COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2003). Trust in schools: A core resource for school reform. *Educational leadership*, *60*(6), 40-45.

The purposes of this investigation were to find examples of relational trust in schools, explore ways in which schools can build these social patterns, and examine the effect relational trust has on student achievement.

Relational trust is conceptualized as an agreed upon set of mutual obligations and expectations that all members of the school community strive to meet in order to form a cohesive school community. To substantiate the historical precedent of this concept, the authors site Comer's School Development Project (1996), Meier's Harlem school (1995), and Alvarado's efforts in Manhattan (Malloy, 1998).

Sociologists at the University of Chicago conducted a longitudinal case study and statistical analyses of 400 Chicago elementary schools. They spent four years in 12 different school communities observing school meetings and events, conducting interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, parents and community leaders, observing classroom instruction and talking to teachers about the progress and problems in their reform efforts.

Two schools, one that was successful in building trust and the other that was not successful are compared and contrasted. Conditions that foster relational trust are described. One of these had to do with the assignment of teachers. The conclusion that the authors drew concerned whether or not the principal has the freedom to choose the teachers for his/her school and the authority to remove teachers whose behavior is inconsistent with the school's new values. If principal has such freedom, there is a better probability of building relational trust. Other key factors listed are: a stable school community, small schools, teachers who choose to be there, a principal that encourages parent interactions and involvement, and is consistent in his/her vision and actions.

It was found that elementary schools with high relational trust were much more likely to demonstrate marked improvement in student learning. Over a five year period an 8% improvement in reading and a 20% improvement in math was found in schools with high relational trust indicators.

From a sociological perspective, this study reinforces the importance of trust among colleagues and identifies the organizational factors that provide the wherewithal for its development. Data from the Consortium on Chicago School Research provides a rich and multifaceted data base for researchers and school leaders to draw upon and might be worth emulating in other University-school partnerships.

Cooper, R., & Jordan, W. J. (2003). Cultural issues in comprehensive school reform. *Urban Education*, *38*(4), 380-397.

Authors argue that schooling in America remains separate and unequal with dire consequences especially for male African Americans, who are disproportionately identified for special education classes, assigned to nonacademic low expectation classes and generally viewed as deficient. This population of students attend schools in communities that have relatively little resources and little social capital or political influence. Also these school populations have endured multi-generational poverty and racial isolation, and other social ills, such as violence and crime and an educational system that has promulgated and not transformed poverty and its concomitant effects.

The authors believe that the use of deficit models promulgate the negative schooling experiences of African American males. They advise a shift to an examination of alternative structures, organizations, and practices that they believe will lead to greater academic achievement. To this end the authors propose four integrated, synchronized dimensions of comprehensive school reform in order to improve the educational experience of African American males. They are: 1) Teacher/student cultural congruence, i.e. hiring African American male teachers who are better equipped to cross the cultural divide and avoid misunderstandings that are culturally based, 2) Changing school structures and organization by altering the social and/or physical organization of the school. These types of changes include various initiatives such as career academies, smaller learning communities, extended instructional periods, reduced class size, interdisciplinary teacher teams, and block scheduling, 3) Focusing on how teachers teach and how and what students learn, 4) Restructuring of the norms that guide policy and practice which refers to altering institutional ethos in ways that value and celebrate the unique contributions and learning styles of each student. This involves seeing racial affirmation, cultural history, family background, and native language other than English as assets to the learning process not as barriers to intellectual pursuits.

This article's primary contribution is an exploration of the complexities of educational and social conditions encountered by African American males in public schools. It also raises the notion of the effects of multigenerational poverty and neighborhoods with problems of drugs and violence on student learning. Specifically, this article provides a rationale for recruiting well-educated African American male teachers to teach in schools with large populations of African American male students. Since there is no research to base this assumption on, the authors call for research in this area.

No effort is made to explore recruitment efforts and results in finding these candidates. Since the publication of this article, research on how children from poor and violent neighborhoods suffer post-traumatic stress disorder and how this affects brain development and concomitant behaviors has contributed to our understanding of and the need for political and social reform, which address the core of the authors' discourse.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2004). Standards, accountability, and school reform.
The Teachers College Record, *106*(6), 1047-1085.

In this paper the author reviews results from different approaches to standards-based reform, the use of assessments and the focus of accountability in states and districts across the country in terms of whether or how they improve educational opportunities and student learning.

She begins with a policy analysis of alternative views of standards based reform and the effect a specific view has on the role testing plays. For example she compares the view of standards as an opportunity to improve curriculum, instruction, and teacher training vs. standards as a basis for testing, the results of which are used for accountability. This latter view has resulted in student retention, increased dropout rate, increase in special education classes, potential dismissal or school closings. Analysis of the research on the effect of high stakes testing shows that it does not improve student achievement especially when investments in improving teacher quality, access to a rich curriculum, and multiple opportunities for success are not included in the change effort. Furthermore it has not propelled efforts toward equitable schooling with comparable resources, comparable class sizes, and teacher quality between low poverty and high poverty school districts.

Darling-Hammond lists four complementary strategies that research suggests can improve student learning in a standards based environment:

 1. Enhancing preparation and professional development for teachers to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills they need to teach a wide range of students to meet the standards:
 2. Redesigning school structures to support more intensive learning including creating smaller school units (within an optimal size of 300–500) and schools where team teachers work with smaller numbers of students for longer periods of time;
 3. Employing school-wide and classroom performance assessments that support more coherent curriculum and better inform teaching; and
 4. Ensuring that targeted supports and services are available for students when they are needed.

 She describes efforts in Connecticut, New York City District #2, and New Haven, California as models for improving the four strategies listed above, and then she articulates three major areas in need of attention: building professional capacity, structuring schools to support student and teacher learning, and ensuring opportunities to learn. Lastly she describes the ways standards and testing must be used: to invest in teacher knowledge and skill, organize schools to support teacher and student learning, and create systems of assessment that drive curriculum reform and teaching improvements.

Darling-Hammond is a Professor of Education at Stanford. Her policy interests have informed many on the importance of viewing teaching as a profession and education equity. This article which unpacks the policy frameworks of standards based reform

and accountability and their intended and unintended consequences, would be helpful to those who seek a deep understanding of the different ways these policies are conceptualized and how these different conceptualizations impact students and teachers.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1992). *Reframing the School Reform Agenda: Developing Capacity for School Transformation.* **Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.**

This paper outlines the policy implications of two competing paradigms of education reform. The "reframing" that Darling-Hammond refers is the current framework of learning that prepares students for 21st century learning. She illuminates these changes in social, technological, political and economic terms, and the changes needed in curriculum, instruction and school governance to prepare all students to be successful. The paradigm of school reform is replaced by the paradigm of restructuring, one that shifts from designing top down controls intended to direct the system to one that develops capacity within the professional community to meet students' needs. She makes the argument that reform efforts within both the school and research communities sought to find "the one best system" of educational practice and use this to control curriculum and teaching.

Restructuring on the other hand makes visible the complexities of human learning and relationships for the purpose of enriching teachers' own thinking about their practice and empowering them to see teaching and learning through many lenses. In other words, change initiated by an authoritative "other" replaced by change that emerges from professionals within the system will empower teachers to develop communities of learning. These communities will gain expertise in the creation and design of effective teaching and assessment tailored for different students.

Darling-Hammond calls for 1) professional development starting with improving teacher preparation programs, forming collegial relationships focused on creating shared knowledge from observation and practice, and the creation of networks that inspire teachers' problem solving, risk taking and leadership. 2) policy development that promotes equity, genuine accountability based on student work, 3) political development to form consensus in communities about the goals of education.

As cited in the previous entry, this is also a policy discourse and those who seek to look beyond a surface understanding of educational mandates would benefit from this paper. In addition it is rare to come across a reference to the "Eight Year Study" which is especially valuable because it provides the basis for many competing concepts of what community based education means as Thomas Dewey envisioned it.

Datnow, A., & Stringfield, S. (2000). Working together for reliable school reform. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, **5(1-2), 183-204.**

These researchers at CRESPAR (Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk) have been involved in creating and disseminating models of school reform. This article describes the next phase of their efforts, identifying where these reforms have been successful or not. They found that of the 8 schools studied, eight years later, three schools had clearly moved toward institutionalization, three struggled to maintain parts of their reforms and two showed little residual evidence of reform.

The researchers found that efforts are reliable and successful when the following elements are in place:
1) Provide sufficient time to study and evaluate various models of school reform. It is important that the chosen model fits the goals and culture of the school community and its students. It is also important that the model be feasible. This would require training staff on how to select a model through whole-group decision-making.
2) Recognizing that implementation of a reform model will result in modifications that require flexibility for a variety of reasons but if carefully monitored will result in commitment and resolve.
3) Reform takes time to be institutionalized.

Efforts required to achieve success are listed at the conclusion of this article. Two of these 12 efforts include having clear goals and maintaining efforts toward continuous improvement.

The authors concede that much more research is needed to fully illuminate what leads to successful school reform. Toward this effort they are embarking on further studies. Given that this study occurred in 2000 and the researchers were to conduct studies over the next 4-5 years, it may prove helpful to look into the CRESPAR web site for further examples of successful school reform.

Day, C. (2002). School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International Journal of Educational Research*, **37(8), 677-692.**

This author argues that the changes in schooling due to more public accountability, external control over curriculum, and assessment and external measures of what it means to be a good teacher, as well as a shift from a community framework to a market one, has resulted in teachers who have lost emotional and moral connection to their work. Although many experienced teachers have maintained their identities, finding room to maneuver within a general reduction in their traditional classroom autonomy, the pressure on these and younger colleagues to comply with competency based

agendas and ill formed assessments are undermining teachers' view of themselves as professionals.

The author discusses the changes in conceptions of what it means to be a professional and the stages that teachers go through as they progress in their career. The author believes that changes in the social contract of teaching has resulted in a hostile environment and changes in how teachers view themselves and their profession. The fear is that if teachers lose their professional identities, they may experience a loss in motivation and commitment and therefore a loss in effectiveness.

If we are to understand how school reform effects teachers' sense of professionalism, it is necessary to take into account the personal and professional teacher identities, the importance of these to self-efficacy, motivation, job satisfaction and commitment, and the relationship between these and effectiveness. Many articles address the importance of collaboration in school reform efforts. This one lends some insight into the psychological and emotional implications of teacher involvement.

House, R. M., & Hayes, R. L. (2002). School counselors: Becoming key players in school reform. *Professional School Counseling*, 5, 249-256.

School Counselors are in a unique position to affect positive change in school reform at the student level. They can mitigate low expectations and the sorting and selecting process that acts to filter out "less competent or low motivated" students by denying them entrance to rigorous courses.

However in order for this change to happen, the authors argue for a new conception of the role, relationship, and responsibilities of the school counselor. This means moving from a clinical model focused on student deficits and gate keeping to leadership in student advocacy, promoting the creation and implementation of student support services, and collaborating with teachers and administrators to monitor individual students and then use data analysis on each student in a case study approach.

The authors believe that all too often the role of the school counselor is ill-defined and they end up being rule enforcers and gate keepers resulting in low student success. This new conception of the role of the counselor means that they will need to become aggressive in promoting changes in class requirements, finding ways for students to be admitted to classes they might not otherwise be "eligible for" and monitoring student attendance, grades and relationships with teachers in order to provide the needed interventions.

This article encourages the school counselor to be an important part of school reform and would be useful to a high school principal who finds that the counselor is an under utilized resource.

Lee, V. E., & Ready, D. D. (2007). Schools within schools: Possibilities and pitfalls of high school reform. New York: Teachers College Press.

This book seeks to reveal efforts in the creation of the schools within schools model of reform and their success and pitfalls. The authors relate the stories of five public high schools that have embraced the SWS method.

In order to fully understand the effectiveness of such a system, the authors have delved into every aspect of the reform in these settings, including participants' reactions, curriculum structures, governance and leadership, and the allocation of students to the schools. The result is a thoughtful look at the SWS model that considers the benefits and problems of implementation, along with issues of equity and access.

This book would be a valuable addition to a school's professional library, especially as a resource when considering a SWS approach.

Little, J. W. (2002). Professional community and the problem of high school reform. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *37*(8), 693-714.

This study investigates how the development of teacher communities serve as resources for teacher development and school reform by comparing such communities in two urban high schools.

The first school engaged teachers in the exploration of school-wide assessment results and levels of student achievement. These teacher communities sustained high teacher commitment and community. However teachers did not find solutions to the teaching and learning problems that would help them influence student achievement, and they were frustrated as a result.

The second school created innovative teacher communities in the English and mathematics departments where subject matter teaching and learning strategies were explored. These teachers gained expertise in both their subjects and teaching strategies and valued the opportunities to learn from this structure. However the transfer to whole school reform suffered from weak organizational supports for teacher development and school reform.

Findings point both to the potential contribution of professional communities situated within subject area departments and the challenge of capitalizing on such communities to advance whole-school reform. The study suggests complex relationships among organizational context, teacher community, teacher development, and institutional reform.

This study reminds us that those teacher communities that couple subject matter expertise, effective research based pedagogy, with school-wide support for school reform will lead to success. One without the other will lead to frustration.

Martinez, M., & Klopott, S. (2005). *The link between high school reform and college access and success for low-income and minority youth.* **Washington DC:** Retrieved January 26, 2017 from American Youth Policy Forum and Pathways to College Network: http://www.aypf.org/wp content/uploads/2014/07/HSReformCollegeAccessandSuccess.pdf.

This paper identifies and analyzes school practices that support college preparations for all students. They investigated reform efforts that successfully improved student achievement and increased enrollment in post secondary education. These reform models such as *Success for All* and their practices are listed.

The following practices were found to be consistent among these reform efforts:

- Access to a rigorous academic common core curriculum for all students that is aligned with post secondary education and includes advanced mathematics
- The prevalence, in structure or climate, of personalized learning environments
- A balance of academic and social support for students in developing social networks and instrumental relationships
- Alignment of curriculum between various levels, such as high school and postsecondary, and between levels within the K-12 system

The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) and Pathways to College Network (PCN) are two resources that schools could tap into to network with and perhaps find ways for additional support and funding. The listing of models and their practices might serve as an interesting comparison with local efforts.

Noddings, N. (2007). *When school reform goes wrong.* **New York: Teachers College Press**

In this brief book, Stanford Professor Nel Noddings challenges the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) by inviting readers to think critically about the basis of the reforms that preceded it, the assumptions about the purpose of schooling and the varied populations that schools serve, and the purpose of federal funding. She wants the reader to consider such questions as: Is money the answer to raising test scores? Are failing schools mainly those attended by poor children, or are all of our schools failing? Do all students need courses in advanced mathematics, physics, and chemistry? Should special education students be expected to meet the same standards as regular students? Does one standard curriculum serve the needs and interests of all students? Does our current system of schooling undermine the democracy it should support?

She devotes chapters to the history of school reform, how the language of reform influences and controls the discourse and reasoning behind it, different ways of looking at equality (as sameness or as opportunity), accountability, standards testing, school choice and lastly the morality reflected in reform.

Like Darling-Hammond above, Noddings' contribution is a deeper understanding at the policy level of legislated school reform and its consequences.

Noguera, P. A. (2002). Beyond Size: The Challenge of High School Reform.
         Educational Leadership, *59*(5), 60-63.

After conducting a national survey of high schools with low income students of color to find those that were effective in increasing academic achievement, reducing violence, poor attendance and high teacher and principal empowerment, Noguera and his colleagues found a small number of high schools that were successful. While they all differed in organization, curriculum and mission, they all had one thing in common: they were all small, around 200 students.

Upon close inspection he found that small size is necessary but not sufficient. His conclusions were:
   1. Small matters but quality matters more, as manifested as shared mission, quality in pedagogy, and fostering students who take responsibility for their own learning.
   2. Schools are created not imposed.
   3. Flexibility to create standards and assessment for accountability that are meaningful result in the mechanisms for improvement.

Pedro Noguera's work focuses on schooling as a mechanism to create change in social ills such as poverty and crime. The successful schooling of children is important if they are to escape poverty and imprisonment and therefore reform deserves our utmost urgency and thoughtful effort. He will be speaking to the U of R community in the spring of 2017 when the University community will have an opportunity to hear more from this inspiring educator.

Quint, J. (2006). *Meeting Five Critical Challenges of High School Reform.*
         ***Lessons from Research on Three Reform Models [White paper].* Retrieved**
         January 26, 2017 from Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation
         (MDRC): http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED491634.pdf

This is the first in a series of reports for policymakers, practitioners, and others who are seeking ways to reform high schools. It discusses three comprehensive initiatives evaluated by MDRC that have grappled with the challenges of improving low-performing urban and rural schools. Together, these three interventions are being implemented in more than 2,500 high schools across the country, and various components of these

models are being used in thousands more schools. These are: Career Academies, First Things First, and Talent Development.

This report offers a synthesis of research-based lessons from across these reform efforts. These lessons include five major challenges associated with these models:

1: Creating a personalized and orderly learning environment
2: Assisting students who enter high school with poor academic skills
3: Improving instructional content and pedagogy
4: Preparing students for the world beyond high school
5: Stimulating change

The overall message of this synthesis is that structural changes to improve personalization and instructional improvement are the twin pillars of high school reform. Small learning communities and faculty advisory systems can increase students' feelings of connectedness to their teachers. Extended class periods, special catch-up courses, high-quality curricula, training on these curricula, and efforts to create professional learning communities can improve student achievement. School-employer partnerships that involve career awareness activities and work internships can help students attain higher earnings after high school. Furthermore, students who enter ninth grade facing substantial academic deficits can make good progress if initiatives single them out for special support. These supports include caring teachers and special courses designed to help entering ninth-graders acquire the content knowledge and learning skills that they missed out on in earlier grades.