

San Diego's Big Boom: District Bureaucracy Supports Culture of Learning

A Research Report

by
Amy M. Hightower
Stanford University

January 2002

(Document R-02-2)



Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON



Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy

A National Research Consortium

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON (lead institution)

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

TEACHERS COLLEGE/COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Other active participants in CTP's research and dissemination program include researchers affiliated with Indiana University, Michigan State University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of North Carolina, and Education Matters, Inc.

CTP studies the way policies and conditions in schools, districts, states, and teacher education institutions shape the quality of teaching and learning in the nation's elementary and secondary schools. The Center pays particular attention to the ways these policies and conditions interact with each other to influence the teaching profession and its practice.

The Center's program of research is carried out in collaboration with various other research organizations, among them other OERI-funded research centers, including the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE), and the Center on English Learning & Achievement (CELA). The Center is affiliated with a variety of professional and advocacy organizations that represent teachers, teacher educators, state and local policymakers, disciplinary groups, and educational reform interests.

This research was conducted for the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (CTP), under contract from the Educational Research and Development Centers Program, PR/Award Number R308B970003 as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. However, the views expressed in this paper are my own and do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the sponsors. This article draws heavily from a dissertation by the same title (Hightower, 2001) and builds on a book chapter for an edited volume on school districts called *School Districts and Instructional Renewal: Opening the Conversation* to be published in 2002 by Teachers College Press (Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, forthcoming). I would like to acknowledge and thank the CTP research study and a number of researchers sponsored by it, most primary among them Milbrey McLaughlin, Mike Knapp, and Julie Marsh. Their feedback on various drafts of this paper was extremely helpful, and their encouragement of this research, overall, has been invaluable. Also, many thanks to Cynthia Coburn, Larry Cuban, Tom Glennan, and Paul Hill for their extensive reviews. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the people in and related to San Diego City Schools with whom I spoke and interacted over the course of my three years of research.

CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Introduction	3
Existing Literature on School Districts	4
Context Driving SDCS' Reform	6
Theory of Change and Instructional Strategy Supporting Reform Goals	8
Reform Year One: Establishing Infrastructure and Creating New Norms of Practice	9
Building an Infrastructure for Learning: Starting with Principals	10
Community Engagement and Organizational Efforts	11
Reform Year Two and Beyond: Using Bureaucracy to Solidify District's Reform	12
Crystallization of Instructional Agenda	12
Enacting Supportive Policy and Fiscal Arrangements	14
Results and Reactions to Reform	15
Evolving Culture of Learning Across Schools	16
Changes in the Central Office	17
Discussion	18
Endnotes	20
References	21

ABSTRACT

This paper contributes to an emerging body of literature on school districts as active partners in education reform. Using qualitative methods, it details the first three years of a major districtwide initiative in San Diego City Schools as reformers sought to orient central office bureaucracy around an instructional agenda. This paper both describes the major thrusts of the reform, including reactions of participants, and wrestles with the notion that large-scale, systemic change in an entrenched urban district may require strong, even bureaucratic, methods to transition the system into supporting a culture focused on instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade of education reform, researchers have “rediscovered” school districts as organizations worthy of study (Spillane, 1996; Resnick & Glennan, forthcoming). Within this resurgence, researchers increasingly have focused on the potential of districts to be active reform partners and learning organizations (e.g., Elmore & Burney, 1997). Such portrayals stand at odds with a somewhat older but not forgotten body of literature in which districts have been villainized as unredeemable bureaucracies resistant to change (e.g., Chubb & Moe, 1990). As a result, the existing literature on school districts now stands divided into two divergent characterizations—districts as bureaucratic and districts as learning-centric—with the research community largely viewing these two portrayals as distinct.

As districts gain attention, the time is ripe to find a way to integrate these two views. Each comes with a particular perspective that adds depth to the study of school districts, and each guides who researchers talk to, what they look for, and what pieces of “evidence” most matter. I argue here that both of these frames employed to study districts are valid and important; moreover, I illustrate their compatibility. I seek to bridge this gap in thinking through the experience of one large, urban district—San Diego City Schools (SDCS), the eighth largest district in the country. By following the first three years of a major districtwide change initiative, I detail the radical approach taken by San Diego reformers as they sought to orient district bureaucracy around learning. Thus, the early reform story of San Diego City Schools provides a key opportunity to explore how these two perspectives on districts blend, rather than compete.

It also offers a theory of change that challenges mainstream thinking, which may lend insight into how a district bureaucracy can become learning-centric. Indeed, this report is called “San Diego’s Big Boom” because that is precisely how reformers believed systemic instructional change must begin in an entrenched district system: the system first needed to go “boom” and organizational norms had to be “jolted” before reforms and new support structures could take hold. In other words, reformers believed that strong, centralized action would provide a critical first step in igniting the district’s emerging instructional agenda. As such, San Diego’s theory of change stands at stark odds with views of incrementalism (Lindblom, 1980); bricolage (i.e., that to learn, an organization needs both an anchor to and a bridge from the past; Lanzara, 1998); and assertions about the importance of “buy in” from organizational members (McLaughlin & Oberman, 1996; Fullan, 1991; 1993). Accordingly, this paper entertains the notion that large-scale, systemic change in a big urban district may require quite bureaucratic methods to transition the system into supporting a culture focused on instruction and learning.

In this paper, I describe and discuss the means through which San Diego reformers transformed classic district bureaucracy to support districtwide learning. I locate this discussion by first reviewing existing research on school districts, concluding with a description of my own study’s methods, sources of data, and relevant San Diego demographics. Next, I explore the context driving the San Diego reform initiative and explain the instructional theory upon which the San Diego reform was grounded. I then describe the first three years of the reform, including early results and participants’ reactions. I conclude with a discussion of how reform leaders transformed classic district bureaucracy into a system that could support learning districtwide.

But first, I provide a definition of terms as I use them here. Throughout this discussion, I use the term “district” to mean the central office and its embedded system of schools. I use “bureaucracy” in a loose, Weberian sense (1946, translation) to refer to hierarchical, centralized aspects of an organization that is driven by rules,

supervision of subordinates, patterned situational responses, and discrete organizational tasks. Bureaucracies are typified by fragmentation, an established division of labor, and a tendency to preserve the status quo (Gouldner, 1954; Merton, 1940; Scott, 1992; Selznick, 1949). I use the term “learning community” to mean a relatively flat and decentralized organizational arrangement driven by compelling leaders; interdependent relationships; and the evolution of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs in interactive, heterogeneous groups (Ancess, 1997; McLaughlin, 1998; Rogoff, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1996; Wenger, 1998). Learning community members receive frequent performance feedback and use these data points for reflection and refinement of practice in communal settings and for making decisions about organizational practice. In the discussion that follows, I do not presuppose these two theoretical constructs to be mutually exclusive. A significant body of literature covering organizational learning illustrates how bureaucratic organizations can and do learn (see, for example, Argyris & Schön, 1996; Levinthal & March, 1993; March, 1994; Senge, 1990), suggesting an intersection between “bureaucracy” and “learning community.” Following this tradition, I assume that just as bureaucracies can be learning organizations, so too can learning communities exhibit some bureaucratic characteristics.

EXISTING LITERATURE ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS

By detailing San Diego’s reform initiative, this report contributes to a growing body of literature on districts as active partners in education reform (Elmore & Burney, 1998, 1999; Massell & Goertz, 1999; Spillane & Thompson, 1997).

Until the mid-1990s, most education researchers either ignored school districts as insignificant organizations or villainized them as impediments to change (see Elmore, 1993; Spillane, 1996; Tyack, 1974). Generally, when researchers have considered districts (especially district central offices) they have negatively portrayed them as “dysfunctional dinosaurs” (Education Commission of the States, 1995)—bureaucratic, intransigent, and beyond reform (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Wise, 1979). Until recently, the preponderance of most district researchers has been a reliance on organizational literatures and frames such as bureaucracy (e.g., Weber, 1946 trans.), political theory (e.g., Kingdon, 1984), sense-making (Weick, 1976), and organizational analyses (e.g., March & Simon, 1958). Accordingly, such researchers have sought to understand districts in terms of functions, roles, and policies, casting them for better or worse—and usually for worse—as formal, bureaucratic systems in which administrators stumble to create coherence among competing agendas, only a fraction of which have anything to do with instruction (Guthrie & Sanders, 2001; Meyer, Scott, & Strang, 1994; Miles & Guiney, 2000). For the most part, they have classified districts as centralized, hierarchical, disconnected from teaching and learning, and as keepers of a prescribed division of labor and pre-established rules and procedures. If positive things happened within schools—particularly those in urban areas—accomplishments were more often than not viewed as occurring *in spite* of districts, rather than *because* of them (Hill, Campbell, & Harvey, 2000). Few of these researchers have entertained the concept that district central offices could contribute positively to instruction across their systems of schools.

Slowly and with a small set of powerful contrary examples, a new group of researchers is challenging the image of school district as insignificant, fragmented, and/or hopelessly bureaucratic (see Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, forthcoming). Catalyzed primarily by a set of literature about New York City’s Community School District #2 over the past decade (see Elmore & Burney, 1997a; 1997b; Stein & D’Amico, forthcoming), these researchers gradually are starting to highlight the *potential* of districts to be powerful agents of instructional renewal. Using theories of learning (e.g., Resnick, 1995; Argyris & Schön, 1996), District #2 researchers

have richly described the innerworkings of this mid-sized K-8 school system. They have illustrated how District #2 functions as a “nested learning community” (High Performance Learning Communities project, 1997), with “trial-and-error” learning cycles (Elmore & Burney, 1997b) in which central office administrators, principals, and teachers work together as professionals on mutually shared goals to improve instruction across the system of schools.

A handful of authors have attempted similar case studies about other small to mid-sized districts. For example, drawing on Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice theoretical frame, Wechsler (2001) has described how “East Bay” school district in California functions as a community of learners. In a similar vein, Snyder has drawn a compelling account of New Haven (California) Unified School District, where central office administrators instituted an array of support structures across their system in order to build quality supports for teachers and teaching; this account was published by the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future as exemplary of the teaching quality standards it advances (Snyder, 1998; forthcoming). As a whole, by focusing on the *possibilities* of districts as change agents, this set of researchers views them as embedded organizational arrangements whereby professionals at all levels actively engage around teaching and learning.

Calling this renewed interest in districts an “evolution” in thinking is probably premature, since such illustrative cases are sparse and relatively narrow. Certainly, this newer conceptualization of districts has not *replaced* more traditional portrayals—and understandably so, given that few district central offices have been shown to defy their bureaucratic stereotype. However, these more recent district cases do represent attempts to understand district central offices differently—that is, from organizations that are self-perpetuating and entrenched in standard operating procedures to ones that can be self-reflective and generative of new ideas. Further, they draw attention to district central offices as a potential part of the solution rather than as a likely part of the problem and view “districtwide change” as a concept that involves deep reform within the central office, not just reform across district schools (Hightower, et al., forthcoming).

However, the introduction of these examples leaves the research field with two contrasting images of “school district”—bureaucratic and learning-centric—and there has been no attempt to reconcile these perspectives. Each uses a different lens for analysis; has a different set of analytic tools; and, as a result, focuses on different aspects of the organization under study. Increasingly, researchers who try to understand district central offices as learning organizations downplay their bureaucratic functions such as agenda-setting (Wirt & Kirst, 1992); budgeting (Doyle & Finn, 1984); issues of rank and control (Chubb & Moe, 1990); and administration of policy details and task complexity (Scott, et al., 1994). Similarly, those who dwell on district central offices as bureaucracies tend to ignore their instructional roles in providing professional development, high-quality curriculum, teaching and learning standards, and attention to system-wide equity. Both perspectives emphasize features and organizational behaviors of school districts that contribute to the field’s understanding of districts. By prioritizing one perspective over the other, which so far has been the norm, we get only a partial picture of district behavior. I look at both aspects in this study and conclude with an conceptualization of districts that blends these two views that, to date, have diverged.

The data for this paper come from three years of fieldwork in San Diego City Schools, beginning in fall 1998 as the district started its reform initiative and ending in summer 2001, with the initiative still underway. Therefore, the case study presented here captures the early reform years of an ongoing reform. The analysis weaves together semi-structured interviews and focus groups with more than 150 people involved in or observing the reform. The primary informants were central office

administrators in both instructional and operational roles (40 percent of the total), teachers (25 percent), and principals (20 percent). Interviews with union officials, relevant community members, and state policymakers also lend insight to this report, as do observation data from nearly 20 district-sponsored events and an extensive document review, including Lexis/Nexis searches, district and union websites, the local newspaper, district policy and communications, and the union press.

SDCS is large and urban, encompassing both great poverty and wealth. Fifty-eight percent of the students qualify for free- or reduced-price lunches; 28 percent are English language learners; and over 50 native languages are spoken in the district. Across nearly 180 schools, the district served 142,300 students in 2000-01, of whom approximately one-third were Hispanic, one-fourth were Caucasian, nearly one-fifth were African-American, and the remainder were Filipino, Indochinese, Asian, or "other."

CONTEXT DRIVING SDCS' REFORM

San Diego City Schools has long been recognized nationally as a district with pockets of great innovation and success, having been an early adopter of such initiatives as the National Science Foundation's Urban Systemic Initiative and portfolio assessments and attracting well-known superintendents such as Thomas Payzant (1983-1993) and, nearly a century earlier, Elwood P. Cubberley (1896-1898). Yet as a system, SDCS was plagued by student performance gaps among students of different races, ethnicities, and parts of town (Mehan & Grimes, 1999). In the mid-1990s, local business leaders and interested parties across California had come to believe that the district as a whole was "stuck" (Rosenholtz, 1989) in an organizational rut (Vigil & Carstens, 1998).

For years, multiple "area superintendents" had jurisdiction over feeder-pattern clusters of schools—a decentralized organizational arrangement in which district leaders became "autonomous, reactive, and competitive," as one long-time observer of the district noted. District supervisors rarely interacted with one another or with others outside of their departments. Resources, information, and capacity were inequitably distributed across district clusters and organizational subunits, one probable result of which was a persistent gap in achievement among different categories of students (Mehan & Grimes, 1999). Superintendent Bertha Pendleton—who in the mid-1990s followed on the heels of Payzant's ten-year superintendency—had matured professionally within the district and largely was concerned with maintaining the system she inherited. At the same time, the local community was beginning to clamor for major change (Magee & Leopold, 1998). Trust between the local community and district had taken a tumble after a 1996 teachers' strike exposed an unresponsive side of the central office. As one long-time board member commented: "The confidence of the community in the schools was pretty low, particularly in the business community.... I think there was the sense that the patients were running the asylum."

By the mid-1990s, the state of the district inspired the Greater San Diego Chamber of Commerce's Business Roundtable to actively pursue education reform. Representing the city's business leaders, this group felt that the district's system had become too entrenched and that its infrastructure had taken on a life of its own with little regard for the students it served. Pointing to gaps in student performance, unqualified graduates entering the local workforce, and negative sentiments lingering from the 1996 strike, the Roundtable helped get elected to the school board members who would push for a change in district leadership. In 1998, the board decided to let the current superintendent's contract expire and search for a more reform-minded

replacement. The board was open to hiring a “non-educator” as superintendent, whose fresh ideas might offer the best recourse for making the kinds of deep changes necessary for true reform.

In March 1998, a divided school board appointed Alan D. Bersin, the local U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of California and Southwest Border, as superintendent. Bersin’s four-year contract started at \$165,000 annually, with a performance incentive provision tied to test scores that had the potential to increase his salary by another \$10,000-30,000 a year. Bersin was well-connected, both locally and nationally, and had a passion for issues of equity and social justice. But as one board member later commented, “It was pretty clear that he needed a partner”—specifically, an experienced counterpart who knew how to focus a district instructionally. By the time he assumed office that summer, Bersin had recruited Anthony Alvarado to the district as his Chancellor of Instruction and co-leader of reform. Signaling his intention to share top district leadership, Bersin negotiated a superintendent’s salary for Alvarado, beginning at \$150,000 annually.

Alvarado came from New York City’s Community School District #2, where he had spent 10 years as superintendent demonstrating how a district could “use professional development to mobilize knowledge in the service of system-wide instructional improvement” (Elmore & Burney, 1997a, p. 3). As District #2 became known as an “existence proof” that districts can matter in positive ways to their organizational members, Alvarado developed a national reputation as a district “change agent” with a keen ability to see district operations through an instructional lens.

Alvarado’s views about teaching and learning came to drive San Diego’s reform agenda. Based on research findings and his own experiences in New York, he believed that the best way to improve student learning was to concentrate on teachers’ practice and to focus district decisionmaking on instructional needs. According to Alvarado’s theory of action, student learning increases when the interaction between students and teachers is improved; therefore, deepening teaching practice becomes an effective mechanism for increasing student learning. His theory further assumed that district administrators have particular roles in supporting learning in schools. In District #2, his theory had proved effective: during Alvarado’s decade as superintendent, District #2’s standardized reading test scores climbed from tenth to second in a region of 32 K-8 districts (Elmore & Burney, 1997a).

San Diego’s emerging reform initiative embraced similar change principles. In what essentially became a shared superintendency, Bersin and Alvarado sought to orient the district’s bureaucracy toward teaching and learning and to infuse across the system solid instructional strategies. While Bersin led the political, organizational, and business aspects of running the district, Alvarado managed the instructional side of things; and the pair learned to work closely together during times when these realms overlapped. This joint leadership arrangement put the superintendent in an interesting and unusual situation whereby he came to define his role as support for what Alvarado was trying to accomplish instructionally.

THEORY OF CHANGE AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY SUPPORTING REFORM GOALS

In summer 1998, Bersin and Alvarado announced that the district's status quo was no longer acceptable. Early the following year, Alvarado reflected on the state of the district when he and Bersin arrived and where he saw the most immediate need for change:

San Diego, in some ways, [was] no different than any large, urban...district, where essentially what you have is...[organizational] confusion about...what the job is.... [The district] ...was fractionalized; it was not coherent; different parts of the system were sending different messages; ...a million policies... [meant] there was an overabundance of work to be done, ...but people were doing everything [only] an inch deep. ...So I think the differences [between the old system and what we're trying to establish] are: try to get some focus, try to get some coherence, try to deal with instructional issues as opposed to operational...things, [and try to] create a structure that can...support [learning and] give people the capacity to do [their jobs].

Superintendent Bersin was fond of saying in public settings, "You can't cross a chasm in two leaps," and with this mentality he and Alvarado sought to bridge the apparent split between organizational procedures and student learning. With great force and purpose, they and a small number of advisors inside and external to the district quickly and publicly took on their organization's established logic, trying to transition it into an organization that could encourage and support learning. Reformers felt that for San Diego City Schools to function as a learning organization, its bureaucratic structures and norms needed to be shaken. As Bersin reflected one year into his superintendency:

There was no other way to start systemic reform. You don't announce it. You've got to jolt the system. I understood that. You've got to jolt a system, and if people don't understand you're serious about change in the first six months, the bureaucracy will own you. The bureaucracy will defeat you at every turn if you give it a chance.

Under new central office leadership, this sentiment fueled the districtwide reform initiative that began in summer 1998.

Reformers began with an explicit instructional theory and ideas about how district administrators best could support teaching and learning within schools. Rather than falling into systemwide priorities by carrying out traditional district conventions and norms, San Diego reformers actively challenged the logic of their district's status quo. In most districts today, the availability of resources to continue the status quo typically determines priorities; and in most districts, the status quo has evolved into little more than an accumulation of programs and funding sources, leaving fragmented, unfocused district systems in which instructional matters simply get lost (Guthrie and Sanders, 2001; Miles and Guiney, 2000; Meyer, Scott, and Strang, 1994). Typically, the bigger the district, the thicker the entrenchment and the harder it is to flip this logic around—which makes San Diego City Schools a particularly "strategic site" to study (Merton, 1987) since its reformers directly attempted such a transformation. As Alvarado explained to a group of principals about the need for change in the district:

It's easier to continue to do the things that we've always done. It always is. [But if] we do the things we've done, we'll get the same results that we've got[ten] before.... If we don't *change* anything, we wind up with exactly what we had before, and what we had does not do justice to the students that we serve.

Tossing aside standard operating procedures, San Diego reformers first identified systemwide instructional needs within the theory of learning framework they had adopted and then sought to align district resources, organizational structures, and policies to serve them.

The unit of change for this reform was the district central office and its system of schools, and the goal was to build an organization oriented around instruction that would increase student knowledge and achievement by investing strategically in teachers' work. SDCS' reformers set out to integrate into their system particular research findings about teaching and teacher learning (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999), which argued for:

- long-term, professional learning networks for teachers and principals (Evans & Mohr, 1999; Fullan, 1997; McLaughlin & Oberman, 1996)
- opportunities for continuous reflection and refinement of practice in communal settings (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Little, 1999)
- organizational configurations and deployment of resources that advance a coherent reform agenda (Bodilly, 1998; Cohen & Ball, 1997; Goldring & Hallinger, 1992; Price, Ball, & Luks, 1995; Rosenholtz, 1989; Spillane, 1996)
- challenging teaching and learning standards tied to assessment tools through which teachers could diagnose student learning according to the standards (Darling-Hammond, 1997; O'Day & Smith, 1993)

Accordingly, district reformers sought to create a system that was grounded in principled knowledge about teaching and learning. This system would be (1) driven by standards, (2) focused on building the profession, and (3) tailored to the specific contexts of each individual school; supporting this system would be central office policies and practices that would place instructional needs above all else. Most education organizations tend to favor one of these "strategies" over another (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999). When pursued collectively, such strategies theoretically can wield significant power by affording an organization flexibility to pursue an agenda in reinforcing ways and maximizing benefits (and minimizing weaknesses) of any strategy pursued in isolation (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1999; Hill, Campbell, & Harvey, 2000).

REFORM YEAR ONE: ESTABLISHING INFRASTRUCTURE AND CREATING NEW NORMS OF PRACTICE

Bersin and Alvarado felt that the district system had become a series of independent units that bred inequities of knowledge and power to the disadvantage of low-performing schools and students. Reform at the *systems* level—including the central office and across the network of schools in this jurisdiction—was obsolete. Therefore, they sought to dislodge arrangements they felt blocked opportunities for systemwide learning and to unite the district around one organizational purpose. As Bersin announced in fall 1998, "The mission of San Diego City Schools is to improve student achievement by supporting teaching and learning in the classroom." Within this larger goal was a focus on the lowest performing students and schools as a means to raise the overall performance level of the entire district and build unity of purpose.

Initially, district leaders felt they could best leverage the reforms by redesigning the central office to better support learning across the district's system of schools. Therefore, reformers launched their change initiative on two fronts: building an infrastructure to support principals' learning and restructuring the central office to improve teaching within schools. Action on both fronts rested on a common belief that learning and school change necessitated restructuring and reculturing the district's central office and that principal instructional leadership could effectively introduce change into schools. Accordingly, in the first year of the new administration, Superintendent Bersin focused on abolishing outdated structures in the central office and raising money for the district by engaging the community around promising research-based plans for reform. Meanwhile, his Chancellor of Instruction began to envision and build a structurally and culturally different sub-organization within the district called the Institute for Learning.

Building an Infrastructure for Learning: Starting with Principals

As Alvarado had learned in District #2, principals could serve as linchpins for change within schools if they were trained to provide instructional supports teachers need most to strengthen practice. Accordingly, he placed a high premium on principals as change agents and sought to devise an effective learning structure for them. Since SDCS had nearly 180 principals (while District #2 had just over 30), Alvarado wanted to create smaller working groups so that all principals could deeply engage in the learning process. Rather than using the existing feeder pattern arrangement run by "area superintendents," reformers chose to abolish it, believing that it bred inequities and fiefdoms across the district and lacked orientation to system-wide instructional needs. Instead, Bersin and Alvarado combed the district for talented instructional leadership and hired and trained seven principals to become districtwide "Instructional Leaders" (ILs). Together with Alvarado, these ILs formed and led seven heterogeneous working groups of about 25 principals each, called "Learning Communities".¹ By design, principals in each of the seven groups were mixed by school level, experience, and school achievement levels. This arrangement offered a means through which principals could learn from both trained experts and their peers how to lead their school staffs in high-quality instructional practices.

In contrast to the area superintendents of the past, the ILs worked closely together, co-constructing their new roles and jointly planning their coaching work with principals. In addition, they collectively received specialized training by professional developers from the University of Pittsburgh's Learning Research and Development Center (LRDC), with whom Alvarado had worked in District #2. These ties with LRDC linked San Diego City Schools with a network of other urban school districts that were trying to focus their systems on instruction (see Resnick & Glennan, forthcoming).

Alvarado and the ILs devised several structures through which principals could learn about exemplary instructional practice and ways to support teacher and student learning. Foremost among these were required monthly meetings called "Principals' Conferences," sponsored by the district's newly-created instructional branch, the Institute for Learning, and led by Chancellor Alvarado. These all-day meetings established regular occasions for the Learning Communities to convene and for principals and central office administrators to discuss reform implementation. The format of the Principals' Conferences varied and included both interactive "fieldtrips" to local classrooms and discussions with experts on relevant topics (e.g., teaching techniques, principals' role as instructional leader). Sometimes during these meetings, site and central office administrators jointly examined aggregated and disaggregated student performance data to focus attention on the lowest performers and the means of increasing their learning.

Among the first activities in which these groups engaged was to understand the district's new Literacy Framework and a set of instructional concepts developed by LRDC staff called the Principles of Learning. These provided the instructional backbone for the district's reform agenda. The Institute expected principals and, through them, teachers to become knowledgeable about the Principles of Learning and each component of the Literacy Framework (see Stein & D'Amico, forthcoming), and to move toward full implementation of the Framework in stages.

A second primary mechanism for principal learning was called the "WalkThrough," a school accountability and review process adapted from District #2 to evaluate site progress and assist principals with specific instructional support needs. About twice each semester, an IL would visit each school in the Learning Community to see, through analysis of teachers' practice and school and classroom environment, how principals were incorporating what they had learned at the monthly meetings. During these WalkThroughs, the IL and principal together would visit about 10-15 classrooms in two or three hours. As they walked from classroom to classroom, the pair typically discussed what they had observed. They would reconvene in the front office after the classroom visitations to share what they had noticed in more depth and would agree upon next steps for the school. The Instructional Leader would follow up each visit with a letter to the principal, specifying what was observed and what areas needed improvement by the next WalkThrough.

Community Engagement and Organizational Efforts

As Chancellor Alvarado's team engaged district leadership in instructional reforms, Superintendent Bersin focused on the non-instructional aspects of running a district, including communications, organizational, and fiscal matters.

Bersin led a massive communications initiative to explain to the San Diego community (particularly those in business) the types of changes underway in the district and to garner legitimacy and financial support for his educational agenda. Early on, Bersin revamped the district's communications office, which took charge of Bersin's personal correspondences to parents and district employees, issued press releases to the community and local press about district initiatives, filmed district-wide events, updated the district's website, and began to document the reform's evolution. Bersin met frequently with business groups to discuss the importance of public education and the reform direction. The November 1998 passage (on the first try) of a \$1.51 billion bond measure by a 78 percent vote signaled growing community confidence in the reform agenda.

In fall 1998, Bersin and his top advisors initiated a "functional analysis" of the central office to "inventory" all district office positions and reporting streams and identify slack and incoherence in the system. Each central office employee was asked "How do you support teaching and learning in the classroom?" and to detail his or her specific responsibilities within the organization. Those who could not respond adequately or whose roles were deemed unnecessary or redundant were given notice at the conclusion of the process. Bersin's chief of staff explained:

As Alan says, there are two types of people in this [district] community. There are the teachers and those who support teaching. Alan and I are those who support teaching. And if you can't fit into one of those two categories, if you can't accept your role in one of those two categories, then you need to leave. Clear and simple.

As Bersin noted in his annual self-evaluation report, this process was conducted to "refine the organization of the district's infrastructure with the intent to be an organization which was both more efficient and more effective in supporting the

improvement of student achievement.” It also helped identify internal funds that could be redirected for instructional priorities and to reduce central office expenditures by at least five percent for the 1999-2000 budget—a directive the school board had given to the superintendent for his first year.

Expecting that reassignments would be massive and hoping to realize savings from the reorganization immediately, Bersin negotiated with the board to abolish a long-standing district policy whereby individuals reassigned to a lesser-paid position would retain their former salary for one year. District reformers cast the policy change request as one that would save jobs and make the reorganization less severe. In spring 1999, Bersin’s reorganization team recommended to the board that 104 central office positions be cut or consolidated.

REFORM YEAR TWO AND BEYOND: USING BUREAUCRACY TO SOLIDIFY DISTRICT’S REFORM

Building on the first year accomplishments, Bersin and Alvarado in years two and three expanded their focus inward to schools and teachers while sharpening attention on the system’s role in supporting instructional needs. They devised a sophisticated instructional agenda for districtwide learning as well as policy mechanisms and creative financing through which this agenda could be implemented. Increasingly, the district’s instructional and operational branches were intertwined. As an intended result, the district’s bureaucratic functions—including mechanisms for resource allocation, agenda-setting, and role assignments—served as a means for infusing instruction across the system rather than perpetuating the status quo.

Crystallization of Instructional Agenda

The district’s instructional agenda was built on several cornerstones revolving around continuous professional development, intense literacy study, differentiated support for low-performers, and high standards coupled with assessments to determine learning levels. By year three of the reform, these were codified into a comprehensive reform strategy called the Blueprint for Student Success (discussed below), which linked all components together and provided a way to fund them.

A centerpiece was the creation of a network of trained, highly-qualified teachers—one for each school and more for schools with high concentrations of new teachers or low-performing students. These “peer coach/staff developers” would coach other teachers and principals on pedagogical techniques aligned with the reform initiative and research-based strategies for learning. In this “train-the-trainer” model, Alvarado and colleagues from LRDC and District #2 worked with ILs, who worked with principals; the literacy department within the Institute for Learning worked with site-based coaches; and together, principals and coaches worked with teachers on deepening practice in the context of each school setting.

Because this position was new, it required negotiations between the district and the teachers’ union—the San Diego Education Association (SDEA). SDEA was concerned about (1) the reporting streams of these coaches as an indicator of the directionality of their allegiance (i.e., would they report to the building principals, someone in the central office, or both?); (2) the selection and placement processes (would these people’s services be forced on unreceptive teachers and schools?); and (3) what impact their work would have on teachers’ evaluations (a realm the contract left solely to site administrators). After a bitter and public debate in spring 1999, a neutral third party negotiated an agreement establishing the position, with San Diego

State University's School of Education screening and certifying applicants, the district's Institute for Learning providing ongoing training, and school site councils interviewing and selecting among multiple candidates for the on-site position. Coaches would report to each building principal.

By the start of the second year of reform, nearly 100 certified and trained literacy peer coaches blanketed two-thirds of district schools. Criteria including student performance, teacher attrition, and grade level determined which schools received full- and half-time coaches immediately or a year later when the program took on 200 additional coaches. These coaches worked with the principal and staff to design and implement professional development activities that were appropriate for, and approved by, teachers in each school and that aligned with the Institute's philosophy, pedagogy, and Literacy Framework. Coaches spent four days a week on the school sites. On the fifth day, staff from the Institute for Learning helped the coaches understand their roles and the instructional strategies that teachers were beginning to implement, learn coaching strategies, and develop ways to become accepted in a school community.

Elementary school peer coaches worked on a rotating basis with a handful of receptive teacher volunteers, and those in secondary schools worked specifically with teachers who were implementing the new district-required Genre Studies course. Introduced in year two, this two-period literacy course was required for all sixth graders and for ninth graders who had performed below the 50th percentile on the spring 1999 administration of the Stanford Achievement Test (9th edition; SAT-9).² The course was designed to improve reading and writing skills while meeting the district's language arts standards. Based on preliminary success in raising students' reading proficiencies, the district expanded the Genre Studies concept in year three by creating two- to three-hour blocks of literacy and one- to two-hour blocks of math for students beginning middle or junior high school and for grade nine students performing below grade level.

In addition to peer coaches and new curriculum, summer school became another way to simultaneously support struggling students and enrich teacher learning opportunities. Beginning in summer 2000, every school not undergoing facilities repairs held classes for students below grade level in all elementary grades and grade eight. More than seat-time for students, summers developed into opportunities for intense learning for both students and teachers. Teachers learned about literacy strategies through an array of paid professional development courses offered through the Institute for Learning; with experienced coaches, they had opportunities to practice techniques during summer school classes.

In keeping with the tenor of the reform initiative, district leaders also wanted to ensure that the schools with the lowest performing students received extra resources and central office support. Using a new state ranking system based primarily on the SAT-9, reformers identified eight extremely low-performing elementary schools as "Focus Schools" and gave each first-grade teacher \$8,000 for enhanced materials (first-grade teachers elsewhere were given \$5,000 for this purpose). Focus Schools also got an additional full-time peer coach, 24 more instructional days each year, enhanced parent training and involvement programs, and programs for preschoolers. In addition, each Focus School received four full-time math specialists—teachers who would initially work with fourth and fifth graders and later with students in grades three and six. Reformers identified 11 other low-performing elementary schools, which received an additional full-time peer coach and increased per-classroom allocations for enhanced first-grade materials.

Realizing that the SAT-9 was inadequate for diagnostic purposes, by year three the district's standards and assessment office had adopted specific assessments for determining student progress and specified cut-off scores for promotion and retention. These assessments became interactive tools used by teachers to assess students' vocabulary, comprehension, and reading skill levels, and to monitor their progress. The district later developed a corollary instrument for assessing mathematics.

A final instructional reform returned to the premise that principals are critical change agents in schools. In year three, the district instituted the Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA) and recruited Elaine Fink, Deputy Superintendent from District #2, to San Diego to direct it. ELDA provided training for principals and ILs and established a program in which up to four full-time mentor principals and 20-25 coaching principals would individually mentor new or struggling principals or those wanting specialized support. Also, in collaboration with the University of San Diego, ELDA included an administrative training and credentialing program for a cohort of about a dozen district teachers who served as interns at district schools while they moved through their coursework; this program would be expanded in the following years.

Enacting Supportive Policy and Fiscal Arrangements

A majority of these instructional reforms were implemented through a single policy package created with public input during year two of the reform and called the Blueprint for Student Success in a Standards-based System. Enacted by a 3-2 school board vote in spring 2000, this plan articulated for the first time a specific instructional agenda under the new administration. It emphasized professional development and focused attention on low-performing schools and students, suggesting that such an approach would "lift the base of instruction across the whole system...so [that] the academic achievement of all students...rises" (Blueprint, 2000, p. 1). At the same time, it set forth both a revised plan for social promotion/retention—thereby addressing a state mandate and mounting public pressure to enforce standards—and wove together a series of standards-based strategies intended to be compatible with the change initiative that the district had pursued for the past two years.

The Blueprint solidified the district's reform agenda and engineered an elaborate reallocation mechanism involving federal, state, and local dollars to fund the costly instructional strategies. The big-ticket cost items included the approximately 300 peer coach/staff developers, \$5,000 for every first-grade class for extra books and materials, and extended student and staff learning opportunities through summer school and after-school programs. District finance officials determined that each peer coach, alone, would cost approximately \$87,500 with benefits. Indeed, the bulk of the changes cost the district some \$62 million in 2000-2001, amounting to over six percent of the district's total operating budget, and were estimated to cost \$96 million in 2001-2002.

The district drew from several funding streams to cover expenses, including a sizeable portion of its Title I dollars (\$19 million of the district's \$33 million), integration funds (\$16.6 million), and various state-funded programs supporting school libraries and new teacher induction (\$15 million). Also, Bersin redirected more than half of the funds identified through the central office reorganization toward building the peer-coaching network (\$4.5 of \$8.3 million). Annual reviews of the central office helped surface additional savings in redirected dollars (\$1.7 million in 2000; \$1.6 million in 2001).

Among these reallocations, Title I funds proved most contentious; ultimately, 600 of 2,800 teacher aides were dismissed at the end of the 1999-2000 school year (300 more aides lost work hours). Knowing their plan would spark controversy, district officials offered employment assistance workshops to those affected. They also actively sought approval from both state and federal officials, which was granted after the district explained how these funds would serve as supplemental assistance and would be allocated to schools in proportion to the student poverty levels at each site. The district's mandate to schools regarding the use of categorical resources significantly reduced the amount of discretionary resources available at the school level. For example, while formerly schools had complete discretion over Title I and integration dollars, under the Blueprint they were required to spend a minimum of 80 percent of these funds on particular reform strategies.

RESULTS AND REACTIONS TO REFORM

By the end of year three, principals, teachers, and central office administrators were engaged in genuine discussions about instructional change. Those within schools were applying these discussions to practice—connections that were facilitated by principals' work as instructional leaders and coaches' daily presence in classrooms. The district's efforts appeared to pay off, although the link to student learning is difficult to prove conclusively, especially in a short time period.³ Nevertheless, SAT-9 scores increased three years in a row during the reform initiative underway (scores increased statewide during this period, as well). In 2000, 16 more schools scored above the state average and five more than in 1999 were right at state average. In 2001, scores were flatter (as across the state), the district tested (rather than waived out) more low-performers and even though more high-performers had parental waivers from taking the SAT-9 assessment. In addition, Genre Studies performance data were promising: after six months in Genre Studies, sixth-graders showed 1.7 years growth, while ninth-graders averaged a year's growth.

Not all outcomes and responses were positive, however. Vocal resistance to the reform came from schools and more subtle resentment from some central office staff. While few questioned the necessity for the reform's ultimate goals, consensus broke down over implementation strategy. Some principals and many teachers questioned the reform's speed, abruptness, and top-down character. The teachers' union served as a rallying point for these feelings for both teachers and administrators.⁴ And two of the five board members were increasingly uncomfortable with the process taken by district reformers.

Evolving Culture of Learning Across Schools

Principals were mostly enthused about the changes underway, but many were simultaneously wary of the increased attention on their position. Of approximately 30 principals interviewed, the vast majority said they appreciated their Instructional Leader, liked the Learning Community groupings, and valued other structured opportunities to talk with their peers, noting the monthly Principals' Conferences as a primary source of professional growth and inspiration and an important conduit for information between schools and the central office. They viewed "WalkThroughs" as positive, non-threatening opportunities to interact with the IL on a more personal, context-specific basis.

In addition, a majority of principals spoke enthusiastically about the reform's "equalizing" quality. They noted that everyone—not just specific schools or areas of town, as in the past—was getting the same message about effective teaching and learning strategies. As one veteran elementary school principal explained:

That consistency helps me to know that when I look at someone who's on the other side of town, they're trying to do the same thing I'm trying to do. And that's very reassuring, rather than to think: "Gosh, they've got the corner on the market for something I haven't even heard about." At least we're all in the same sailboat.

Principals also identified where the reform could be strengthened. Some noted that the Principals' Conferences failed to address differences in participants' needs and learning levels. A frequent request was to group principals by grade level. High school principals were especially concerned that the reform initiative was "too elementary" and viewed the exclusive focus on literacy as antithetical to the mission of a comprehensive high school. This request to treat high schools differently was honored by district officials toward the end of year three; by year four, most Learning Communities were homogeneous by grade level. In addition, while principals appreciated the renewed central office support for instruction, they frequently lamented that they lacked accompanying support for what they called non-instructional or "operational" matters (e.g., budgeting, facility repairs, staffing questions). Moreover, for many site administrators, a day off-site each month—sometimes more, when principals of a single grade level would meet for additional half-day sessions—created a tension between on-site responsibilities and their own professional learning.

Principals also spoke about feeling overworked and somewhat fearful about the pressures and consequences for principal and school performance under the new district administration. They often noted the high stakes attached to the role of the building principal—a fact that was driven home in the summer after the first year of reform (1999) when the administration abruptly reassigned 15 site administrators to the classroom for failure to demonstrate effective instructional leadership in their schools. Prior to the Bersin administration, principals rarely were removed from their schools other than through voluntary transfers; and in extreme cases, questionable principals were placed in central office roles. Accordingly, the actions by the new administration came as a shock to the district community, particularly to site administrators, many of whom wondered if they might be next.

Teachers' reactions to the district's new instructional reforms were more mixed. In general, they appreciated the emphasis on professional development, but disagreed with overall implementation, claiming that the reform was "too cut-throat" (elementary teacher), "top-down" (elementary teacher), and "bureaucratic" (Genre Studies high school teacher). Elementary school teachers appeared more aligned with the reform principles and literacy focus than were teachers in middle schools and comprehensive high schools, raising fundamental questions for many about the relevance of the literacy initiative for all teachers, schools, and students. Furthermore, while many elementary teachers, in particular, noted how a loss of instructional aides through reallocation of Title I dollars made their job more difficult, about two-thirds of interviewees indicated that the peer coach position offered helpful support for their practice.

On the one hand, many teachers—particularly in elementary grades and the newly-introduced Genre Studies courses at the secondary level—offered specific examples of how the reform changed and deepened their own practice. One elementary teacher commented:

Having a peer coach and a more supportive principal really helps people not just say they're going to [make changes in their practice], it's not just a dog-and-pony show. They really help make you a better teacher; it does make you more aware of how you spend your time [as a teacher].

Even those who seemed to resent the top-down nature of the reform described ways they were incorporating many of the strategies in their classrooms.

On the other hand, teachers had concerns about various aspects of the reform. Initially, some teachers worried about a lack of books and curriculum materials to accompany the literacy focus. Others felt the homogeneous tracking of the lowest performers into Genre Studies ran counter to some research on learning. About a third of the teachers interviewed disagreed with the reform entirely because it had caused elimination of "successful" programs underway within a school or was incompatible with teachers' individual conceptions of good teaching. As the reform unfolded, teachers increasingly demanded to see research upon which the strategies were built. They also expressed interest in reading about District #2 and knowing its structure and operations. In addition, teachers wanted to see research and cases of exemplary practice from *within* SDCS, where the policy and professional contexts were immediate. Indeed, it is possible that the district's reform initiative pushed teachers to attend to research and question their practice as never before. Simultaneously, perhaps this evidence points to a community becoming less willing to "take things on faith" from the central office.

Changes in the Central Office

Within the central office, budgeting and operational managers learned to collaborate with instructional administrators to specify and prioritize educational needs and direct district dollars toward instructional priorities. Both instructional and operational administrators commented on a shift away from letting available money guide program and policy decisions and toward having districtwide, articulated, instructional needs govern the budget. Alvarado described the shift as getting "operational departments [to] become the handmaiden of instruction." The district's chief financial officer—self-described as the "Chief Administrator of the Blueprint"—noted that "It was a daily process and a daily collaboration on how to get the resources behind the strategies that were being identified." Alvarado summed up this change accordingly:

[T]he Blueprint...created a group of people working together for the first time in which the...instructional issues drove [things], and the budget people and the operational people knew that their job was to make the budget thing happen. That's a *very* important thing to happen in districts. It almost never happens.

These central office changes focused the organization on instructional priorities; however, it also came at a cost to the system's emerging culture of learning. The 100 positions eliminated in 1999 during the first functional analysis, and smaller eliminations in subsequent years, caused some ripples of fear in the district community. Remaining central office administrators lost trusted colleagues with whom they had worked for decades. Some were angry and confused over particular individuals who were reassigned. Others felt that because of their position they were having to implement someone else's tough decisions. One classified district administrator wrote the teachers' union president an anonymous note, published in SDEA's newsletter stating: "We work in an environment here of hostility and/or fear of retribution and ostracization if we are not part of that 'inner circle'.... Morale here is at an all time low" (*The Advocate*, 5/19/99, p. 1). A top-ranking, exiting central office administrator

predicted this massive reorganization would mark the beginning of an 18-month “era of intimidation” in the district, a period that would be characterized by fear of the new administration, distrust among those making changes, and the formation of deep alliances among those affected by the district’s reform.

DISCUSSION

San Diego City Schools is an unusual case of reformers using strategies grounded in research on teaching and learning to align a large urban district’s organizational structures and norms toward the improvement of instruction. Their reform initiative differed markedly from most districts’ efforts in three respects. They: (1) built and nurtured new instructional supports that reflected effective practices; (2) sought changes both within the central office and at school sites; and (3) followed an unabashedly directive change process to move beyond traditions they believed did not support learning. Building on the New York District #2 “existence proof” that central offices in modest-sized districts can be agents of instructional change (Elmore & Burney, 1997a, p. 3), the San Diego reform story extends this notion to the seemingly-intractable, large, urban school district central office, heretofore known for impeding rather than instigating change.

Simultaneous efforts to dismantle and build within the district, coupled with an expectation for system-wide change, underlay this comprehensive approach to district reform. At points, however, reformers walked a thin line between focus and chaos, acting swiftly to direct change but failing to engage adequately all district employees and members of an increasingly resentful teachers’ union. And at times, reformers unintentionally allowed fear to invade the district community as they abruptly dismissed and reassigned organizational members—sometimes without warning or perceived due cause. Complicating matters, a deeply split school board gave reformers a narrow one-vote margin on which to act. By year three of the initiative, reformers had refocused district bureaucracy and instruction, but did so in a way that was politically unstable.

While urban district central offices are, themselves, particularly unlikely objects of change (Meyer, et al., 1994), it was the targeted central office reforms that facilitated San Diego’s instructional change initiative. Quickly and with great force and purpose, San Diego City Schools’ reformers reoriented their district bureaucracy to focus on instruction and bring coherence across programs, policies, and instructional agendas. They simultaneously attended to instructional quality across their system of schools *and* to the organizational details of the central office that reinforced the system’s larger instructional vision. Like any bureaucracy, SDCS adhered to specific, rational rules and a prescribed order; these gave the district structural definition in which learning could occur. This structure included formal roles and functions, budgeting procedures, accountability mechanisms ensuring that members upheld their responsibilities, and a division of labor reflecting instructional priorities. Accordingly, district leaders designed the central office to support instruction throughout the entire system; they did not rely solely on norms of professional responsibility for improvement. However, they simultaneously attended to creating a professional learning culture throughout the district in which members interacted with others around research, performance data, and teaching practice and through which the larger system learned to incorporate feedback it received. As such, the San Diego case illustrates how a district’s bureaucratic and learning features not only can co-exist but also how they can be mutually reinforcing.

Moreover, the case of San Diego surfaces nuances about *catalyzing* large-scale change initiatives and suggests a reciprocal relationship between centralized action and principled knowledge that is grounded in research on instruction. San Diego's top-down, non-incremental approach to change provided an *enabling* condition for the principled knowledge to take hold across the system. Only through going "boom" *first* in San Diego—and immediately launching specific support structures to reinforce the changes—did reformers have a chance of establishing instructional design principles about instruction throughout the system. Had they waited for organizational buy-in, the reforms likely would never have come to fruition because too many forces were at work to stabilize the district and to return it to its former state. Equally, the principled knowledge upon which the change initiative was based legitimized reformers' centralized approach. The case of San Diego City Schools, therefore, illustrates how a district can employ bureaucratic means to ground the organization in the core of teaching and learning. Nonetheless questions remain about the longevity of the reform amidst an uncertain reform climate: ultimately, going "boom" and sustaining reform may prove a difficult combination in the long-run.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ By the fourth year of reform, however, the number of Learning Communities had expanded to nine, due to some IL attrition (three of the original seven retired or left their positions) and reconfigurations of the groups to become mostly homogeneous by grade level. By the 2001-02 school year, there were two high school principal groups, four elementary groups, two groups with a mix of elementary and middle school principals, and one group of Focus School principals.
- ² As the reform matured, the district established its own set of diagnostic assessments that replaced the SAT-9 in determining eligibility for Genre Studies.
- ³ It took a decade for the District #2 (New York) patterns of test score improvement to be attributed to the reform strategy after which the San Diego reform is modeled.
- ⁴ SDCS had no collective bargaining unit for administrators. Its Administrators' Association was a non-unionized organization that could form relatively weak memorandums of understanding with the district but did not have the power to engage in collective bargaining.

REFERENCES

- Ancess, J. (1997). *The reciprocal influence of teacher learning, teaching practice, school restructuring, and student learning outcomes*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
- Anonymous. (1999, May 19). Classified partner notes Ed. Center dysfunction. *The Advocate*, San Diego Education Association, p. 1.
- Argyris, C. & Schön, D. A. (1996). *Organizational learning II: Theory, method, and practice*. Essex, UK: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Bodilly, S. J. (1998). *Lessons from New American Schools' scale-up phase: Prospects for bringing designs to multiple schools*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Chubb, J. E. & Moe, T. M. (1990). *Politics, markets, and America's schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Cohen, D. & Ball, D. (1997). *Where macro and micro perspectives meet: Resources and teacher policy*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *Doing what matters most: Investing in quality teaching*. New York, National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
- Darling-Hammond, L. & Sykes, G. (Eds.) (1999). *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Darling-Hammond, L. & McLaughlin, M. W. (1999). Investing in teaching as a learning profession: Policy problems and prospects. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 376-411). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Doyle, D. P. & Finn, C. E., Jr. (1984). American schools and the future of local control. *Public Interest*, 77 (Fall), 77-95.
- Education Commission of the States. (1995). *The new American urban school district*. Denver, CO: Author.
- Elmore, R. F. (1993). The role of local school districts in instructional improvement. In S. H. Fuhrman (Ed.), *Designing coherent education policy: Improving the system* (pp. 96-124). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Elmore, R. F. & Burney, D. (1997a). *Investing in teacher learning: Staff development and instructional improvement in Community School District #2, New York City*. New York: Teachers College Columbia University.
- Elmore, R. F., & Burney, D. (1997b). *School variation and systemic instructional improvement in Community School District #2, New York City* (OERI contract deliverable). Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh, Learning Research and Development Center, High-Performance Learning Communities Project.
- Evans, P. M., & Mohr, N. (1999). Professional development for principals: Seven core beliefs. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(7), 530-32.
- Fullan, M. G. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. G. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. Bristol, PA: The Falmer Press.
- Fullan, M. G. (1997). *What's worth fighting for in the principalship*. New York: Teachers College Press.

-
- Goldring, E. B. & Hallinger, P. (1992). *District control contexts and school organizational processes*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Gouldner, A. W. (1954). *Patterns of industrial bureaucracy*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Guthrie, J.W. & Sanders, T. (2001, January 7). Who will lead the public schools? *The New York Times*, p. 46(N).
- Hightower, A. M. (2001). *San Diego's big boom: District bureaucracy meets culture of learning*. Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University.
- High Performance Learning Communities Project. (1997). *Final report (0017{4.7.c})*. Pittsburgh, PA: Author.
- Hightower, A. M., Knapp, M., Marsh, J. A., & McLaughlin, M. W. (forthcoming). *School districts and instructional renewal: Opening the conversation*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hill, P., Campbell, C., & Harvey, J. (2000). *It takes a city: Getting serious about urban school reform*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives, and public choices*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.
- Koppich, J. E. & Knapp, M. S. (1998). *Federal research investment and the improvement of teaching 1980-1997*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.
- Lanzara, G. F. (1998). Self-destructive processes in institution building and some modest countervailing mechanisms. *European Journal of Political Research* 33:1-39.
- Levinthal, D. A. & March, J. G. (1993). The myopia of learning. *Strategic Management Journal* 14: 95-112.
- Lindblom, C. E. (1980). *The policy-making process (2nd Edition)*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Little, J. W. (1999). Organizing schools for teacher learning. In L. Darling-Hammond & G. Sykes (Eds.), *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice* (pp. 376-411). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Magee, M. & Leopold, L. S. (1998). New superintendent, many other changes welcome 139,000. *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, p. B-1:6,7,8; B-4:1.
- March, J.G. (1994). *Organizations and learning: Three lectures on efficiency and adaptiveness in organizations*. Helsinki, Finland: Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration.
- March, J. G. & Simon, H. A. (1958). *Organizations*. New York, John Wiley.
- Massell, D. & Goertz, M. (1999). Local strategies for building capacity: The district role in supporting instructional reform. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, Montreal, Canada.
- McLaughlin, M. W. (1992). How district communities do and do not foster teacher pride. *Education Leadership* 50: 33-35.
- McLaughlin, M.W. & Oberman, I. (Eds.) (1996). *Teacher learning: New policies, new practices*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Mehan, H. & Grimes, S. (1999). *Measuring the achievement gap in San Diego City Schools*. San Diego, CA: University of California San Diego.

-
- Merton, R. K. (1940). Bureaucratic structure and personality. *Social Forces* 18: 560-568.
- Merton, R.K. (1987). Three fragments from a sociologist's notebook: Establishing the phenomenon, specified ignorance, and strategic research materials. *American Review of Sociology* 19: 1-28.
- Meyer, J. W., Scott, W. R., & Strang, D. (1994). Centralization, fragmentation, and school district complexity. In W. R. Scott, J. W. Meyer & Associates (Eds.), *Institutional environments and organizations* (pp. 160-178). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miles, K. H. & Guiney, E. (2000, June 14). School Districts' New Role. *Education Week* 19(40): 30, 32-33.
- O'Day, J.A. & Smith, M.S. (1993). Systemic school reform and educational opportunity. In S. Fuhrman (Ed.), *Designing coherent educational policy: Improving the system*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Price, J. N., Ball, D. L., & Luks, S. (1995). *Marshaling resources for reform: District administrators and the case of mathematics*. East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.
- Resnick, L. B. (1995). From aptitude to effort: A new foundation for our schools. *Daedalus*, 124, 55-62.
- Resnick & Glennan (forthcoming). Leadership for Learning: A Theory of Action for Urban School Districts. In A. M. Hightower, M. S. Knapp, J. A. Marsh, & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *School districts and instructional renewal: Opening the conversation* (forthcoming). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Rogoff, B. (1994). Developing understanding of the idea of communities of learners. *Mind, culture, and activity* 1(4): 209-229.
- Rosenholtz, S. (1989). *Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools*. White Plains, NY: Longman Inc.
- San Diego City Schools. (2000, March 14). *Blueprint for student success in a standards-based system*. San Diego, CA: Author.
- Scott, W. R. (1992). *Organizations: Rational, natural, and open systems*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Selznick, P. (1949). *TVA and the grass roots*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Currency Doubleday.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1996). *Leadership for the schoolhouse*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Snyder, J. (1998). *New Haven Unified School District: A teaching quality system for excellence and equity*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
- Snyder, J. (forthcoming). New Haven Unified School District: A teaching quality system for excellence and equity. In M. Knapp, A. M. Hightower, J. A. Marsh, & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *School districts and instructional renewal: Opening the conversation* (forthcoming). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Spillane, J. P. (1996). School districts matter: Local educational authorities and state instructional policy. *Educational Policy* 10(1): 63-87.
-

-
- Spillane, J. P. & Thompson, C. L. (1997). Reconstructing conceptions of local capacity: The local education agency's capacity for ambitious instructional reform. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 19(2): 185-203.
- Stein, M. K. & D'Amico, L. (forthcoming). District as learning laboratory: An example from District #2's literacy initiative. In A. M. Hightower, M. S. Knapp, J. A. Marsh, & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.), *School districts and instructional renewal: Opening the conversation* (forthcoming). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Tyack, D. B. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vigil, D. W. & Carstens, L. J. (1998). *The San Diego High School Cluster case*. Pittsburgh, PA: Pew Forum on Standards-based Reform.
- Weber, M. (1946). *The theory of social and economic organization*. London: The Free Press of Glencoe.
- Wechsler, M. E. (1997). *Reforming the district: New policies, practices, and priorities to support whole-school change*. Unpublished paper. Stanford, CA, Stanford University.
- Weick, K. E. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21(1): 1-19.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wirt, F. M. & Kirst, M. W. (1992). *The politics of education: Schools in conflict* (3rd Edition). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Co.
- Wise, A. E. (1979). *Legislated learning: The bureaucratization of the American classroom*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

CTP Research Reports

The Center's Research Report series presents the findings of CTP studies, analyses, reviews, and conceptual work. In addition to internal review by Center members, each report has been reviewed externally by at least two scholars and revised in light of the reviewers' comments and suggestions. Along with CTP Working Papers, Policy Briefs, and Occasional Papers, these reports are available for download from the Center's website: www.ctpweb.org

Center Affiliates

American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education
American Federation of Teachers
Council for Chief State School Officers
National Alliance of Business
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
National School Boards Association
National Staff Development Council
National Urban League

American Association of School Administrators
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
International Reading Association
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Governors' Association
National Science Teachers Association
National Urban Coalition
Teachers Union Reform Network

Center Team

Principal Investigators and Co-Principal Investigators

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Michael Knapp, Center Director
James Banks
Elizabeth Dutro
Margaret Plecki
Sam Wineburg
Sheila Valencia

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Linda Darling-Hammond
Pamela Grossman
Milbrey McLaughlin
Joan Talbert

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Deborah Loewenberg Ball
David Cohen
Edward Silver

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Thomas Corcoran
Richard Ingersoll

Researchers at Other Institutions

Barnett Berry, University of North Carolina
Robert Floden, Michigan State University
David Monk, Pennsylvania State University
Jon Snyder, University of California at Santa Barbara
Judy Swanson, Education Matters, Inc.
Suzanne Wilson, Michigan State University

Contact Information

Michael S. Knapp, Center Director
Miller Hall M201, College of Education
University of Washington, Box 353600
Seattle, WA 98195-3600
email: mknapp@u.washington.edu

Michele C. Ferguson, Center Manager
Miller Hall 203C, College of Education
University of Washington, Box 353600
Seattle, WA 98195-3600
Phone: (206) 221-4114
FAX: (206) 616-6762
email: ctpmail@u.washington.edu

Sally Brown, Communications Director
Miller Hall 404B, College of Education
University of Washington, Box 353600
Seattle, WA 98195-3600
Phone: (206) 543-5319
FAX: (206) 616-6762
email: salbrown@u.washington.edu

Web Address
<http://www.ctpweb.org>

