

Radius

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Editors' Note:

Restructuring means different things to different people. For some, it is the putting into question of assumptions regarding the hierarchical way schools have traditionally been organized and the resultant flat structure of the teaching profession. For others, it is the grass roots movement by which fundamental changes in classrooms are being advocated in accordance with alternative views of how students learn. Still others view it through the economic lens of declining "competitiveness" with all that entails for labor-management cooperation. Undoubtedly each of these elements is significant. Yet even collectively they seem insufficient in capturing the pervasively moral atmosphere in which the litmus test of restructured schools ought to occur: Does it make a positive difference in how kids learn and how they're taught?

For us in AFT, however, it is more than a matter of definition. It's a matter

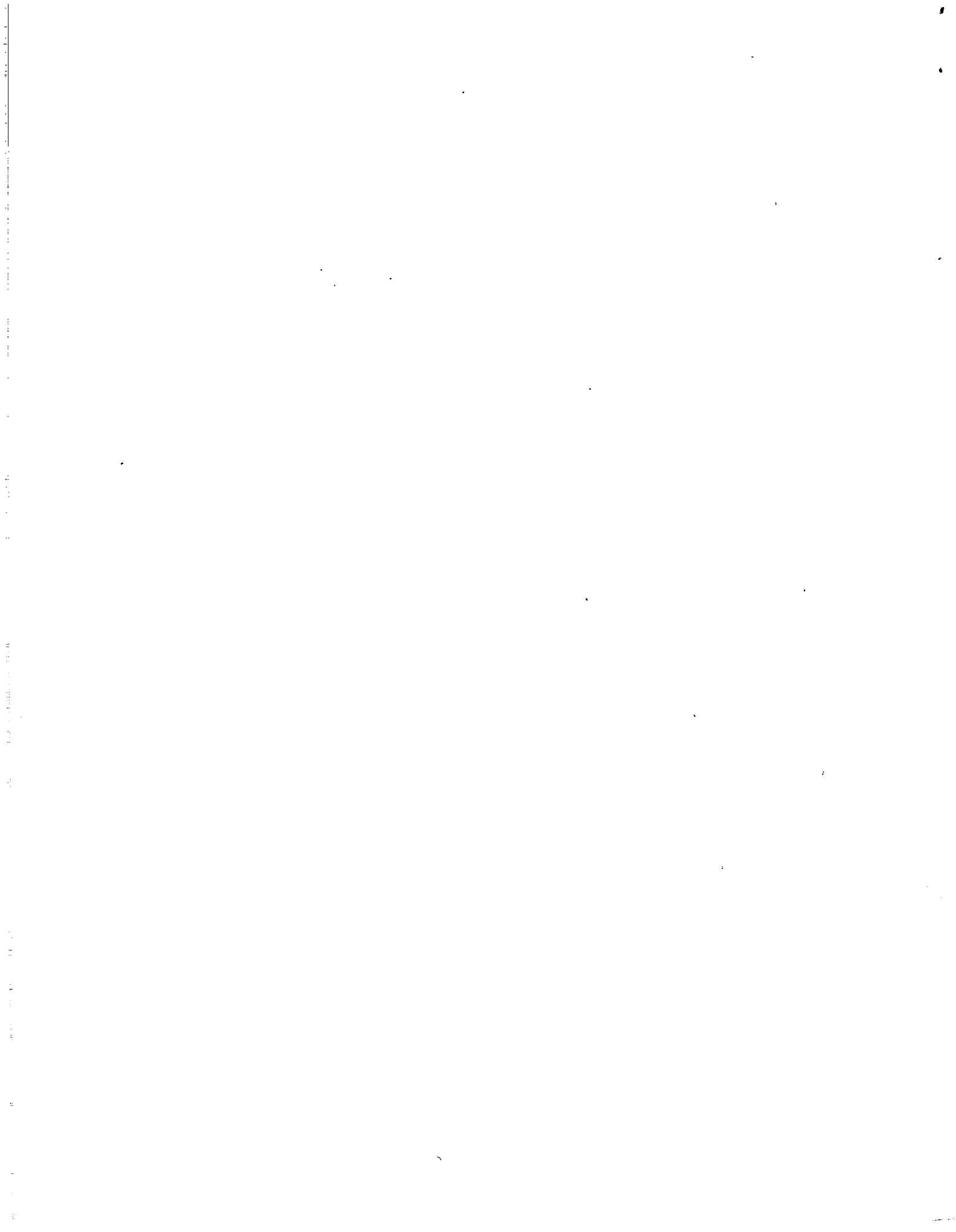
of putting ideas into practice, ideas which help to promote both student success and professional practice. The changes occasioned by restructuring, moreover, are interconnected. More often than not, a change implemented in one corner of the education landscape reverberates against the presumptive soundness of yet another rule, practice, or procedure. Restructuring is a chain reaction process.

In what follows, and in each succeeding publication, we will choose an issue or idea currently being explored in restructuring efforts. Our emphasis will be on clarifying what the issue or idea is, its relation to restructuring, and what current experience has to tell us about both its pitfalls and promise. In addition, we provide a resource guide indicating where the practice is being tried and/or how to obtain further information.

Any views expressed are not necessarily official AFT policy, but instead represent recent thinking on the topics and as such are intended to provoke further thought and discussion.

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SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

What Is It?

The central idea is building-level autonomy. Among areas usually included under the purview of school-based management (SBM) are:

1. educational outcomes
2. curriculum and instructional decisions
3. school-based budgeting
4. parental, community and student involvement
5. personnel decisions
6. maintenance
7. non-instructional topics (discipline, safety, lunchroom, community relations, etc.).

The rationale for SBM is that schools, communities, parents and students have different needs, and that these needs can best be accommodated at the building, not the district, level. This still leaves great leeway, however, for decision-making at the district level. Thus, according to Lindelow, "The school board makes general system-wide policies, including commitment to program, budgeting and operating autonomy of schools, and does not usurp or intrude upon administrative implementation" (Lindelow, 1981).

Motives, however, often differ. SBM has been invoked as the hopeful answer to everything from achieving desegregation to enhancing teaching as a profession. Some see it politically as the extension of choice to those (parents and community) who have been left out of local decision-making. Others view it as effective business practice, consistent with the findings of how excellent companies are managed, while yet others emphasize potential gains in student achievement.

At times, these motives congeal and SBM is suggested as a remedy for a host of

ills. Embarking on a site-based management course, one exuberant Louisiana school district expressed it this way:

"The site-based management effort will make a difference for our students. The effort will get East Baton Rouge Parish schools in compliance with the Desegregation Court Order, pupil and teacher absenteeism will go down, test scores will go up, vandalism will go down, community support will go up, dropouts, suspensions and expulsions will go down, morale of teachers will go up and overall accountability will be improved." (At The Crossroads, East Baton Rouge Parish School Redesign Plan, Into The Next Century, March 11, 1988.)

Does school-based management require shared decision-making (SDM)?

Of particular interest to teachers and local unions is the extent to which SBM entails some notion of shared decision-making. SBM models exist which do not involve teachers in meaningful decision-making. For example, the East Baton Rouge Parish plan cited above, while advocating that principals work collaboratively with "school advisory councils," is nonetheless clear about how decisions will be made: "The principal remains the site-based leader and is ultimately accountable for decisions and building performance. A critical factor in the harmonious interactions of the principal and the school advisory council is trust." (East Parish plan, page 4.) This contrasts sharply with other school-based management approaches that do include shared decision-making. In Hammond, Indiana, for example, where a school improvement process (SIP) has been fostered in a number of schools, special attention has been given to avoiding the traditional top-down hierarchy of decision-making."Although

Hammond school representatives have made it a point not to set any rigid rules concerning SIP committee membership or meeting times and procedures, there is one rule to which all teams are expected to adhere: a principal should never chair the SIP committee, because this would merely perpetuate the traditional top-down approach to school management." (Casner-Lotto, 1988) Similarly in Dade County Public Schools in Miami, an innovative pilot program is being instituted which makes the connection between SBM and SDM explicit: "There is a close correlation between school-based management/budgeting and the shared decision-making process. They go hand in hand." (School Based Management/Shared Decision-Making, A Historical Perspective, p. 73, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida, October 1987)

Indeed there is some evidence to indicate that districts which fail to link the two are less likely to succeed. One such case is Albuquerque. The attempt to mandate school-based budgeting in Albuquerque failed recently for reasons the Albuquerque Teachers Federation expressed as follows:

"The school-based budgeting process as it now operates in the Albuquerque school district appears to be a democratic process with opportunities for participation by a wide range of educational constituencies. In practice, however, it has resulted in divisiveness, elimination of positions such as librarians and nurses, some programs atrophy as inadequate school budgets are cut in order to fund special needs in any given school. Final budget authority continues to rest with principals who often wield undue control over the school-based budget committees.... The budget committees at each school should have the final say on the budget, not the principal." (ATF Position Paper: School-Based Budgeting)

It is interesting to note that a research debate lays at the root of the controversy over linking SBM with SDM. Much of the impetus for SBM stems from the "effective schools" research. This diverse, and sometimes conflicting, body of research identified five general characteristics associated with effective schools: "...strong principal leadership, academic focus, high expectations, healthy and orderly environment, frequent monitoring of student achievement." (Miller and Lieberman, 1988) In their now classic review of the effective schools literature, Purkey and Smith (1983) drew attention to school-site management as one of the "most important organizational-structural variables" connected with effective schools.

At issue in some of the research, however, is the place of "shared governance." On the one hand, much of the effective schools literature attributes success to strong instructional leadership by the principal. Yet, in the words of one critic, "contrary to the traditional formula, the instructional leadership at most of the effective schools did not depend solely on the principal." (Steadman, 1987. See also Zirkel and Greenwood, 1987) Others have gone even further in asserting that the research takes the most common form of school organization—the hierarchical type—as given. "As a result, ESR (effective schools research) and the school effectiveness movement that springs from it are primarily concerned with improving schools by making small adjustments rather than fundamental changes. This means that the assumptions on which traditional schooling is based remain unexamined and unchallenged." (Lauder and Khan, 1988)

The approach taken by teachers in Hammond, Dade and Albuquerque is consistent with an approach to restructuring education which seeks both greater decentralization of

decision-making and at the same time alternatives to existing decision-making structures. That is, the realization of goals, such as the professionalization of teachers as well as the empowering of other constituencies (parents, paraprofessionals, students) would seem to require the coupling of school-based management with meaningful shared-decision making. As The Carnegie Task Force on Teaching As a Profession, A Nation Prepared, noted: "No organization can function well without strong and effective leadership and schools are no exception. But the single model for leadership found in most schools is better suited to business or government than to the function of education." (Carnegie, p. 61, 1986)

The restructuring projects underway have gone beyond the effective schools movement, then, in two ways: first, by seeking to create structures not ordinarily found in traditional schools, and second, by examining some of the assumptions on which traditional schooling is based.

Does School-Based Management Promote Learning?

Promoting efficiency and enhancing autonomy for teachers are worthwhile goals, but if at the same time there is no impact on student learning, while certain battles might be won, the war will be lost.

How are we to judge whether or not SBM/SDM makes a difference? It would seem first necessary to clarify what is meant by "student learning." There is a certain body of evidence (again from the effective schools literature) which takes as given the results of norm-referenced standardized achievement tests. The argument is that those schools which practice SBM/SDM are those whose students excel at standardized tests. "Student learning" then, becomes identified with test performance.

Two concerns have surfaced with this line of reasoning. First, it is not clear that the reporting of test scores has been totally accurate, and second, there is some apprehension that, even if accurate, damage can be inflicted on the curriculum (and teaching) by narrowing it to fit the kinds of basic skills measured by existing tests (Steadman, 1987). In short, there is mounting concern with the kinds of measures or indicators traditionally employed to assess student learning. Restructuring schools will involve reexamining the instruments employed in assessment and evaluation.

Another sort of issue is raised by the question, "Do restructured schools distract from student learning?" That is, even if we could agree upon measures to assess performance, measures more acceptable as accurate representations of student learning than standardized tests, there remains the question of whether or not "the shifting of management responsibilities to the school level is in some way a distraction from the central processes of schooling, namely, learning and teaching..." (Caldwell, 1988) Some recent commentators have warned against wholesale adoption of SBM/SDM structures which model those envisioned in reports such as the 1986 Carnegie Report, A Nation Prepared. Koehler and Fenstermacher (1988), for example, wonder whether calls for the professionalization of teaching which shift the focus of decision-making to various levels of the teaching force, are compatible with higher quality student learning.

Of course there is no definitive answer to this issue and for the very simple reason that our experience with restructuring schools is still in its infancy. The case study cited by Koehler and Fenstermacher, for example, is very limited in scope, covering only one K-6 elementary school, Desert View, whose restructuring decisions seem to lack clear consensus on what

constitutes student learning, as well as questions regarding the appropriateness of the chosen implementation strategies.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to realize that whatever SBM/SDM models are designed, the quality of student learning will be affected. Following one path might lead, as it did in the case of Desert View Elementary, to teachers spending more time on collective decision-making and other meetings than on instruction, or to increased educational problems for children, but things don't have to end up this way. It is instructive to contrast, for example, successful restructuring efforts, as in Germany's Koln-Holweide school (American Educator, Spring 1988) when the measures undertaken stem from the shared desire to create a school community. In Desert View, students were pulled out of class for special help; they moved classroom to classroom, from teacher specialist to teacher specialist; and there was little apparent coherence in the functioning of teacher teams. In Koln-Holweide, on the other hand, teams of teachers work together employing multiple instructional strategies (such as cooperative learning) allowing for students to remain in class for special help; teachers are cooperatively responsible for more than one academic specialty; and students experience a satisfying coherence in lessons, discipline, and classroom communication. Restructuring schools in Koln-Holweide means, among other things, that, in the words of its head teacher, Anna Ratzki, "...teachers are responsible not merely for teaching their subjects but for the total education of their students, for making sure that their students succeed, personally and academically." (American Educator, Spring 1988) SBM/SDM is more likely to succeed when it springs from concern for student success than when it is tangential to it.

Are there problems when a district moves simultaneously to centralize and decentralize?

As mentioned before, SBM is perfectly consistent (and empirically coincident) with a school board setting system-wide goals. However, conflict can still arise. It often does so when the question, "Who controls the curriculum?" is raised. The move to centralize control over curriculum, a move, for example, key to Thatcher's Reform Plan in Britain, is also causing conflict here. In Philadelphia, teachers have been advocating greater decision-making authority at precisely the same time the district had been attempting to impose a standardized curriculum. (Education Week, March 23, 1988) Similarly at the state level, at a time when local districts such as Hammond are involved in promoting shared decision-making, the state of Indiana is imposing a state-wide testing program that's certain to affect the degree and extent of local initiative.

Two general solutions seem possible. Eitner, as in Philadelphia, some move toward a less rigid, more flexible approach to curriculum, a compromise, can be proposed or else (as in Hammond and Dade) waivers to existing regulations can be sought.

What kinds of resources are necessary to effect SBM/SDM?

As in all change, time and money are critical resources. Dade, for example, allotted some \$6250 per school for the purpose of planning its SBM/SDM proposal. Even then staffs often met on their own time to develop and further refine their proposals. In reflecting on Hammond's School Improvement Project, Hammond Federation of Teachers President Patrick O'Rourke has suggested that extra time be spent in discussing the meaning and rationale for shared decision-making along with a more thorough regard for implementation. Similar thoughts are

being echoed by teacher leaders in Toledo, Rochester, New York, Cincinnati and other districts evolving new decision-making structures. In sum, more planning time and financial resources will be helpful in effecting a transition to SBM/SDM.

How long does it take for SBM to be put in place?

Although there appears to be no one right answer, experience tends to confirm a gradual, evolutionary approach to implementation is desirable. Edmonton, Canada, perhaps the North American school district with the most experience in school-based management, is still evolving after ten years. This evolutionary approach, however, is often at odds with the American penchant for speedy application. In Albuquerque, site-based budgeting was to be implemented within two years, and plans to accomplish even more encompassing measures were presumed possible in the same amount of time by the East Baton Rouge Parish school system. Caldwell writes, "Time lines have been unrealistically short, with experience to date suggesting five years or more are required." (Caldwell, 1988) This is especially so when complex issues such as equity in resource allocation (Edmonton takes into account eleven levels of per pupil allocation to meet forty-seven categories of student need in determining each school's allotment) or the building of trust among decision-makers, is necessary to the smooth functioning of the changes being undergone.

One other possibility should be noted. The preceding discussion could be interpreted as assuming the only setting for school-based management is that of an entire school building and staff. Such an interpretation would be

mistaken. It is possible (indeed it is a reality) to create "schools-within-schools," and by so doing, expedite the implementation of SBM/SDM. This strategy, elaborated upon most recently by AFT President Shanker, will be the subject of a future issue of RADIUS.

SUMMARY

1. School-based management will more likely meet its goals when it is coupled with meaningful shared decision-making.
2. The goal of enhanced student learning is an indispensable precondition for considering SBM/SDM.
3. To insure that student learning is enhanced, it is necessary to enumerate the kinds of decisions to be considered at the school level (the use of multiple instructional strategies, scheduling, etc.)
4. Simultaneous attempts to centralize and decentralize can result in conflict (as in curriculum and testing decisions) which can be managed if planned for in advance.
5. Additional time and resources are items most often clamored for by staffs implementing SBM/SDM.
6. An evolutionary approach (over at least five years) to SBM/SDM is more likely to succeed than one mandated for implementation in a short period of time.
7. SBM/SDM is one piece of the restructuring puzzle and so should be considered in relation to other pieces (assessment and curriculum, for example).

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SOME ORGANIZATIONAL PROJECTS CONCERNED WITH RESTRUCTURING

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

ASCD: Mini conference on restructuring tentatively scheduled for November 1988.

National Curriculum Study Institute:

Sessions on relevant issues (planning, decision making, etc.). For dates and locations, Contact: Delores Flemoury, NCSI Assistant, ASCD, 125 N. West St., Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2798. Phone 703-549-9110.

Consortium of schools involved in restructuring (governance, roles, curriculum, instruction) starting sometime in 1988. Contact: Diane Berreth, ASCD, Director, Field Services.

National Governors' Association

NGA: Restructuring Schools Project:

Provides grants and technical assistance to states for such projects as rethinking state accountability systems, organizing schools to enhance productivity (emphasis on shared decision making, collegiality, attracting minorities into teaching). Contact: Dean Honetshlager or Mike Cohen, NGA, 444 North Capitol, Washington, D.C. Phone 202-624-5300.

Education Commission of the States

ECS: Defining the term and linking it to state policy. Contact: Jane Armstrong. Phone 303-830-3600.

National Center on Education and the Economy

Inherited the policy development function of The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. Will be working closely with Rochester School District on implementing its comprehensive restructuring agenda (the Center will be located in Rochester)

and will provide technical assistance to other districts throughout the country. Contact: Marc Tucker, Carnegie Forum, Washington, D.C. Phone 202-463-0747.

Coalition for Essential Schools

Based on many of Ted Sizer's ideas, the coalition is a loosely based network of secondary schools who share a number of beliefs in common (student-as-worker, less is more, teaching and learning should be personalized, no more than 80 students per teacher, and so forth). Contact: Susan Follett, P. O. Box 1938, Providence, Rhode Island 02912. Phone 401-863-3384.

Network for Outcome-Based Schools

With help from Danforth Foundation, two school districts (in Arizona and Illinois) are being restructured beginning with the definitions of outcomes and then moving to how the curriculum gets developed and how instruction gets delivered. Follows generally a "mastery learning" approach. Contact: Bill Spady (Spady Consulting Group), 14 Whitman Court, San Carlos, California 94070. Phone: 415-592-7053.

Institute for Educational Leadership

IEL: Still in embryonic form, a collaborative project between IEL, Education Commission of the States, and the National Conference of State Legislatures, will soon focus on five states, bringing together policymakers, practitioners, civic and business groups, in order to attempt to achieve a common understanding of restructuring. Contact: Marty Blanc, 10001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Phone: 202-822-8405.

A POTPOURRI OF SUGGESTED CURRENT READING

Educational Leadership, February 1988. Issue devoted to "Restructuring Schools to Match a Changing Society" (rethinking school calendar, eliminating tracking, changing school structure in the summer, interview with Ted Sizer, demographics, and more).

"Beyond Special Education: Towards a Quality System for All Students," Harvard Educational Review, Gartner and Lipsky, November 1987, urges a "unitary" or "merged" system for all students which requires the authors argue a paradigm shift in how we organize schools and how we view the purpose of education.

"Learning In School and Out," Lauren Resnick, Educational Researcher December 1987. Differentiates "in-school" and "out-of-school" learning and concludes there is a "general need to redirect the focus of schooling to encompass more of the features of successful out-of-school functioning."

Contradictions of Control, Linda M. McNeil, Rootledge & Paul, 1986. Case study analysis of four secondary schools which reveal in various degrees contradiction between educative and administrative/control functions of schools. "The tendency of teachers and students within this organizational context to bracket their personal knowledge in the exchange of information reducible to minimal classroom exchanges heightens the feelings of both that schooling is a ritual rather than an education." Synopses of the book appeared in January 1988, February 1988 and March 1988 Kappan and was reviewed by Al Shanker in February 14, 1988 where We Stand.

"The Coming of the New Organization", Peter Drucker, Harvard Business Review, January-February 1988.

Information-based organizations require relooking at how we define leadership, management roles, structure (teams and task forces, not departments), utilizing analogies with organizations like symphony orchestras.

Improving Education With Locally Developed Indicators, Jane L. David, October 1987, Center for Policy in Education, Wisconsin Center for Education Research. "To be useful for local educational improvement, indicators should provide adequate measures of those aspects of schooling deemed important and amenable to change through policy-making." In addition, selection of indicators should "be accompanied by attention to the organizational factors that promote use of feedback Educational Indicators for improvement at all levels of the system." Thus, cooperative planning, stakeholder involvement, etc. See March 1988 Kappan for a number of articles on Educational Indicators.

Making Sense of the Future: A Position Paper on The Role of Technology in Science, Mathematics, and Computing Education, January 1988, Educational Technology Center, Harvard Graduate School of Education. A sensible approach to integrating computers and instruction that is consistent with restructuring (teachers as coach/student as worker). Process involves practitioners in collaborative research. "Projects consider the constraints and rewards that affect classroom teachers and schools as organizations."

"Assessment of Educational Personnel in the Twenty-First Century," Tetenbaum & Mulkeen, Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, February 1988: Follows Drucker's thinking on information-based organizations and applies it to teacher assessment (acknowledging at the same time the importance of teaching

"artifacts"—computer programs,
studyguides, etc.--as well as
uncertainty and inadequacy of
pedagogical knowledge, professional
autonomy, the limitations to planning).

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