Improving Leadership for Learning

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High School Transformation

Leadership for Transforming High Schools

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State-of-the-Field Reports: Improving Leadership for Learning

This report is one of a series produced by a research team at the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, a national research consortium home-based at the University of Washington. Developed with support from The Wallace Foundation during the early stages of an initiative that explores central issues in the exercise of educational leadership, the reports synthesize studies, conceptual work, and examples of current and emerging practice.

The reports are intended to clarify each leadership issue, while assembling what is known from empirical studies. The information in these reports lays the groundwork for further study and practical experimentation by leaders and reformers in states, districts, and schools.

The first report offers an overview of leadership and leadership support in relation to the overarching goal of improving learning. The remaining six explore in more detail particular issues within that terrain.

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Introduction: Transforming the American High School

The basic blueprint of the nation's high schools has not changed significantly since the rise of the comprehensive high school nearly a century ago. Most of America's current high school workforce matriculated into schools that, over the course of the past 100 years or so, got fairly good at meeting the needs of some children. By and large, the comprehensive high school was designed to sort and select students through various mechanisms, producing high-quality learning for some—in privileged communities, for most—and weeding out the rest. As a matter of policy and broad public consensus, however, merely meeting the needs of *some* is no longer good enough for America's public schools. Making high schools work for all students poses a significant set of leadership tasks, and it is precisely the leadership challenges posed by these tasks that form the central focus for this paper.

Historically, comprehensive high schools have been notoriously impersonal places, and they have served to sort and select students into various tracks, enabling some to achieve at high levels, allowing others to simply get by with meeting minimal expectations, and perpetuating the tacit understanding among adults that many adolescents will not graduate at all. As currently conceived, comprehensive high schools remain inadequate for preparing all students to reach rigorous national and state standards because they prevent many students from accessing challenging academic experiences that mine their personal interests. A large percentage of students entering high school in America (approximately 30 percent in Washington state, for example) do not graduate within a typical time frame. Furthermore, size and complexity of comprehensive high school schedules and staffing relationships prevent the construction of more personal relationships between teachers and students that could serve to promote better learning environments and student learning outcomes.

The advent of stricter and more specific accountability reforms associated with the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, and the alignment of state-level education policy initiatives with that broader set of mandates, has reinforced the fact that many American students still do not complete high

school, despite various efforts at reform. Even those who do get a diploma often leave school lacking the necessary preparation that would provide them with choices about what comes next.

Various efforts to address problems with high schools have occurred over the past three decades or longer. The most recent efforts have been guided by different theories of action, some focusing centrally on structural reform strategies, such as the development of smaller schools aimed at the creation of more of the kind of personal relationships supposed to bring about better learning experiences for students. Others have focused more centrally on efforts to change curricular expectations, such as the push for higher graduation standards, or on an emphasis on understanding and developing coherence between the K–12 system and higher education. Reforms have also attempted to permeate the professional community of teachers, focusing on the improvement of teaching within and across content strands. No matter what the underlying theory of action, efforts to change high schools for the better necessarily implicate the work of leaders inside the school and those who work across the system.

Given the complexity of the leadership challenges inherent in the problem of making high school work for all students, it is not always clear what leaders should do to contribute to learning goals. High school principals and assistant principals report that their time continues to be consumed by matters unrelated to learning improvement. District leaders face increasing pressure to improve graduation rates and to ensure students' access to a broad range of post–high school options. Teacher leaders working inside high schools face the challenges of teaching and leading simultaneously. State departments mandate standards and accountability mechanisms, but they operate at a distance from the classroom and teaching.

A central challenge for practice and research, then, is to inform instructional improvements in the high school. This means wrestling with what forms of leadership are necessary to make the shift from "some kids" to "each kid." Where should time and energy be focused on this most central and difficult challenge of the leaders' work?

Why This Issue Matters: A Brief Historical Note

The original ideas underpinning the development of the American compre-hensive high school in the early 20th century took aim at creating a unitary, democratic system of secondary education that would combine vocational and academic endeavors under one roof and thereby transcend the class-based, discrete educational systems for "haves" and "have nots" found in Europe (c.f., Tanner, 1982; Wraga, 1999). This effort at creating a comprehensive high school was prominently described in the *Cardinal Principles* report, the product of an early 20th-century body focused on national education reform in secondary schools (CRSE, 1918). This push early in the century propelled more than four decades of intense activity as the country built a system of secondary schools that served about half a million students to well over six and a half million by the 1940s.

From the time of the *Cardinal Principles* report through the 1960s, many educators, perhaps most notably James B. Conant (1959, 1967), pro-posed enhancements to the original comprehensive high school ideals, while still advocating their existence. Conant (1959) argued that only large, com-prehensive schools (of roughly one hundred students per grade) could achieve the economies of scale necessary to supply students with the range of cur-ricula required by their diverse educational needs. He further argued that by tending to students' different needs "under one roof," comprehensive high schools were an important source of the "democratic spirit" in public educa-tion, a stance shared by many educators in subsequent years as they sought to bring disadvantaged and minority students into the educational mainstream in the wake of the civil rights movement (Wraga, 1999). Not all educational scholars viewed public schooling as grounded in democratic theories of egali-tarianism, however. Recognizing that schools function as sorting mechanisms that prepare students for a socially stratified work world, Waller (1965) had maintained decades earlier that the essential function of schooling is "most incongruous" with democratic, egalitarian theory. Regardless of the point of view, the leadership issues embedded in these large, comprehensive schools were by necessity managerial in nature and roughly modeled on scientific management notions coming out of the industrial revolution.

Two key functions were central to the original idea of the comprehensive high school: *specialization* and *unification*. Efforts to specialize led to a mul-titude of curriculum offerings, including some required of all students (also

viewed as a unifying effort) and others intended to serve students' specialized needs and interests (electives, differentiated curriculum tracks). Efforts to unify would occur through various whole school programs (assemblies, etc.) and extracurricular offerings (sports, fine arts, etc.), as well as recreation activities open to the entire community. Over time, education scholars and advocates paid increasing attention to beefing up the specialization function, resulting in what one research effort called the "shopping mall" high school (Powell, Farrar, & Cohen, 1985) offering "cafeteria-style education," and downplaying the original unifying intent. Wraga (1999) notes:

> … in practice the specializing function has been exalted at the neglect of the unifying function. Out of a strong commitment to serve individual needs and interests, specialized courses and programs proliferated to the point that the existence of variegated course offerings alone has become the sole criteria for the now commonplace label *comprehensive high school.*

Critiques of the comprehensive high school over the past three decades have come from a series of notable scholars, including Boyer (1983), Goodlad (1984), Sergiovanni (1996), and Sizer (1984), who have all called for reform in high schools and identified the comprehensive high school's burgeoning size and lack of personalization as key elements leading to apathy and alienation among both teachers and students. These scholars set the table for the recent policy/practice juggernaut aimed at exploring and creating more rigorous and personalized secondary schools.

The small schools movement today has several precursors, the most notable being the Alternative Schools movement (c.f., Neumann, 2003) and the "house" design movement (illustrated as the Kennedy High School case in Bolman & Deal, 1991). More recent efforts to personalize the high school can be seen in the creation of new small high schools in urban centers in the late 1980s and 1990s, perhaps most commonly in Deborah Meier's work in New York City (1995) and in Theodore Sizer's creation of the Coalition of Essential Schools. As of late, the push for personalized, rigorous high school education has benefited from larger scale philanthropic and governmental interventions, all still seeking answers to the question of how to make high schools work for every student.

The Culture and Norms of High School Teaching and Learning

Despite repeated calls for reform and various efforts aimed at reform, evidence suggests that what transpires for students inside the high school classroom remains relatively impervious to change. High school teachers work in separate content disciplines, mostly in isolation from one another, and the subject department is typically the locus of teacher professional identity and community (Lortie, 1975; Siskin & Little, 1995).

What Lortie (1975) noted 30 years ago is still largely true—high school structures isolate teachers by relegating them to their separate "domains"—be it subject matter or the classroom itself. Conant's mid20th century plan to consolidate high schools brought about secondary educational settings serving up more curricular options in buildings that housed more students than ever before. The vast number of students (when compared to the elementary school), coupled with autonomy over curriculum and pedagogy, presents a unique challenge for high school teachers because they must keep track of more students' academic progress without much collegial contact or support. Moreover, the nature of the high school makes leadership issues more complex by introducing a myriad roles (e.g., principals, assistant principals, deans, department chairs, instructional content coaches, etc.) and the inherent relationships to be negotiated among these various role players.

Subject departments are a stable and foundational element of high schools, recognized as "the one fortress that proved virtually impregnable," despite nearly a century of reform (Kliebard, 1986, p. 269). Teachers associate their professional identities with the subjects they teach so that the department becomes their primary point of reference and the institution that reliably unites—and at the same time divides—them along professional lines (Siskin & Little, 1995; Stodolsky, 1988). Partitioning high school instruction into discrete subjects communicates to students that knowledge is organized in much the same way.

These distinctions between departments (and thus, subject matter) present obstacles for the interdisciplinary collaboration of teachers and even greater challenges for those who lead them. Rigid departmental divisions can threaten schoolwide communication and community (Siskin, 1994). A study of administrator perspectives from three "typical" comprehensive high schools revealed that high school department cultures largely determined how leaders guided school improvement efforts (Siskin, 1997). Additionally, McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) found teachers' professional communities shaped how

they view two critical aspects of teaching—the intellectual potential of their students and their role as educators to elicit it. The department has great influence on how teachers conceptualize their work in the high school, but administrative leaders (principals, assistant principals, etc.) are not "members" and rarely pass as the content "experts" that secondary teachers perceive themselves to be. Given these long-held traditions of subject affiliation, particularly savvy leaders examine the interaction between subject matter and the overall instructional transformation goals (Grossman, Stodolsky, & Knapp, 2004). And yet, in policy conversations about high school improvement, very little attention is paid to these departmental structures that could potentially be a powerful lever for change.

To be sure, the departmental organization of high schools can support excellent teaching in particular subjects, where the department head or others within the department act as instructional leaders and the department as a whole forms a viable community of professional learning and support for department members. There are strong departments in many, if not most, of the nation's comprehensive high schools. But that fact does not change the structural and cultural facts of life for high school teachers: They face more students than they can come to know well; they are unlikely to get strong instructional support from school leaders, or others besides those they know in their department; and they are unlikely to interact with teachers outside of their department on matters of teaching and learning (or even with those colleagues who teach the same students). Individually and collectively, there is little in the design or leadership of the school to encourage teachers to take responsibility for the students' whole learning experience. That matter is left, by default, to counselors, leaders with schoolwide scope of responsibility, or the students themselves.

A number of other factors add to the complexity of high school leadership for those at the "top" of the typical hierarchy. Some of the factors include the logistics of managing a large organization with multiple budgets, facilities issues, and the concerns of the effect of the tightly compressed schedule of eight disciplines per day on the quality of teaching and learning, as well as the teacher workload associated with greater numbers of contacts (e.g., teachers, parents, students) than those inherent to most elementary schools. Add in the expectation for constructing and overseeing ongoing professional learning opportunities for a handful of content domains, and high school leadership can appear quite daunting.

Problem Scale: National, State, and District Contexts

On a national scale, high school leaders and policymakers are faced with overwhelming numbers of high school dropouts. Further, these dropout rates reflect current socio-economic inequities by income. In 2001, students from low-income families (bottom one-fifth of all family incomes) dropped out at an annual rate of 10.7 percent, versus a rate of 5.4 percent for students from middle-income families (those in the middle three-fifths of the income range), and 1.7 percent from high-income families (Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2004). The 2005 National Governors Association (NGA) summit on secondary schools focused on improving such outcomes, signaling to policymakers nationwide that current high school results are insufficient.

The failure to adequately serve large numbers of students is made more complex by the fact that high schools are not islands unto themselves, but rather they fall under the purview of both the state and the district. Both set student graduation requirements (to varying degrees of specificity) and, at times, administer different policies and practices that require attention by school level leadership. State leaders, for instance, make national issues meaningful for districts and vice versa through the following range of activities:

- Mediating federal requirements and transformation resources for teaching and learning.

- Supervising the connection for students between high school and higher education opportunities.

- Publicizing new transformation policies to the broader community.

- Regulating high school assessments such as standardized tests.

District leaders tend to their local population by hiring, assessing, and creating incentives for principals and administrators; garnering resources for improved working conditions and student outcomes; managing the local political environment; and collecting data on their students' progress. As leaders at these two levels attend to different priorities, they participate in the longstanding debate over centralized versus localized control.

The connection between states, districts, and schools in working to improve high schools may, in the best of cases, be characterized as a process of "crafting coherence," defined by ongoing negotiation at the school level to bridge or buffer external demands in an effort to keep the school focused on

established goals (Honig & Hatch, 2004). Hence, the impact of state or district policy—in the form of graduation requirements, waivers, money for adding facilities and personnel—may be understood at the school level as either a support for reform or a hindrance that requires buffering. The presence of multiple leaders steering the transformation of high schools is confounded by public expectations about what high school should be, including expectations for expansive, diverse course and program offerings, as well as popular nostalgia about high school activities such as prom, sports programs, pep rallies, and band. As with any other reform, the transformation of high school leadership occurs in a context of multiple initiatives, policies, requirements, and philosophies about the purpose of schooling—all competing for attention and resources.

Conceptualizing Leadership for Transforming High Schools

The problems facing leaders who would transform high schools are complex. Leaders seeking to create high schools that serve all students more effectively confront a host of forces, some of which lie completely outside their control. Conceptions of leadership to date have sought to leverage narrow pieces of a larger whole—especially apparent in the structural changes such as those embedded in the work funded nationally by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, leadership pipeline development efforts such as those supported by previous rounds of The Wallace Foundation funding in State Action for Education Leadership Project states, and cultural change efforts such as those promoted by the Coalition of Essential Schools during much of the 1980s and 1990s.

The most useful conceptual framework, in our view, would productively encompass structural and cultural change efforts, alongside leadership pipeline development, but always in relation to the improvement of teaching and learning.

Preconditions and Dimensions of the Leadership Challenge

In considering the dimensions of leadership necessary for transforming teaching and learning in high schools, a set of preconditions concerns who leads and what the leaders bring to their work. These include core leadership values of equity, inquiry, social justice, and access to high-quality instruction for all. Preconditions also encompass who leaders are and what they bring to the problem of leading high school transformation; their beliefs about what high school is and should be; their knowledge of content and pedagogy; and their skills with leading others in various domains of activity related to improving teaching and learning. Finally, how high school leaders are prepared, selected, and supported in their leadership development constitute important preconditions for their work in high school transformation.

As to where leaders could productively focus their energies, five dimensions of leadership activity, closely related to those specified in earlier work conceptually defining leadership for learning (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003), are worth considering in high school transformation. These dimensions closely

link to other aspects of leadership identified by groups currently working on high school transformation (e.g., NGA, 2005; Murphy et al., 2001):

1. *Focus on learning.* Leaders' ability to promote a clear and consistent focus on learning for all high school students and professionals as a central part of their work.

2. *Use of data and evidence.* Leaders' continuous use of data and evidence in service of instructional improvement and as a basic element of decision making related to instructional improvement in the high school.

3. *Aligning resources with learning improvement goals.* Leaders' targeted reallocation of resources and creation of incentives that serve the specific instructional improvement goals that each high school sets out for itself, across differing school district contexts.

4. *Construction of roles that enable leaders to focus on learning improvement.* The redefinition of leadership roles and authority relationships that enable leaders (construed broadly) to impact teaching and learning in high schools.

5. *Engagement with the community.* Leaders' emphasis on engaging community constituents, parents, and support providers in ways that promote the learning agenda.

Ultimately, as this outline suggests, the outcomes of leaders' efforts to improve high schools must be judged on the basis of tangible evidence of learning—learning by students and professionals and for the school as an organization. Absent this, not much else matters.

Embedded in the problem of high school transformation are a range of major leadership issues, especially those that have been signaled by The Wallace Foundation and others. The problems inherent in leading high school transformation serve, in one sense, as a case through which one can view all the other issues at play. However, given the comprehensive high school's complex nature and its historical resistance to change, we argue for beginning with this broad frame that may offer new strategies or insights as to how research can inform the field about promising leadership activity.

Leading the Transformed High School: A Perspective on Distributed Leadership

Having proposed a picture of the terrain of the leadership activity important for transforming high schools, we turn to the question of how the work of leadership might be accomplished. Much of the current thinking on the nature of leadership in education focuses on notions of distribution. Some scholars of high school reform, most centrally those delving into research on the development of small high schools, suggest that leadership crucial for transforming high schools moves away from traditional, hierarchical leadership roles and functions. The creation of multiple small schools, particularly from a single large school, elevates the necessity for many, rather than few, to assume leadership for various functions associated with helping the school to thrive. Big school leadership models that include specialized administrative functions focused on attendance, discipline, curriculum, extracurricular activities, and the like, populated by principals and assistant principals who operate under "factory model" assumptions established in the early 20th century, run contrary to small school ideals of personalization and the development of strong professional community (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Advocates of smaller high schools contend that the success of a small school rests largely on the willingness of those closest to the students to step up and lead aspects of the school's functioning that overlap with, or even replace, much of what school administrators have done traditionally.

While these issues have come to the fore in the research on small schools, we argue that the distribution of leadership is key regardless of a school's size, and arguably it is different in scope and specification depending on a school's size. The nature of the monumental effort to transform high schools into places that seek to serve *each* student calls for an understanding of leadership that moves away from reliance on administrative hierarchies and toward a network of shared and distributed practice.

Given this backdrop, how are we to think about distributed leadership for transforming high schools? First, it is clear that *distributed leadership is collective activity, focused on collective goals, which comprises a quality or energy that is greater than the sum of individual actions*. Distributed leadership has been defined as "an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals, contrasting it to conceptions of leadership that focus on the actions of singular individuals" (Bennett et al., 2003). Complementary to this understanding, others offer the view that leadership is an organizational qual-

ity, originating from many peoples' personal resources and flowing through networks of roles (Pounder et al., 1995; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). Leadership of this nature is more than just the sum of individual efforts. Implied in the idea is a dynamism that extends beyond simply better articulation of divisions in task responsibility. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) offer a conception of leadership as a necessarily distributed activity "stretched over" people in different roles rather than neatly divided among them—a dynamic interaction between multiple leaders (and followers) and their situational and social contexts. Similarly, Lambert (1998) conceives of leadership as work that is separate from person, role, or a discrete set of individual behaviors. Beyond arguable conceptual differences, virtually all definitions emphasize the importance of a shared vision and a strong emphasis on the developing education's core technology—teaching and learning—with attention to both the subject-specific aspects of instructional improvement and those that are more cross-cutting, for example, as manifested in attempts by high schools to fashion interdisciplinary learning experiences or to make reading and writing instruction a priority for teachers in all subjects. Such a vision runs counter to the silo-like nature of the culture of teaching and learning in most high schools.

Second, *distributed leadership spans the task, responsibility, and power boundaries between traditionally defined organizational roles.* Bennett and colleagues (2003) found in their review that conceptions of distributed leadership often signal these boundaries of leadership are more open than in traditional organizational settings. Naive understandings of what constitutes teachers' or principals' work are made problematic in the shift; and, perhaps more important, responsibilities for "who does what" are opened up for negotiation. Moreover, with distributed leadership, decisions about who leads and who follows are dictated by the task or problem situation, not necessarily by where one sits in the hierarchy.

Again, this view of leadership runs counter to the pecking order that characterizes the bureaucratic structure of most high schools at present, with a titular principal "in charge," various deputies who are delegated to serve in closely circumscribed roles (disciplinarian, athletic director, truant officer, curriculum overseer), and department chairs who stay close to the particular work of their subject matter areas, though focusing mainly on managerial tasks, such as ordering supplies, managing budgets, and the like, rather than on instructional leadership.

Third, scholars have suggested that *distributed leadership rests on a base of expertise rather than hierarchical authority.* Related to the deconstruction of role boundaries is the idea that numerous, distinct, germane perspectives and capabilities can be found in individuals spread throughout the organization. Bennett and colleagues (2003) found that conceptions of distributed leadership involve recognizing expertise rather than formal position as the basis of leadership authority in groups. Herein lies a necessary shift in power relationships and a need for deep understanding about where and how influence is generated. Instead of primarily centering on the principal, the expert knowledge and skills necessary to exercise leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning reside within the professional community or "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998) with which teaching staff identify. Many, rather than few, have a share of responsibility for the shared purpose—a view of leadership requiring the redistribution of power and authority toward those who hold expertise and not necessarily privileging those with formal titles.

While obviously complex and fraught with a need to rethink existing power and influence relationships in the traditional hierarchy, such a view of leadership has the potential to instill organizational change in high schools. The history of school reform time and again suggests that strategies for improving teaching and learning fundamentally succeed or fail in the interaction between teachers and students behind the classroom door (c.f., Berman & McLaughlin, 1978). Leadership built from expertise broadly exercised in service of consensual goals offers, at least in theory, a more promising chance for lasting innovation to take root in schools than does a "chain of command" approach to implementing change. Furthermore, such a perspective invites a view of expertise as more than subject-based, enabling individuals to exert expert-based leadership across, as well as within, the areas defined by subject matter boundaries.

Scholarly work on leadership distribution is not confined strictly to theory. Primary research evidence also is surfacing in support of the notion that, within successful school communities, the capacity to lead is not principal-centric by necessity, but rather it is embedded in various organizational contexts. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), for example, examined organizational context effects on teacher community, teaching, and teachers' careers and found no instances of administrative leaders who created extraordinary contexts for teaching by virtue of their own unique vision; nor did the study reveal any

common patterns in strong principals' personal characteristics. Successful principals were men and women with varied professional backgrounds who worked in collaboration with teacher-leaders and in respect of teaching culture. They found various ways to support teachers in getting the job done. The leadership of these principals was not superhuman; rather, it grew from a strong and simple commitment to making the school work for their students and to building teachers' commitment and capacity to pursue this collective goal. Perhaps most important, the responsibility for sustaining school improvement was shared among a much broader group of school community members, rather than owned primarily by formal leaders at the top of the organizational chart.

Armed with these ideas as a conceptual lens, any effort to understand leadership for transforming high schools or improve it must go well beyond a focus on traditional hierarchical roles of superintendent, principal, assistant principal, and others. Teacher-leaders, instructional coaches, and other resource personnel within schools are leaders in their own right, exercising decision making that potentially affects teaching and learning in fundamental ways. The questions for leadership practice and related scholarship concern ways to acknowledge and encourage the potential synergies among all these players—to enable their joint focus on teaching and learning improvement, while making sure that other aspects of the management of the school are taken care of. Doing so means various things, among them are the following:

- Developing a common focus on learning and learning improvement.

- Managing the distribution of leadership responsibilities and the intersection of multiple, individual roles.

- Finding a common language and evidence base for and where particular student needs are not being served as well as they should be and deciding what needs to be done.

- Lining up resources that enable a distributed set of leaders to act on behalf of a learning improvement agenda, while making it possible to share resources.

- Engaging community interests and resource organizations that are implicated by the school's attempts to transform itself.

Practices and Strategies Gaining Prominence in High School Leadership Practice

A number of high profile national efforts have convened around the issue of high schools in the past decade, each issuing a report (or series of reports), including the recent NGA report (2005) focused on improving American high schools. Looking at all these efforts to gain perspective on changing high schools, we find the key leadership issue revolves around how to improve instructional practice in the high school, leading to deeper, more rigorous learning for all students and preparing them for college and the workplace. Despite the relatively weak research base on small schools and personalization, efforts to build capacity for teaching within professional communities, efforts to continue to link personalization and teaching effectiveness, and explorations of models of leadership distribution are all vehicles currently in view.

High Profile Efforts to Transform the High School

Ideas about the transformation of leadership in high schools flood scholars' and practitioners' professional lives. For example, in the 2001 report *Transforming the American High School*, author Michael Cohen frames high schools' current inability to respond to the learning needs of all students and presents overall state and local policy strategies that would likely accelerate the improvement of secondary schools. Specifically, these strategies encourage policymakers to provide immediate and intensive help to the lowest-performing high schools; invest in capacity building for teachers, principals, and schools; provide incentives for creating small high schools and small learning communities; stimulate the creation of new models of schools and youth pathways; rethink high school graduation requirements; and plan and pilot more fundamental changes.

A national report titled *An Action Agenda for Improving America's High Schools*, sponsored by Achieve and NGA (2005), addresses the variable conditions that influence leadership and learning in high schools. The report highlights leadership pipeline issues that are necessary for schools to have the leaders they need. It focuses on structural redesign issues, offering

an expanded view of what high school redesign could look like, including but not limited to, schools-within-schools and small school start-ups.

This focus is consistent with efforts to promote more personalized learning experiences through various structural and cultural reforms. A prominent recent effort has focused on creating small high schools with significant monetary support from both the private and public sectors. U.S. Department of Education grants total $647 million over the past 5 years; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has invested $1.2 billion into supporting more than 2,000 rigorous, small high schools in 41 states (including many high school transformation projects).[1] Despite such large investments, small school research reports confirm that smallness is a necessary but insufficient condition for creating a personalized and rigorous learning community (Cotton, 2001; Wasley et al., 2000; Elmore et al., 1996). And despite millions of dollars poured into high school reform or "reinvention" efforts, research findings on the efficacy of such efforts remain largely agnostic.

Consistent with this focus on structural change, a series of reports from the National Association of Secondary School Principals titled *Breaking Ranks* (1996) highlights the importance of instructional reform through the development of learning communities for teachers and students, and it emphasizes the development of personalized strategies to ensure all students meet identified standards. The report underscores a need for leadership distribution and suggests that:

> in order for personalization strategies to survive and grow, school and district leaders must promote the adaptation of existing school policies and organizational structures. Principals in personalized high schools do not try to solve every school problem on their own. Rather, they empower staff and students to develop solutions and plans. They support the development of teacher-leaders, encourage students to take an active role in school governance, and allow for flexible scheduling to meet students' and teachers' needs.[2]

The issue of getting and sustaining the leaders needed to achieve high school change is highlighted by other national reports. *High Schools of the Millennium: Report of the Workgroup* focuses on leadership turnover and politics as obstacles to changing high schools. The report, published by the

American Youth Policy Forum (2000), a nonprofit professional development organization based in Washington, D.C., notes:

> The turnover and politicization of leadership, particularly at the district and school level, create major roadblocks to systemic and long-term change.[3]

Finally, among several high-profile efforts to improve the quality of educational leadership, The Wallace Foundation initiatives have placed some emphasis on high schools and on issues related to leadership for transforming high schools, though not as the primary focus of concern. A review of efforts funded through the Foundation's State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP) and district-level LEAD initiatives suggests that problems inherent to leading high schools have not been at the forefront to date, except as part of a broader effort to improve the quality of leadership across all levels of schooling. No SAELP sites or state department of education Web sites explicitly refer to Wallace-funded high school leadership transformation, although high school–related efforts are subsumed in the variety of K–12 SAELP initiatives broadly concerned with recruiting and developing a more diverse and prepared leadership force. Consistent with this focus is language from The Wallace Foundation regarding efforts in Texas to improve the leadership pipeline for high schools:

> Texas has obtained a commitment from the Commissioner of Education to create a new "master principal" certification for high school turnaround specialists. The Commissioner's Officers and the SAELP team will work together to set these new certification standards and the Commissioner's office will promulgate them to the universities. SAELP will provide design grants to five universities throughout the state, where highest needs schools are. Universities are very interested in developing these programs because the state will have sanctioned this type of position, and the school districts have been vocal in complaining to the universities that the universities are not adequately preparing high school leaders. SAELP will fund the pilot development of these programs and subsequently leaders from the demonstration districts will compete to be "fellows," who will be trained in these new programs, certified, and have a commitment to subsequently

work in the highest needs schools. In addition, Texas SAELP will receive matching funds from the State up to the $3.6 million of the combined Wallace/Gates grant, which will enable much of the work to go to scale in this large state.

While these notes make no explicit reference to high school leadership in Texas, the state is working to reshape high schools through different avenues. For instance, a $2.65 million Texas High School Redesign and Restructuring Grant funds nine low-performing high school campuses across the state for the purpose of revamping existing programs and structures to improve graduation and college attendance. The grant sits within a larger effort called the Texas High School Project, which distributes more than $120 million from public and private sources such as the governor's office, Texas Education Association (TEA), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and The Wallace Foundation.[4]

Assumptions and Implications Underlying Emerging High School Reform Strategies

The ideological terrain of high school reform efforts, such as those discussed previously, spans a number of theories about what is most effective for improving student learning outcomes in high school. As results suggest, however, most reforms have had little success in fundamentally changing the way schools operate (Cuban, 1988), and there is little evidence of substantial changes in approaches to teaching. Usually aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of schooling, conventional "first-order" reforms range from resource reallocation to textbook selection to teacher recruitment practices and are based on the assumption that the existing goals of schooling are "both adequate and desirable" (p. 342). In short, they adjust rules and make alterations within the existing structure, unlike a "second-order" change, which aims at transforming the purpose of schooling and reflects a major dissatisfaction with the existing authority, roles, and structures of the educational system. Some examples of second-order change include voucher programs and teacher-run schools, both of which challenge conventional notions of leadership and choice (p. 342). To a large extent, high school reforms are stuck at the first-order level and are likely to remain this way unless particular attention is paid to *how* and *why* teachers teach the way that they do (Cuban, 1988; Shannon & Bylsma, 2006).

Looking across the specific reform strategies and practices currently gaining prevalence, we recognize the value in illustrating the intellectual context in which the issue of leading high school change resides. In the discussion that follows, we present a synthesis of the issues signaled by these recent change efforts, and associated research, which illustrates some clear ideological divisions within the scholarly and reform communities that have focused on high school change. We have grouped these perspectives into what can be understood as three different theories of action aimed at improving high school teaching and student learning in response to accountability pressures; each is based on a distinct perspective on the ways that educational leaders, philanthropists, and community members conceptualize the transformation of high schools. In pursuing different leverage points toward the end of improving high schools, these system and "non-system" actors have built theories of action that focus on one of the following:

1. Altering structural design and coherence,

2. Changing instructional norms and practices, and

3. Creating more educational choices and opportunities.

Altering structural design and coherence. Driven by an assumption that structural innovations can bring about positive results in student outcomes, the first theory of action is both prevalent and hotly debated in high schools today. A large number of secondary school leaders are choosing (or considering) to implement block periods, schools-within-schools, ninth-grade academies, and advisories in the name of regrouping students and teachers into a more personalized, more academically rigorous, and less "factory-like" system (Newmann & Associates, 1996). Such actions are grounded in the belief that strong student-teacher relationships (Meier, 1995, 1998; Cotton, 1996, 2001) and the reorganization of instructional time (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Raywid, 1996) will produce better teaching and learning.

Some evidence in the literature on structural changes suggests that positive outcomes for students may result from such changes. A progression of studies beginning in the late 1980s and continuing to the present strongly suggests small schools are more productive and effective than large ones—although these studies are not typically limited to high schools, nor are they primarily concerned with small schools resulting from the conversion

of a larger comprehensive high school, but rather they display the results of small schools created from scratch. Literature reviews summarize the findings of such studies and cite advantages of these deliberately small schools, such as more personalized learning environments, more adult mentoring, and more academic rigor (Cotton, 1996; Gladden, 1998). Moreover, size exerts a "unique influence" on students' academic accomplishment, with a strong inverse relationship linking the two: the larger the school, the lower the students' average achievement levels (Howley, 1994). The research on various indicators of student achievement, involving large numbers of students, schools, and districts, implies that students learn more and better in schools that have started out purposefully small (Lee & Smith, 1995).

Other structural reforms are rooted in pragmatic theories of action but are less well supported by the research literature. For example, adjusting the schedule so that teachers spend more uninterrupted time with students is believed to provide more opportunities for in-depth thinking and discussion. A typical 40-minute period includes the noninstructional time students and teachers spend organizing themselves, their papers, and their notebooks at the beginning and end of class. By joining two periods, the instructional time can be maximized; by joining two different subjects, such as English and social studies, instruction takes on an interdisciplinary character that may be more relevant to the lives of students and teachers. However, the implementation of such "block schedules"—or schools-within-schools or new small "academy" structures, for that matter—does not guarantee better teaching. If teaching practice remains static, the addition of more time may have unintended results, like assigning more time in class to complete homework or using extra time left over at the end of class for noninstructional activities. Ultimately the success of block scheduling depends on "appropriate changes in instructional practices and the effective use of class time" (Queen, 2000).

Another strategy gaining attention is Comprehensive School Reform (CSR), also known as whole school reform. The theory behind CSR supports the alignment of all school activities toward cultural changes that are believed to produce better student learning outcomes. Unlike most within-school efforts at reform that are incremental and sporadic, CSR relies on various pre-existing models of change that are subsequently supported and maintained by external organizations. The sheer number of CSR models, however, makes it difficult to generalize the effects of this approach. Similarly, research

on CSR has typically been limited to implementation studies (Husbands & Beese, 2001).

At the core of these research findings lies the uneasy relation between structural change and instructional improvement. As various scholars have pointed out, the connection is loose at best (Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthy, 1996; Murphy, 1991). One study concluded: "[T]he relationship between changes in formal structure and changes in teaching practice is necessarily weak, problematic, and indirect; attention to structural change often distracts from the more fundamental problem of changing teaching practice" (Elmore et al., 1996, p. 237). While these findings derive from research on restructuring elementary schools, they are applicable to high school transformation efforts. In short, changing the larger structure of the school and its program attends to the more visible "shell" in which teaching and learning takes place, but, by itself, it does not address the often less visible issues that arise in the relationship between teachers, learners, and content.

The limitations of structural change within the high school parallel issues arising from attempts to achieve structural coherence across levels of schooling. While high schools are the last link in mandatory K–12 schooling, they are considered by college-bound students to be only part of their education. Reports about high school–college transitions, however, reveal a long-neglected and problematic educational system that hinders college readiness by segmenting responsibilities by primary, secondary, and postsecondary levels (Hodgkinson, 1999, 1985; Timpane, 1999; Resnick & Glennan, 2002). The lack of communication and connection between the educational levels has led to remediation and other problems with high school and postsecondary completion (Kirst & Venezia, 2002).

Structural attempts at cross-level coherence also are part of the landscape of high school structural reform. Recently, the work of initiating and sustaining K–16 reforms has been tagged as a state-level responsibility. Over half of the states have undertaken focused efforts to systematically strengthen student achievement from preschool through the completion of a college degree. The State Higher Education Executive Officers, for instance, recently emphasized the improvement of high schools as a crucial step in bolstering the K–16 or P–16 system through its collaboration with key leaders in higher education and the U.S. Department of Education. Projects such as *Meeting Postsecondary Responsibilities for Improved High Schools and Building*

Statewide K–16 Systems for Student Success are aimed at getting all high school students "college ready."[5]

Most suggestions for strengthening the high school to college transition call for a multifaceted structural approach that aligns coursework and assessments, school finance, and data and accountability systems (Haycock, 2002; Kirst & Venezia, 2002; Callan et al., 2006). The involvement of high school students in "early college" classes at nearby postsecondary institutions is one way that educators are attempting to improve college readiness and, at the same time, freeing up teachers to build the core skills of underachieving high school students (Haycock, 2002). While these early college programs benefit some students, they may not be an adequate long-term solution because they do not engage important policy levers such as school finance, data, and accountability at the state level (Callan et al., 2002). Still others advocate a restructured curriculum that features advanced placement courses, or international baccalaureate programs, as a means for leveling the playing field between poor students and their wealthier counterparts, enabling more students to graduate ready for college (see for example, Matthews & Hill, 2005).

Overall, despite the reputed benefits of many efforts at structural change within high schools and across levels of schooling, very little is known about how teaching and learning is affected under such strategies. As the previous argument implies, it is entirely possible that a high school could undergo massive restructuring while the fundamental processes of teaching and learning remain relatively unchanged. The process of restructuring schools surfaces difficult questions concerning school organization, educational change, and the purposes of schooling (Elmore et al., 1996; Fullan, 1993; Murphy, 1991; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1993). Acknowledging the possibility that structures influence actions and outcomes, Murphy emphasizes, "Efforts at reorganization—despite the prevailing rhetoric—often have more to do with politics than with greater efficiency and enhanced quality … . Structural changes in and of themselves never have and never will predict organizational success, i.e., student learning in this case" (1991, p. 76).

Perhaps most important, research indicates that the hard work of structural redesign is necessarily shouldered by teachers (Lieberman, 1995). In addition to their regular responsibilities of preparing lessons, grading, and taking part in school meetings and decisions, teachers are encouraged (and often required) to put more time into collaborating with their colleagues on teaching

units and evaluating student work. For leaders, this recognition must factor into considerations of how to improve schools without taxing—with additional and often ancillary responsibilities—those whose work matters most.

Changing instructional norms. For decades, the overall quality of instruction in public high schools has been characterized as inadequate by a variety of sources. Particularly influential was the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*, a federal response to the perceived mediocrity of American public schooling in the face of stiff international competition. The public perception of high school graduates as academically inferior to those in competing nations raised the consciousness of many educators and scholars to look critically at the business of teaching. Instructional reform is—and still continues to be—a central goal for school leaders seeking to improve student learning, and so it is no surprise that some high school leaders today have shifted their focus away from the structure of the school and, instead, have attempted to address teaching quality more directly. Some research suggests that this target is a sensible one: By one estimate, variations in teacher quality account for 8.5 percent of the total variation in student achievement—a much larger percentage than any other school characteristic (Goldhaber, 2002).

Unlike theories of action emphasizing structural changes, this theory of action assumes that enhancing student learning requires intentional, explicit *instructional leadership* that focuses on the improvement of teaching throughout the school. Shifting the focal point to instructional quality might cause instructional leaders in the high school to consider content-driven professional development, since teacher preparation programs rarely educate future teachers sufficiently in the needed content knowledge and pedagogical strategies unique to their content areas (McDiarmid, 1994). These leaders recognize that powerful instruction is fueled by teachers' deep understanding of subject matter and the ability to anticipate and respond to students' struggles with the content (for more detail, see Newmann & Associates, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1997). Emergent principles of learning from cognitive science can potentially inform how leaders reform high school instruction. In *How People Learn* (1999), the authors provide four lenses for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning environments (p. 12):

- The *learner-centered lens* encourages attention to preconceptions, and it begins instruction with what students think and know.

- The *knowledge-centered lens* focuses on what is to be taught, why it is taught, and what mastery looks like.

- The *assessment-centered lens* emphasizes the need to provide frequent opportunities to make students' thinking and learning visible as a guide for both the teacher and the student in learning and instruction.

- The *community-centered lens* encourages a culture of questioning, respect, and risk taking.

Although high school leaders can certainly benefit from adopting these lenses, they have little research to guide them on how *high school* students learn. Confounding this picture, literature suggests that effective high school teaching looks different depending on the content area. History teachers, for example, can "work to build a history-specific culture that, through its patterns of interactions, instructional tasks, and artifacts, assists students in thinking historically" (National Research Council, 2005, p. 206). Teachers "make the key features of expert historical thought accessible for students when they need them." High school science teachers can develop scientific understanding by tending to "a set of complex and interrelated components, including the nature of practice in particular scientific disciplines, students' prior knowledge, and the establishment of a collaborative environment that engages students in reflective scientific practice. These design components allow educators to create curricula and instructional materials that help students learn about science both *as* and *by* inquiry" (p. 561).

Efforts to change instructional norms in the high school have primarily taken place within subject-matter communities, as supported by scholarship on the issues of curriculum and instruction (e.g., Grossman, 2001; Wilson, 2001; Seixas, 2001). This work has not tended to view or treat the problem as one of *instructional leadership* and not one of schoolwide concern. However, concern for the problem of professional development and the growing attention to the role played by professional communities in the high school signals an entry point for leadership—especially leadership that is effectively distributed—to encourage new ideas about teaching to take root, as the following review of scholarship on the teaching of literature notes: "How teachers teach literature is likely to be framed not only by their individual orientations to literature but also by the departments, schools, teams, and districts in which they work" (Grossman, 2001, p. 429). Disparate research on leadership for

high school reform offers an incomplete picture of how leaders might improve high school education across content areas (Siskin, 1994).

To sustain a culture of growth and professional learning, high school instructional leaders may also seek to strengthen the professional communities of practice that arise among teachers who share a content focus or particular group of students. Teachers already seek each other out more frequently than their administrators for instructional and emotional support. By tapping into this communication structure, school leaders may build community norms that encourage the "opening up" of practice to professional scrutiny—ultimately encouraging teachers to consider themselves learners (Resnick & Glennan, 2002; Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). However, the culture of high schools can prevent teachers from undertaking critical assessments of their own teaching, as well as from forming collegial bonds outside of their content areas.

Systematic instructional reform relies heavily on equipping teachers with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that are thought to improve student outcomes. Instructional improvement efforts that address these matters are likely to require a great deal of time and patience on the part of both teachers and administrators, and to that end, various forms of instructional support may be helpful. A new strand of thinking, for example, recognizes that on-the-ground instructional coaching is a powerful way to improve teaching and learning (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Leaders who communicate urgency for improving student academic outcomes may consider contracting instructional coaching services from external organizations, such as the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh (e.g., Resnick & Glennan, 2002) and the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington (e.g., Marzolf, 2005, 2006). Such investments in classroom-level coaching presume that the contexts closest to the actual teaching duties of teachers have the greatest influence over teachers' work (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

Instructional leadership in the high school also embodies theories of distributed leadership consistent with those articulated earlier. School leaders rely on multiple layers of leadership in the high schoolbecause all faculty and staff members are relevant to the improvement of instruction, regardless of official title. Furthermore, individual leaders' expertise can only go so far: A language arts teacher's knowledge of literacy coupled with a principal's

understanding of district accountability measures will likely enhance the sustainability of an instructional improvement policy about reading (Spillane et al., 2001).

Creating more educational choices and opportunities. The third theory of action seeks to address the bureaucratic rigidity and unresponsiveness of the educational system as presently organized by proposing a radical shift in the extent to which students and their parents, as educational consumers, can choose among competing high schools. Here, we are referring to charter schools and voucher systems, both of which suggest that focusing on structural change or instructional reform within a given school will not be enough to address the inadequate teaching and leadership within the public school system (Hill, Campbell, & Harvey, 2000). In effect, this theory of action relocates attention to the school system—that is, toward the array of schooling options that a school system offers as a whole. At the same time, the theory of action posits that improvement in individual high schools and high school classrooms depends ultimately on the incentives for educators within the school (and all schools) to create attractive and effective options for consumers served by the school system. In theory, the schools that fail to do so will cease to attract customers and will ultimately close.

Arguments for introducing more choice into the public school system hinge on various economic concepts that have generally been applied to the K–12 system writ large, rather than to high schools in particular. Classic economic debates about choice and open market theories emerge when schools have to compete for clientele to stay in business (Tiebout, 1956; Friedman & Friedman, 1982; Hoxby, 1996, 2000). These theories hold that, eventually, the presence of instructionally effective schools will weed out ineffective ones much faster than system-level efforts to change the quality of public education (Hill et al., 2000; Hill, 2005). The resulting competition between schools and districts makes them more productive over time (Hoxby, 2000).

The fundamental components of the theory of charter school reform are autonomy, competition, and accountability (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). In granting local schools autonomy over their operations and parents the freedom to choose where to send their children, chartering systems motivate educators to be more responsive to—and ultimately accountable to—the people they serve. Yet charter school critics question how such decentralized control will affect these schools' accountability to accepted learning standards and

the equitable distribution of resources to traditionally underserved populations. Because systems of school finance rely on local capacity for funds and decision making, some districts are more economically impoverished than others and cannot generate the same wealth from property values as other districts. Consequently, leaders of charter high schools will likely spend considerable time organizing community involvement and upholding contracts to the public that promise academic results within a certain time frame. Over the past 14 years, however, some charter schools appear to be failing because of their inability to provide high-quality education to underserved populations and maintain organizational efficiency (Bulkley, 2001).

The implications of this theory of action for the quality of instruction remain to be established. As in structural models of high school reform, choice theories assume that changes in instructional improvement are more likely in certain organizational and political contexts—although the contexts alone are insufficient levers of change. In effect, if the consumers like the product and seek to enroll in the school, then the quality of teaching must be good—at least, by the standards held by the consumer. Whether that is so by other standards of instructional quality has yet to be documented fully and may have to wait until there are more high schools of choice in a number of different school districts. Until such evidence is available, the matter is more likely to be addressed on ideological grounds—with some holding that the consumers' interests and preferences should ultimately hold sway, while others argue that systemwide learning standards (e.g., state student learning standards or their district equivalents) are a better reference point for instructional quality.

But it is not clear if and when there will be a large number of high schools of choice across many school district jurisdictions. The educational choices available to families ultimately depend on district willingness to support a diversity of public schools, as well as its capacity to do so. The politics within a district, for one thing, may have a great deal of influence on high school leaders' ability to develop and institutionalize learning opportunities that are different from those in a typically large, comprehensive school. Community expectations of the high school may also limit school leaders' flexibility to stray from the norm.

Herein lies an often hidden assumption in the application of choice theories to high school transformation. Most districts across the United States have relatively few or only one high school, generally some version of

the comprehensive high school; only in the largest districts are there many schools serving the upper grade levels. Accordingly, to introduce choice into the high school transformation equation often implies creating more, necessarily smaller schools within a district's boundaries (or permitting students to choose schools across district boundaries, as in some voucher proposals or models of the "virtual high school"). In many districts, especially in smaller or more remote jurisdictions, it is simply unrealistic that many such alternatives will be created.

Non-school institutions that provide opportunities for youth development—for example, community-based youth organizations—are not new, though they are beginning to emerge as partners with high schools in building the assets and competencies of students (Husbands & Beese, 2001). Aligning the various sectors that support teenagers is believed to strengthen self-esteem and school participation, although little research to date offers substantive proof.

Unanswered Questions and Research Possibilities

Given the complexity of leading high school transformation, several questions emerge for high school leaders now and in the future, linked to the three theories of action at work in high school change discussed in the previous sections and informed by the conceptual framework introduced earlier in the paper. These questions are preliminary in nature and are designed to spark conversation that will undoubtedly result in their refinement.

Questions about Changing High School Structures

These questions concern the interface of structural change and instructional leadership. Given the natural tendencies of restructuring to avoid confronting change in teaching practice deeply or effectively, there are nonetheless many opportunities in the process of structural change for issues of instructional change to arise. The leadership issues concern how systems engaged in structural reform either do or can seize these opportunities.

1. What changes in leadership approach are necessitated by the restructuring of school size, mission, time, staffing, student assignment, departmental arrangements, or other targets of high school structural reform? In what ways do or can these pressures on high school leadership bring the exercise of *instructional* leadership to the fore?

2. To what extent, if any, can efforts to restructure large, comprehensive high schools imply or provoke changes in instructional practices? More specifically, what happens to instructional practice—and to questions about it and the motivation to change it—as large schools attempt to break down into smaller schools, and in what ways can the restructuring process prompt or enable teachers to approach their work in the classroom differently?

3. How (if at all) do high school restructuring efforts deal with long-standing divisions between subject areas? In what ways do or can structural changes focus on redefining traditional high school

leadership roles, such as the department chair, as well as creating openings for others (e.g., instructional coaches) to exercise effective forms of instructional leadership within and across subject matter domains? What might this imply for how teachers collaborate across disciplines?

4. How do districts with multiple high schools mount structural change initiatives that take account of the differences among the schools in staffing, leadership capacity, instructional capacity, openness to change, and student population served? How are school leaders helped to avoid or address the issues of equity that may arise?

Research focused on leadership in the context of structural change could take advantage of a veritable hot bed of opportunities across the country at present. In particular, those efforts to transform large high schools into smaller learning communities comprise a multitude of school-specific projects that could be the subject of research. The study of one or more districts' efforts to transform high schools using a combination of structural and instructional interventions could prove a promising avenue.

Questions about Changing Instruction through Leadership Practices

A second set of questions zeroes in more specifically on the meaning and nature of instructional leadership within high schools, regardless of the school's participation in attempts at structural transformation.

5. As high schools retool instructional practices to more effectively serve the academic needs of all students, what conditions and leadership supports facilitate this retooling? How do leaders help the school keep the diverse interests and needs of the full student population as a central consideration in the retooling of instructional practices?

6. What balance can leaders in the transformed high school strike between a rigorous core content focus and student opportunities to explore varied academic interests in a high school curriculum, while not sacrificing the students' opportunities for personalized attention from the school's teachers?

7. How (if at all) might teachers or others take on new leadership roles in service of improving high school instruction, and how do administrative leaders support these roles? How do participants in distributed instructional leadership jointly manage their collective responsibility for the quality of high school instruction?

8. How can principals assume an instructional leadership role in the high school and at the same time distribute their leadership and/or responsibilities for improving instructional practice?

9. How do school and district leaders promote and realize changes in the norms and culture of instructional practice, given the primacy of subject-defined departments in establishing such norms and culture? How do school leaders work productively with and across subject-matter departments to address these matters?

Research efforts into these questions might involve capturing instructional leadership from the perspective of multiple players (principal, teacher leaders, department chairs, coaches, etc.), at multiple high schools, and in different stages of transformation, thereby providing snapshots of the change process. Answering questions regarding change in instructional practice would likely call for research designs that placed researchers in high school classrooms over an extended period of time, suggesting a fairly expensive and time-intensive effort in very few locations.

Questions about Changing System Expectations Regarding the Nature of High Schools

A final set of questions steps back from the individual high school and considers the way that system-level considerations and actions play into the high school transformation equation.

10. How do district and state leadership strategies or theories of action shape the structure, leadership, and politics of high school change? To what extent and in what ways are these strategies concerned with teaching and learning?

11. How do district and state actions address the array of options available to high school students and their parents—either within the ex-

isting schools or across the emergent array of high school programs to which students have access? How do or can efforts to enrich the array of options keep questions of instructional quality central?

12. How do district and building leaders communicate efforts to change high schools—and within that change process, efforts to improve teaching and learning—to families and students? To teachers?

District and system questions such as these could be examined by studying the work of multiple districts—possibly in a SAELP state such as Texas—that was intentionally focused on promising high school transformation efforts. Naturally the districts' theories of actions would differ, but they would all operate in the same political and accountability context of the state. Research designs for such a study could focus primarily on a survey strategy, repeated across sites, with some limited opportunity for deeper qualitative work that would follow based on what was learned from the survey components.

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Endnotes

1. See the following Web sites for reference: www.ed.gov/programs/slcp/funding.html; gatesfoundation.org/Education/RelatedInfo/EducationFactSheet-021201.htm.
2. See knowledgeloom.org/practice_basedoc.jsp?t=1&bpid=1354&aspect=1&location=2& parentid=1095&bpinterid=1095&spotlightid=1095&testflag=yes.
3. Report text available at www.aypf.org/publicatons/HSchools_round_3.pdf, found on page 8.
4. For more information, visit www.tea.state.tx.us/press/redesign.html.
5. More information on K–16 issues can be found at www.sheeo.org/k16/k16-home.htm.

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