GROWING SMALLER
Three Tasks in Restructuring Urban High Schools

JOLLEY CHRISTMAN
JODY COHEN
PAT MACPHERSON
Research for Action

Demoralized by high failure rates, unwieldy bureaucracies, and entrenched adversarial relationships, urban school populations struggle in harsh conditions. In this article, the authors offer a framework, derived from 5 years of ethnographic research in Philadelphia high schools, to illuminate the vision and labor necessary to make urban school reform both systemic and doable. They identify and describe three tasks—building community; generating knowledge about change, and reinventing curriculum—as essential for engaging participants with the substance of education. These tasks encompass the work of changing the culture of teaching and learning.

Urban schools sit at a perilous juncture. Cities have lost jobs, tax base, and federal and state funding. Neighborhoods deteriorate from the increase in violent crime. Demoralized by high failure rates, unwieldy bureaucracies, and entrenched adversarial relationships, urban school populations struggle in harsh conditions. Typically, half of high school students\never graduate. A politically entrenched top-heavy district battles the teachers' union for authority

over how schools run. A teaching force, in which White and African American teachers predominate, faces an ethnically and racially diverse population of students. The term *school community* belies disengaged and sometimes hostile relationships between schools and their neighborhoods. In these urban settings where need is greatest, school restructuring seems least in evidence (Kozol, 1991). Here we offer a framework, derived from 5 years of ethnographic research in Philadelphia high schools, to illuminate the vision and labor necessary to make urban school reform both systemic and doable.

Philadelphia presents a classic urban case. The student population is predominantly African American and includes a significant number of Latino and some Asian and White students. At the time high school restructuring began, most teachers had averaged 20 years in the system. While magnet high schools skim off many of the highest-achieving students, 22 comprehensive high schools serve neighborhood adolescents. These hundred-year-old fortresses—seen by many as "high schools of last resort"—provide premature exit to more students than they graduate.

In 1988, the Pew Charitable Trusts funded the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative to catalyze the restructuring of comprehensive high schools. This reform was intended not as an alternative for the still-invested teachers who perennially step forward to rethink their practice or for the relatively few urban students with the social resources to "shop" alternative educational programs. Instead, it was designed as a systemic effort for the many. A first priority was to re-engage those students most likely to fail ninth grade and eventually drop out and those teachers most discouraged by the system.

The Collaborative developed its vision of restructuring from successful efforts across the country. In partnership with district educators and some parents, the Collaborative designed small learning communities (SLCs) as the central strategy for reforming comprehensive high schools. Research has shown that size of school matters (Smith & Lee, 1994) and that small schools are more successful at improving student outcomes (Newmann & Wehlage, 1994). Philadelphia SLCs were designed to cohere around a "home-grown" theme or focus, with 12 to 18 teachers working with 200 to 400 heterogeneously grouped students over the 4 years of high school. Teachers and students would select these schools-within-schools. Decentralized resource allocation and decision making would put SLCs in charge of planning professional development for teachers and curriculum and instruction for students.

We entered new SLCs in four high schools as ethnographers to document their emergence, and as consultants to help with organizational development, curriculum, and pedagogy. For more than 5 years, we conducted participant observation and interviews with principals and teachers, parents, and students working inside these restructuring schools.

These four high schools represent a range in terms of size and population. Two are large, housing several thousand students; one is racially isolated, the other a mix of students speaking more than 30 languages. Set in White working class and poor neighborhoods, the other two schools house less than a thousand students apiece, many of whom come from across the city from diverse back-grounds. All four schools entered restructuring with a significant number of students at serious risk of failure, high incidences of conflict within and beyond school walls, and visible staff, student, and community frustration with the conditions and outcomes of schooling.

In the following sections, we identify three tasks—building community, generating knowledge about change, and reinventing curriculum—as essential for engaging participants with the sub-stance of education. These tasks encompass the work of changing the culture of teaching and learning. They are, we discovered,

doable, interdependent, and effective in making change. They are interactive, simultaneous, and ongoing processes. They show how professional development, decentralization, and shared decision making must consistently move into relationship with one another to support the on-the-ground reform work of teachers, parents, administrators, and students.

We elaborate each of the tasks by telling early stories of reform from within SLCs. Although we divide this article into three sections and stories highlight a particular task, in fact, all tasks are visible in each story. The stories also contextualize the tasks, revealing the harsh realities of a systemic reform effort trying to take root and grow inside old school structures and cultures. Some stories literally capture *moments* of possibility, showing the fragil-ity of new efforts and relationships. Others offer moving pictures of small changes building upon one another to create new culture.

In the discussion of each task, we highlight particular constitu-encies and perspectives. In *building community*, we focus on teach-ers forging collegial relationships that emphasize democratic par-ticipation across differences *and* responsibility for shared students. How are teachers building collegial community strong enough to risk accountability questions? What are the obstacles and supports? *Generating knowledge about change* brings all stakeholders—students, staff, parents, friendly outsiders—into focus as they seek to make sense of what is happening and to purposefully, democrati-cally chart their futures. Without reflection and revision, success remains invisible, mistakes are reified, and ultimately, the current reform era is dismissed as inconsequential. Building community and generating knowledge about change are essential to the central work of reform: *reinventing curricular instruction and assessment*. In our discussion of this third task, we foreground students as we illustrate how deep curricular reform emerges from and builds community and how student reflection is critical to their learning. Positioning students' knowledge and experience at the center of classroom teaching and learning is essential to their investment in school.

TASK NO. 1: BUILDING COMMUNITY

There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication (Dewey, 1916)

Is this the part when we get to take the [room-divider] curtains down? (Philadelphia teacher)

Urban high school culture has been built upon both a separation and hierarchy of teachers, students, and knowledge. It enacts both the bureaucracy in which it is nested and the Western male notion that separation and distinction are critical to formulating identity. Fragmented time, space, and disciplinary knowledge ignore the potential of collectivity for bolstering student learning and teacher professional development.

When restructuring architects laid out a vision of communities where teachers would work closely with colleagues to reinvent schooling, one teacher's cynicism spoke for many: "Have you seen my colleagues?" But collegial community posed an early incentive for those looking for help in "caring about kids," as one teacher describes her SLC's beginnings: "I started talking it up to other teachers who I got along with and who I knew really cared about kids to try to get them to come on board." Other SLCs grew from collegial bonds already formed in long-standing funded programs like English as a Second Language (ESL), Chapter 1, and within-school magnet programs. While offering resources, these programs often perpetuated tracking of students and teachers.

Building community requires an SLC to construct identity—what it is, does, and stands for. Collective identity is both what teachers "choose" initially and a negotiated work-in-progress. Exploring curricular connections was a tremendous first step for most teachers unaccustomed to articulating and discussing—much less negotiating—their academic assumptions. What happened illustrates where the work of nurturing collectivity inside an entrenched bureaucracy begins.

Community SLC: In September, the SLC Curriculum Committee requested time on the agenda. Interrupting a meeting protocol focused on administrative paperwork, teachers pulled into a circle to talk about what they were doing in their classrooms. The tone was quiet, almost hushed. The math teacher asked an English teacher

what her students wrote about in journals. Then he proposed cross-disciplinary work on "numerical language," "Special" and "regular" teachers worked together with their last period classes on time lines and "tools of being a historian." A math teacher could connect negative and positive numbers with time lines. Teachers brainstormed ways to stay abreast of what colleagues were doing and to coordinate across classes. "It's a start, I haven't done it in 28 years in the system," said one teacher.

In a few instances, teachers came together around a shared philosophy of teaching. Supported by teacher networks like the Philadelphia Writing Project or the Coalition of Essential Schools, such beginnings posed their own set of challenges.

Inquiry SLC: Three teachers who shared a Writing Project background and involvement with active, student-centered, inquiry-based education formed the nucleus of the Inquiry SLC. While exploring affiliation with the Coalition of Essential Schools, they recruited other teachers less familiar with this vision.

The first year they block-rostered students and experimented with 90-minute periods. Their cross-disciplinary, "essential question" was: How does learning connect you with your world? This question drove classes where students investigated language in their communities, wrote "relationship journals" while reading *Othello*, and conducted town meetings on pollution. In other Inquiry classrooms, the question was posted visibly amid more traditionally constructed lessons. How could teachers, differently invested in the original vision and brought on board at different points in time, help to shape SLC identity?

Building common teaching and learning goals is new work for most teachers. Diversity of race, gender, class, and position among teachers has not been addressed. Working side by side for years, SLC teachers—and, ideally, students and parents—now must make decisions about daily and long-term issues. Long-standing differences must be acknowledged in order to negotiate common interests. Power differentials get challenged—between students and teachers, staff and parents, different racial groups, and males and females. As one teacher described this step, "We got past 'Hi, how's the family?' and started hitting on some of the hard stuff."

Tourism SLC: Teachers talked about how to prepare students for the workplace. When African American teachers suggested that the SLC had "an obligation to get kids ready for the racism out there,"

they're going to get hit in the head with it," two Caucasian males with graduating sons talked about the deteriorating economy as an equalizer. They suggested that racism was no longer the barrier it once was, and minority status might be an asset. Both sets of teachers grew uneasy; the conversation turned to other subjects.

Negotiating differences within the SLC is risky work, with high payoff: ever deepening shared identity and investment. But risk requires dense and stable networks of communication, founda-tional elements of trust (Schneider & Bryk, 1995a, 1995b), SLCs need teachers and students rostered together throughout the day and over the course of 4 high school years; SLC classes housed to-gether; common planning time for teachers; and SLC authority to make decisions about all resources. Only within such tightly bounded systems (Alderfer, 1980) can teachers and students begin to create sufficiently safe, long-term, and mutually knowledgeable relationships to consider issues of reciprocity and accountability. But even as teachers and students work to create a climate of mutual knowledge and trust that might address and resolve conflict in the interests of collective identity, school roster offices have continued to spit out schedules that fracture and impede community.

Community SLC: An African American math teacher and a Caucasian social studies teacher struggled through painful negotiations over what and how "their" students of color should learn about slavery, only to return in September to classes composed of students across five small learning communities.

Although it is foundational, building community has been frus-tratingly unstable and disrupted, due both to rostering difficulties and to systemic interruptions. Both can make this work a perpetual starting over. What we know about SLC development suggests the uneven, fragile process evident in a teacher's metaphor—one step forward, two steps back. Structures for community need consistent and strategically thoughtful support from district policies, admin-istration, and key outsiders.

Only in smaller, stabler communities can students' academic progress and difficulties become more visible. This then presses teachers to account for student failure and generate collective strategies to promote student success.

Tourism SLC: Later, in a discussion about "bonding the kids," a teacher pointed out that the spillover of students' sense of connec-tion to the SLC into a sense of connection to academic subject matter and intellectual work is not automatic. He ventured: "I'm working with 10th graders who were in the SLC last year and whose skills at focusing, thinking, drawing inferences, are no better than before we had SLCs." Another teacher replied, "These particular 10th graders started with very low skills last year and have made pro-gress, especially in the area of life skills." He reminded everyone of a student who had spoken with poise to a large group of adults, including the superintendent, about his experience in the SLC. The SLC coordinator emphasized, "Our goal last year was to get the kids to attend and to give them a reason to stay in school. Some students passed subjects on the basis of the alternative assessment. We need to think about and talk about conflicts and pressures we feel about failing kids and keeping them in school."

Such conversations start from teachers' different values and expectations and head toward joint decision making about stan-dards. In the mandate and compliance model of bureaucracy, ac-countability for standards is narrowly measured. By contrast, SLCs challenge teachers to negotiate face to face their own mandates and responsibility for follow-through with students.

Languages SLC: The student trips program began with one language teacher's trip with 10 students to Europe to practice language in a host family. Another language teacher took five students to Asia the second year. Now other language teachers are exploring trips, and a faculty committee has been formed to set trips policy and teacher accountability for student learning outcomes on trips—another SLC "first": teachers explicating accountability standards for each other on SLC projects. After this group stepped forward, individuals stepped back—and tripped into conflicts over frustrations of col-laboration among teachers who do not, cannot, or will not share tasks and responsibilities. The issue of teachers' accountability to each other remains the central work of their group.

Building administrators can help create safety and respect among SLCs. This entails negotiations and mediation among SLCs vying for scarce resources. Administrators must also cohere a "campus of small learning communities" around a school's shared educational vision. A principal, pondering the relationships among SLCs "under a single roof," asked, "What does taking care of the

roof entail and what ought my role to be?" But principals were also subject to changes in leadership at the district and the collaborative, and to the teacher union's primary concern for protecting building seniority. These "outside conflicts" seriously undermined administrative will to enact SLCs. As one principal put it, "You had the Collaborative saying 'Do it!', the district saying 'What're you doing?', and the union highly skeptical about reform."

Building partnerships with key outsiders has proved crucial for SLC development. Supports included: funding, friendly and informed critique, and professional expertise. SLC staff had to learn how to link with these outsiders. When outside resources enter an SLC, insiders and outsiders together must negotiate what kinds of support will develop SLC vision and program and hold each other responsible for follow-through.

Community SLC: In December, a second set of social work interns, frustrated with an unwieldy system, left the SLC and school. Ninth graders who had connected with these interns assumed the interns had left because of them—a stolen pen in one group came to symbolize students' response to the loss. At an SLC meeting, social work administrators and SLC teachers shared frustration about their unshared project. The social workers and SLC coordinators redesigned the program using another organizational change model. Subgroups of invested teachers and students would work on service projects. A special education class planned and implemented an action to support a local homeless shelter, and a university professor taught a weekly class on community service.

The next year again saw a roster that made it difficult for outsiders such as interns to know, much less connect with their students. Several weeks into the year, one of the social work interns, a tall, heavy-set, African American male, scheduled a day to shadow several ninth graders in "his" advisory to become familiar with their school experiences. He settled in the back of a classroom taught by a non-SLC teacher. She glanced up from paperwork: "You new?" He smiled, approached her, began to explain. "You'll have to leave." She returned to her work. He tried again, now with students eyeing them. "Hey what's up man?" from his students. "Leave the room," she repeated. "Leave. I don't want you watching me." He knew he shouldn't say it, but did as he left. "Why—you have something to hide?"

These stories illustrate the necessary connections between administrative and outside supports. In *Community*, the lack of administrative supports undermined the partnership with outsiders. Interns could provide important supports for students but also needed support themselves from the SLC and the school.

District ambivalence about SLC authority and contractual requirements in the context of a shrinking urban budget have created a high-stress mixture of choice and coercion. Teacher planning has been subverted by top-down decisions from both the district and the union that overrode promises of SLC rostered stability. As SLCs expanded, teachers were transferred and reassigned. New communities were only half-built on choice—which is essential for trust, investment, and accountability. Each year, the SLCs invested in new teachers, welcoming their questions and perspectives. Then these teachers might transfer out the next year. All teachers shared responsibility for a subculture with no assurance of longevity, leading one teacher to ask central office administrators, "When things settle down next year, will the power players send consistent signals through words and actions to either support or oppose small learning communities and reform, so that teachers and schools don't disproportionately carry the risks inherent in change?"

TASK NO. 2: GENERATING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHANGE

We were having a discussion at the [SLC] meeting about teachers correcting grammar. [A teacher] ([A teacher]) finally said, "Well, there are standards," and we said, "Whose standards are they?" and she said, "I guess they're mine." She still wasn't willing to concede that because they're hers, they weren't necessarily better. It was really a fascinating discussion. It wasn't what we were supposed to be doing at all; we were supposed to be writing up our action plan. (Teacher, Inquiry SLC)

The second task for SLCs is generating knowledge about the change process. Continual reflection is essential to an SLC's invention of itself. To generate knowledge, teachers ask questions, seeking a variety of perspectives on what is and ought to be happening,

then reflect on what they learn. Some teachers have asked students how they experience SLC life and what they want to learn; they have solicited parents' perspectives on schooling. Our work argues that an SLC's ability to reflect collectively, critically, and over time determines the effectiveness of its change efforts.

While generating knowledge about change depends on the task of building community, it also functions as a catalyst—challenging and deepening community as teacher relations shift from congeniality to collegiality (Hargreaves, 1992). The task of generating knowledge aims to expand community, as well, when the perspectives of students, parents, and outsiders contribute to a rich, layered picture of SLC life and possibility. Generating knowledge about change is also critical to reinventing curriculum. Teachers need to make visible their practices so they can monitor and assess them. Such teacher talk provides a "collective organizational history" and knowledge base to inform change. Such learning through systematic inquiry into teaching experiences is the kind of authentic, contextualized investigation that defines "reformed" classrooms. Thus, when SLCs generate knowledge about change, they model and support instruction that emphasizes inquiry and critical thinking (Erickson & Christman, 1992).

> People don't talk about [the issue] too much. They're afraid they'll say the wrong thing. They might mislead someone, might offend. Then there'd be a fight—and a report to the principal. (Teacher, Languages SLC)

Whatever the issue, we recognize this entrenched avoidance—the opposite of reflection. School bureaucracies have long discouraged risk and change. Barricaded behind closed doors in a losing battle with youngsters who, ironically, oppose their own learning (Haberman, 1990), urban teachers have been discouraged from looking reflectively at their own practice, much less exposing it to colleagues' eyes. Teachers and students often resist new ways of learning as they become newly accountable for outcomes. Furthermore, when assessing teaching and learning becomes SLC business, teachers and students must have faith in both structural supports and their SLC's evolving standards. How do we move from holding others—whether "other" teachers, parents, students,

or the system—accountable for disappointing student outcomes, to holding a collective "we" reflecting together as the accountable body?

> Inquiry SLC: In June, teachers sat in a circle debating their essential question for next year. They'd learned techniques to ensure equitable air time. Speakers observed a time limit, while others held responses. They considered a question about the past and future. One mused, "Looking at our past and future would be helpful for the program and interesting for our kids. I also wanted to remind us that we don't have to know it all before we teach it—teachers and students can figure this out together." Another added, "The kids who were polled like the idea of working on the future." A new teacher hesitated: "Can I ask a question? I don't know, what about, How does our past affect our future? I mean, is that the kind of question we're going for?"

This scene highlights a moment of change effected by the new teacher synthesizing student interests with old and new teacher investments in the SLC. It shows the formative influence of different constituencies in the SLC. This has been a hard question: Whose voices count in the process of generating knowledge about change, or who is in this community, really? Despite the rhetoric of parent and student involvement in reform, few SLCs have found effective means for inviting parents in to look closely and question what is going on in school. An ethnographer working with parents wrote,

> In some instances, parents are active in schools that have enabled them to participate in developing the educational plan and making other school decisions. In other instances, parents feel that although they are included, they are not given adequate time or information to make informed decisions. In still other instances, parents have never seen an educational plan and feel that they need training that will enable them to play a productive role in this process. (Okongwu, 1991)

While parents call important questions about school reform—such as whether and how reforms are improving their children's schooling—educators may not know how to tap into their knowledge, resisting or devaluing parental participation, and parents may feel unequipped or uninvited to participate in meaningful work.

Students invited to ask questions about their own and peers' experiences of school inevitably challenge the status quo. Whereas

some teachers invite critique inside their classrooms, many resist hearing students' perspectives. Teachers must build trust and commitment to change in order to learn from students.

Tourism SLC, Year 2: On Fridays, ninth graders "debriefed" their work at neighboring elementary schools. Their teacher Mr. T. wrote on the board: Community Service: What's going wrong? What's going right? A male student said, "The kids at that school are off the wall" and described a recent incident of children cursing in the office. Mr. T. asked how he felt. "It made me feel like I didn't want to be there." Manuel joined in: "No teacher was there. No one knew what to do. I want to work in the office, like that other girl. Doing that filing stuff. I can do that." Mr. T. said, "But Manuel, you're a star. I walk by your classroom and those kids are climbing all over you. Don't you think they look up to you?" "No. Yeah. But every time I try and help them with their math, they keep saying they don't understand. And then they say, 'You just do it.' And then you end up doing their work. And then maybe you make a mistake on the problem and they tell the teacher, 'He did it, not me.'"

When teachers reflected on this anecdote, they focused on their students' efforts to "get over," it was difficult to hear students' critique of the nascent service program and to deliberate the kinds of support students need from adults.

Hard questions—about support for fragile initiatives like Manuel's—are hardest to talk about at "home," where players are invested in roles and consequences. Yet, critical conversations about community, curriculum, and standards for student work are essential for the development of SLCs as dynamic "nerve centers" of teaching and learning (Fecho & Pincus, 1992). This kind of talk, so hard to sustain in schools with their incessant interruptions, is key to learning from collective experience.

Community SLC: The SLC had twice attempted partnership with a university, using social work interns for Family Group. But interns were leaving in midstream. The social work administrators met with SLC teachers to discuss the difficulties. A teacher spoke up: "I heard from other teachers that I wasn't allowing students to go to Family Group. I had this problem—the other half of the class was 10th graders, so I couldn't teach Mondays. And my department head objected to students being out every Monday. It's like a coal mine and the [social work] group is coming in looking for diamonds, but the roster didn't change and there are department-SLC conflicts."

When the administrator interjected, "All of this was known back then (in the summer)," a teacher responded, "I didn't want to look negative!" Another said, "I never saw the interns. My class could've worked on issues if I knew them." The administrator agreed: "We need to do more sharing. We're talking about how to define something we want to work."

Despite the buildup of loss and anger before teachers and their outside partners talked about what was happening, and then the blame when they started, this conversation marked a moment of critique that moved toward collective responsibility. Reflecting on structure, access, and authority for the new initiative, teachers analyzed power within the SLC.

When SLCs first generate knowledge, the talk is disorderly, in need of structures to create process. At first, dissonance and debate, but with practice, deliberation and decision making elaborate the vision that holds the SLC together.

TASK NO. 3: REINVENTING CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

Is the point of restructuring to provide a better way of teaching the current curriculum to students who haven't learned it? Or is the goal to fundamentally change, for all students, what is taught and how it is taught? (Newmann, 1992)

For graduation, students should have to write a book or essays 'cause that's what they gonna ask you to do when you go to college. It should be judged on how you form the body, introduction, conclusion, and to show that you know how to do things, know how to think, know how to solve problems (Student, Community SLC)

Reinventing the triad of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is at the heart of changing school. According to Sleeter and Grant (1991), students are routinely required to deposit their "personal and cultural knowledge" outside the classroom door. The result is a "pedagogy of poverty" (Haberman, 1990) in which urban teachers and students have bartered away real learning for apparent control. When teachers and students take seriously their diverse experiences as building blocks of curriculum, they challenge the "text and test" model embedded in the pedagogy of poverty. Paolo Freire

argues that "reinventing requires from the reinventing subject a critical approach toward the practice and experience to be reinvented" (quoted in Kutz & Roskelly, 1991, p. 302). Deep reinvention of curriculum and instruction implies seeing knowledge as constructed, constructing knowledge individually and collectively, and developing flexible frameworks so SLCs can author dynamic curricula. Students stand at the center, constructing with their teachers what and how they learn.

In this light, curricular reform both emerges from community and contributes to the building of community. Rather than relying on a thick manual designed by a nation or district, this approach requires that teachers and students continually reflect on their teaching and learning, stopping at critical junctures to consider successes and obstacles as they chart ongoing work. The task of reinventing curriculum is a collective endeavor that is fragile, occurs and accrues in spurts over time, and must remain in dynamic, flexible relation to students. In two scenes that follow, we will see how issues of identity and difference brewing in streets and hallways "enter" and engage the members of SLCs.

Postmodern anxieties simmer as groups and individuals alternately confront and repress the question: Will difference overwhelm democracy? Urban comprehensive high schools, where more than half of the African American and Latino students are failing and/or dropping out, have not provided reassuring images of how a nation might rally its resources to provide for and capitalize on the strengths of increasingly diverse populations. Events inside and outside their walls raise stakes in the debate over whether and how "inclusive" curricula might challenge the Eurocentric and one-way discourse of most classrooms. Teachers want students to get along and understand one another's heritage, but exploring difference is as difficult for adults as for the young people they hope to influence. When students want an Asian Club, staff balks: Wouldn't that exacerbate differences?

Young people often bring the issues to the fore. When asked to articulate their concerns, urban students talk about race, gender, respect, and violence. Seldom in the curriculum but critical to

youngsters' lives, such concerns often shape, even control the life in SLCs. Multiculturalism invites constructivist teaching and learning, as students and teachers bring their diverse experiences, questions, and hypotheses to the table (Banks, 1994). Often, however, teachers have lacked processes for hearing from their students as multicultural "insiders." Here, students voice concerns and teachers see curriculum as "work-in-progress":

Tourism SLC: Racial tensions heightened in the White neighborhood, and Latino males expressed fear about traveling to and from school. In Community Service, Julio expressed anger at racist epithets used in the classroom where he assisted. Julio's Caucasian teacher urged him to consider this as "a good reason for you to work there and show those students how not to treat each other badly." Julio asked, "How can I teach them that when their own teacher is not doing anything about it?" Another reflected, "This ain't community service cause this ain't my community. If this were community service, it would be round my way."

Tourism had talked about using the neighborhood as a resource. Teachers pulled together strands of multiculturalism, community service, and neighborhood into an industrial history project in which students would map industrial sites, collect neighborhood artifacts, and prepare a display for the community. Students have engaged in a walking industrial architecture tour, an interview with the mayor about his economic development plan, and projects such as oral histories and film making.

This story shows several kinds of community within one SLC. First, it is in the context of their SLC that these students feel sufficiently safe and invested to challenge their community service work. Likewise, although their teacher argues for a "turn the other cheek" response to the conflict, he also listens to what his students are saying. Such conversations address the dangerous ambiguity of "community" for these students, studying the borderlands they occupy but seldom examine in school. The new curriculum is not a perfect match with students' felt needs. Latinos did not want to walk through a neighborhood where men emerged from bars to watch their uneasy march. This required that they become anthropologists of this community where deindustrialization had set one working class culture against another. Talking with the mayor about

local dilemmas reconnected learning to doing. Constructing this curriculum over time strengthens bonds between teachers and students, giving new meaning to the community.

Changes in curriculum and instruction evolve, sprouting through cracks of school culture and bureaucratic constraint. Such changes remain fragile, often existing only for a minority, for a brief time and a specific situation. Reflecting on curriculum and instruction becomes especially crucial and difficult in settings where the increasing numbers of African American, Latino, Asian, and Native American students are taught by Caucasians who are also different by class and neighborhood. In the following scene, adults reflect with students on the shared agenda of curriculum reinvention. As students move from receiving mandated knowledge into an invested, critical stance toward their own learning, adults call the moment for listening, engaging in dialogue, and allowing reflection to inform action:

Inquiry SLC: Predominantly Caucasian staff met with African American student representatives. "We want more Black studies in social science and history classes. We don't want a complete makeover of the curriculum, we want to know how Blacks tie into what's already being taught."

This meeting was the culmination of student organizing to address perceived imbalance in the curriculum. Another young man ticked off arguments: "If we don't know about slavery, it could happen again. We need to know more about Blacks . . . like Martin Luther King, the history books focus on the 'I Have a Dream' speech but not how Kennedy and them used him. If we know this, history students in the SLC and even in the city and the whole country could unite." Black leaders' philosophies would inform students and "build black self-esteem." The lunch bell rang; no one left. The social science teacher reported her negotiations with a class to do "a concentrated month on African American history," then satisfy the state economics curriculum, bringing in African American issues.

Rather than lobbying for a Black Studies course, these students argue for a multicultural curriculum in which students construct social history by examining history in light of their own experiences and analyzing connections and contradictions. They can express their frustrations in a coherent learning community where

teachers listen, respond, and ultimately negotiate some revisions of the curriculum. This meeting itself is illustrative of reflection as teaching and learning, suggesting that curriculum becomes a vital work-in-progress at the intersection of students' experiences, subject matter, and community.

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are student-centered and constructivist both emerge from and help to build community. Reinventing this triad entails reflection on learning and reflection as learning. This runs counter to a recent resurgence of support for a national curriculum, suggesting instead that teachers be given the resources—time, materials, and professional development—to develop curriculum with their students.

CONCLUSION

The final frame for understanding these tasks of reform work by Philadelphia teachers is their paradoxical nature as both voluntary and systemic strategies.

Parts of the reform were mandated—the structures and constituency makeup and resources for SLCs and for governance bodies. However, the real work of reform was voluntary. Teachers could sign up for professional development and take initiative using professional development designed to support teacher-based vision and strategies for change. Teachers could also opt out, or resist—wait to be assigned, argue against consensus, or simply refuse to participate meaningfully in the work of change. Much of reformers' energy went to selling reform to colleagues, "sharing and caring," as if the impossible could be done in a system of shrinking resources subject to a constant barrage of outside mandates and limit setting by funding sources.

Along with a panel of teachers and principals, we presented our three-tasks framework to Philadelphia teachers at the Collaborative's annual Celebration of SLCs conference in 1994. Teachers devoting their careers to reform could find acknowledgment and clarification of the complexity of their struggles in our three tasks.

Only within a safe-enough audience of "us" could teachers begin to examine—rather than defend—their turf issues, collective decisions, and struggles over participation. The inside of most comprehensive high schools in Philadelphia is perceived as unsafe for reflection.

With an insufficiency of mandates, of supports, and of whole-community participation in reform, teachers are struggling to make wholesale change using patches of volunteer effort. Their reform vision is extensive and intensive: changing an embattled system while building safe learning communities for all kids. What was remarkable by the 4th year of restructuring, as one teacher explained, was that such monumental effort was sustained, the number of SLCs kept growing, and SLCs themselves are actually, against the odds, "growing."

REFERENCES

Alderfer, C. (1980). Consulting to unbounded systems. In C. P. Alderfer & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Advances in experiential social processes* (Vol. 2). New York: John Wiley.

Banks, J. A. (1994). Multicultural education: Development, dimensions, and challenges. *Phi Delta Kappan, 75*(2), 22-28.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education.* New York: Macmillan.

Erickson, F., & Christman, J. B. (1992). Correspondence to the Knight Foundation.

Fecho, R., & Pincus, M. (1992, August 8). Two teachers see opportunities, not obstacles in Philadelphia schools. *The Philadelphia Inquirer.*

Haberman, M. (1990). The pedagogy of poverty versus good teaching. *Phi Delta Kappan, 73*(4), 290-294.

Hargreaves, A. (1992). Cultures of teaching: A focus for change. In A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan, (Eds.), *Understanding teacher development.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities.* New York: Crown.

Kutz, E., & Roskelly, H. (1991). *Unquiet pedagogy: Transforming practice in English classrooms.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heineman.

Lee, V. E., & Smith, J. B. (1994). High school restructuring and student achievement: A new study finds strong links. In *Issues in restructuring schools* (Vol. 7, Fall). Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

Macpherson, P. (1994). Co-making ethnography: Moving into collaboration. In M. Fine (Ed.), *Chartering urban school reform.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Newmann, F. (1992). Beyond common sense in educational restructuring. *Educational Researcher, 22*(2), 4-13.

Newmann, F., & Wehlage, G. (1994). From knowledge to understanding. In *Issues in restructuring schools* (Vol. 7, Fall). Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

Schneider, B., & Bryk, A. S. (1995a). *Social capital in the community and schools.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, DC.

Schneider, B., & Bryk, A. S. (1995b). *Trust as a moral resource: Constructive social relations in urban school communities.* Paper presented at the meeting of the Invitational Conference on Social Capital, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Sleeter, C., & Grant, C. (1991). Mapping terrains of power: Student cultural knowledge versus classroom knowledge. In C. Sleeter (Ed.), *Empowerment through multicultural education.* Albany: State University of New York Press.