As Darling-Hammond points out, "Almost everything about school is oriented toward going it alone professionally." Inside school, teachers are inclined to think in terms of "my classroom," my subject," or "my kids" (p. 601). Most teachers have little experience with helping peers grow professionally and find the role of "teacher of teachers" uncomfortable at first (Hoerr 1996).

Sharing problems and their solutions, collegiality, and collaborative inquiry are incongruent with bureaucratic principles of efficiency, authority, and procedural specificity, which still exert a strong influence on our public schools (Clark & Astuto, 1994). Thus, in addition to time to breathe and funding for a diverse menu of professional development activities, structures which promote changes in attitude and practice must be in place. These include a democratic governing body, a supportive administration, open door policies, team teaching, and opportunities for both small and large group collaboration with colleagues inside and outside the school.

Summary

Although schools have traditionally been places where teachers engage in direct instruction of 30 children who work quietly at their seats, this model of "teaching as telling" is giving way to an approach based on a view of children as actively engaged in constructing their own understandings through interactions with the social and physical environment. If schools are to become exciting places for children to grow and learn, teachers, like children, need opportunities to become actively involved in their own learning process. Effective professional development, then, is grounded in the questions and concerns of those who work closely with children, and in

Little's words (1993), "are intricately interwoven with the daily life of the classroom," p. 137).

In this approach to professional development, teachers are viewed, not as technicians, but as intellectuals (Giroux, 1988), teacher leaders, peer coaches, and teacher researchers (Lieberman, 1995). Ample opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective study of teaching practices, experimentation, collaborative problem-solving, and peer coaching in a supportive community of learners are essential.

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EPAAcommentary

Contributed Commentary on
Volume 4 Number 14: Novick *Actual Schools, Possible Practices: New Directions In Professional Development*

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29 August 1996

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Like most articles in this journal, I found Novick's article ***Actual Schools, Possible Practices*** both informative and thought provoking. I have a couple of questions about the article. While it's no secret that the traditional mode of instruction (with its emphasis on passive learning) fails many children, what about those who excel and thrive with traditional instruction? Do we really know how the second group will fare with the more collaborative instruction model? How much does a child's temperment and personality type affect his receptiveness to instructional models? My sister (an elementary school teacher with 14 years experience) has observed that her high achieving students all have the ability to occupy themselves without disrupting the class. When they finish their assignments before the rest of the class, they will quietly read a book or do a puzzle while they wait for their classmates to finish. Her academically at-risk students rarely have this trait. They are more restless and easily distracted. I should add that she teaches in an urban school where most of the students come from low-income, minority families and that she herself is black.

Also, while the collaborative teaching model requires a lot of creativity and flexibility from the teacher it will also require a great deal from the student. It will require that they take more responsibility for learning. Are most students capable of this? How will students with deficient social skills fare in an instructional model that requires they work closely with classmates on assignments, etc.? Some people just work better alone.

I'm not saying that the collaborative model doesn't have merit. I think it could benefit those children who are turned-off by school so it is definitely worth trying. I'm just pointing out that just as the traditional model doesn't work for many children, the collaborative model may not work for many children.