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ABSTRACT

An account of the first year of Chicago's school reform effort as experienced in a predominantly Hispanic school is presented. The ethnicity of actors in each level of the restructuring effort is examined to develop an organizing framework to explain how interaction between these "layers" influences policy making and program implementation. Methodology involved interviews with school personnel, parents, administrators, and community groups; a teacher survey; and observation. Findings indicate that despite decentralization efforts, a gap exists between school level participants and the central administration. Reform processes and outcomes are influenced by different levels of groups, individual school context, and degree of ethnic diversity. Because policy implementation is a combination of actors, their needs and issues, and relationships with the larger context, the entire chain must be studied to develop a comprehensive picture of reform. Communication, connecting community organizations, family participation, and an interactive principal are needed for successful program implementation. One table is included. (14 references) (LMI)

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CHICAGO SCHOOL REFORM: FROM THE INSIDE OUT

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Chicago School Reform: From the Inside Out  
by Toni Griego-Jones

Introduction

Chicago Public Schools are engaged in the most radical, wide sweeping school restructuring effort in the country. Indeed, some claim, in the history of public schooling in America. Improving student achievement through the empowerment of the local school unit is the target of the restructuring effort. The individual school is the place where reform has to take root or fail and all the resources of the district have been shaken up so that the school site and those who live and work inside it are now supposedly in control of schooling. If all goes well, the school will be where power lies and the needs of students in local diverse communities can be met, unencumbered by a bloated, bungling bureaucracy.

This paper reports on a case study of one of those schools so empowered--no a specialty school, not a magnet, not one of the worst or the best, but a plain old neighborhood school, typical of many schools found in the inner city. The building itself is old and terribly overcrowded. Test scores fall in the middle or slightly above average for Chicago Public Schools (CPS), but still below national norms. Ninety-seven percent of the school's one thousand students are Hispanic (primarily Mexican-American), thirty percent of them designated as Limited English proficient. Its teaching staff, like many others in public schools, is predominantly white and tenured with sixty-four percent having taught more than fifteen years.

Approximately half have been at this particular school less than five years.

### Methods and Procedures

The purpose of the study was to document and analyze the perspectives of those theoretically most affected by this major effort at restructuring, those within an individual school. Essentially the study was an account of year one in Chicago's school reform as seen by those at the heart of it in one of its schools. The account began with the stories of those within the school building, and as it became immediately clear that school personnel had not been actively involved in initiation of this reform which they were expected to implement, the study soon proceeded to interviews with actors outside the school, to those who had caused the reform to come about.

Interviews were then structured to get perspectives from those involved in all aspects or "layers" of the reform, from those in the classroom to those involved in drafting and implementing the reform legislation on a broader scale at the neighborhood, city, and state level. Since the school site is supposed to be the depository and recipient of the benefits of this reform, it made sense to study it from the perspective of the school which is the eye of the storm with the neighborhood, subdistrict, central district administration, civic and business community swirling and radiating from it. The result was a picture of a "chain" of reform connecting the school to the larger circles or layers around it.

Looking outward from the school site then posed the question of how these layers were all connected. What links formed the chain of reform for

this school? The actions of the outer layers impacted what went on in the school, but was there also an impact in the opposite direction? Did school site personnel have any say in the activity of the outer layers? Given the diversity of schools in CPS, were the chains or connections the same for all schools?

Data was collected over a period of six months from on-site observations in the school, at meetings of the Local School Council, of the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee, and of various coalitions of business and community organizations involved in drafting and implementing the state legislation on reform. Data includes analyses of minutes from these groups' meetings throughout the school year. However, the primary source of data was on-site interviews with school personnel (principal, teachers, aides, custodians, secretaries, security guards), parents and community, central and subdistrict administrators, business leaders, and leaders in groups such as Leadership for Quality Education, the City Wide Coalition, the ABCs Coalition, Designs for Change, and the United Neighborhood Organization. A teacher survey at the end of the school year also measured attitudes toward reform, teacher autonomy, morale, involvement in school governance, perceptions of effects of school reform thus far and expectations for the future.

Data was analyzed qualitatively to identify, sort, and categorize perceptions, both within and between groups or "layers" of respondents. The intent was to gather as much information from as many sources as possible to explain the picture in one school.

Background. In order to put the data into context the following information about the Chicago reform movement is given. Popular literature is full of descriptions of the controversial reform experiment in Chicago. This study does not attempt to review the history and scope of this district wide effort at restructuring. Suffice to say that state legislation effective July 1, 1989 mandated sweeping changes in the governance of schools. A highlight of the legislation is the transfer of authority from central administration to Local School Councils (LSCs) by giving Councils authority to select principals, to approve the school's budget, and to influence and approve the School Improvement Plan. Unquestionably, the point of the Chicago reform legislation and movement was to break up the very strong bureaucratic central administration and make the school the locus of control. Each school now has a Local School Council composed of eleven elected members (two teachers, two community representatives, six parents) and the principal.

State legislation divides the Chicago Public Schools with an enrollment of 425,000 students, into eleven subdistrict areas (including one high school area which encompasses all high schools) with an office and subdistrict superintendent for each area. There is also a subdistrict Council made up of representatives from each LSC in the subdistrict area. Members of the city-wide Central School Board have always been and still will be appointed by the Mayor. Consequently, the school system has historically been very tied to city government.

The climate and publicity surrounding the Chicago educational reform effort are unprecedented. There is a sense within the larger community

(university, city, state, business) that this was a "last chance" attempt to save the school system. There is a fervor among proponents of the reform akin to that of the Civil Rights movement of the sixties. The community at large is very aware of the plight of the CPS and the radical effort to restructure the schools, particularly in regard to the Local School Council and its authority to select principals. The press has publicized this aspect of the reform, especially in cases where council decisions have resulted in conflict between council members and principals. The term "reform" is thrown about everywhere and the assumption seems to be that the schools and classrooms themselves are going through some type of reform.

### Findings

Across the board, the one common theme which emerged from interviews with all actors at all layers was that restructuring should, or could, help students in a specific school through the focus on local school control, by shifting attention and power closer to the school community. But, just how can we know if this shift is actually taking place? If it is, then we can ask, "Is this focus resulting in more effective delivery of schooling for the diverse student populations in this city's schools?"

An analysis of data from this case study suggested a framework within which to study the supposedly altered delivery system of education with the locus of control at the school site. Data identified the following groups or layers as important in this school's restructuring effort: School site personnel including teachers and principal; the Local School Council;

Chicago Public Schools, including Central Office and subdistrict Council; Community groups including United Neighborhood Organization, civic, business, and coalition groups. Data was analyzed to study each group/layer identified in the reform--its actors, types of interactions among actors, decision making, and issues important to each group. Information about groups/layers was then compared for evidence of connections between layers and for similarities and differences in identified issues. Using this framework of looking within each group and at connections between groups began to give a comprehensive picture of how this Chicago school was involved in and affected by the district restructuring effort.

Although there were many characteristics of respondents and aspects of reform which surfaced in the study, the scope of this paper does not allow a discussion of all the data and analysis. Rather, it focuses on two aspects of a developing framework analysis and discusses them in relation to each other. The paper deals with one characteristic of the actors in each group of reform and with major issues identified by respondents in each layer. This begins to describe who was talking and what they were talking about.

The actor characteristic analyzed and reported here is that of ethnicity of actors in each group/level of the restructuring effort. The author chose to focus on this actor characteristic because that was the most salient and noticeable characteristic of the student population in this building, the fact that it was ninety-seven percent Hispanic. Also, there is evidence that the Hispanic student population is not only the



fastest growing student population in the nation, but it is also the most undereducated group in public schools. It is therefore important to study how educational reform may be addressing this student population (National Council of La Raza, 1990; Orfield, 1986).

Ethnic composition of case study actors. Race and ethnicity of actors in reform are often ignored in discussions of urban school reform except for reporting that minority students are dropping out or underachieving in staggering numbers. There is not much thought given, however, to how race and ethnicity figure in what needs to be done as a part of the reform. Not only reform initiatives, but subsequent research and literature have for the most part chosen to stay away from discussions about the role of race and ethnicity in educational reform (Haywood Metz, 1990; Medina, 1990). The reasons for this avoidance and controversy arising from such discussions are not within the scope of this paper. The author does suggest, however, that this propensity to hide from the reality that urban student populations are ethnically and culturally diverse and that their ethnicity and culture impact on schooling will only doom reform efforts to failure. How can reform connect to students and parents at each school if "reformers" refuse to acknowledge who they are dealing with?

At a very basic level, a look at the ethnic identity of the actors involved in the various layers of the reform--the school, local community, district, and city--gives a gross measure of the involvement of various groups throughout implementation. It also gives some indication of the representativeness of actors in this chain of school reform to the student population at the case study building. Further analysis of interactions

and decision making at the Local Council level, and at every other level, would yield information about just how this involvement and representativeness affect power and influence. More research on the relationship of the composition of councils and patterns of participation and decision making is needed to determine the effects of diversity of participant characteristics in decision-making processes (Haywood Metz, 1990; Malen & Ogawa, 1988).

At the Local School Council (LSC) level where the power now theoretically lies in Chicago, all eleven members of this case study LSC were Hispanic except for one of the two teachers. The principal, a very important actor, was Hispanic. The Hispanic members of the LSCs were a mixture of professional and working class parents and community members. A few had experience working on committees but clearly the principal and the two teachers were more adept at handling parliamentary procedure, articulating their points of view, and manipulating discussions.

In contrast to the LSC, the teaching staff at the school was predominantly non-Hispanic White. Those who were Hispanic were all part of the bilingual program cadre of teachers except for one Hispanic "regular" teacher. This make-up is reflective of national statistics on the teaching force in public education (National Education Association, 1987). There were no Hispanic representatives elected to the teachers' Professional personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC).

At the next level of the school system and of reform, the subdistrict and district central office, the subdistrict community superintendent was Hispanic as were some central office personnel who served as resources to

the school. For example, coordinators from the central bilingual office were Hispanic. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the reconstituted central office city wide was thirteen percent Hispanic, forty-five percent Black, forty percent White, and two percent Asian administrators. This was virtually unchanged from the old power structure (Catalyst, March 1991).

Another very important collective actor in the reform chain for this particular school, the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) is a well known and well established Hispanic community advocacy group in Chicago, especially in this predominantly Mexican American neighborhood. According to respondents and the press, UNO had been very influential in negotiations for school reform at the city and state level and was very adept at organizing parents and the community to vote in LSC elections. The organization had also been one of the main resources for training LSC members during the first year of implementation. UNO, because of its involvement both with LSCs at the school site level and the "movers and shakers" at the city and state level was the only concrete bridge between those layers of reform. The school building, then, and levels closest to it were well represented by Hispanic participants except within the teachers' group.

At the level of city and state groups the picture changed. In the coalitions of Chicago business and government leaders influential in developing and lobbying for the state reform legislation there was less Hispanic presence. Attendance and participation at coalition meetings indicated that White university, business, and political leaders dominated the activity at this level although Blacks were well represented. Hispanic

representation on these coalitions consisted of representatives from UNO and a few other smaller Hispanic organizations and individual representatives from building LSCs. The Hispanic population in Chicago, although clearly a minority (26%), is growing and is heavily concentrated in certain areas of the city. According to demographic information from city wide surveys of school councils and subdistrict councils, councils in Hispanic neighborhoods had strong Hispanic representation, but in the city at large they were a definite minority (Chicago Panel on School Finance, 1990).

Issues identified within each layer. The second aspect focused on in this paper were the major issues which concerned each layer or group. These issues were also compared from layer to layer and analysis showed that issues raised at the building level, central office and subdistrict level, and at the level of city "movers and shakers" had some similarities and some important differences. Even when the issues were generally on the same topic, emphases and focus were often different.

At the school level, an analysis of minutes from meetings of the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee (PPAC), indicates that teachers were primarily concerned with curriculum matters and with organizational matters, those regarding the structure, purpose, and role of the PPAC itself. Curriculum issues included selection of textbooks for various subject areas, ordering and distribution of library books, periodicals, grading policies and procedures, and testing. Members also had major discussions about the PPAC's function and purpose, advisory as opposed to decision making. They tried throughout the year to define their

relationship to the principal and to the LSC and how they should work together. The PPAC established subcommittees to deal with all curricular areas, including the bilingual program, and appointed liaisons to the LSC and to the principal.

A major upset occurred within the entire faculty ranks when the PPAC "took an opinion poll" during a regular meeting on whether the principal should be given another contract. Based on results of the opinion poll, one teacher representative to the LSC reported to the LSC that teachers were against giving the principal a new contract. Faculty not on the PPAC vehemently objected to this as they had not been given an opportunity to express their views on the principal. Faculty members themselves called for a school wide faculty vote which resulted in a clear majority of the teachers in favor of retaining the principal. This dispute caused bitter feeling within staff and the teacher representative from the PPAC to the LSC was reprimanded by an open letter from an ad hoc group of teachers. This disagreement, however, also helped teachers to sort out responsibilities as they discussed the issue of representation and the right to vote for other faculty in the building.

Much of the activity in PPAC meetings was centered on reporting information, asking advice, and requesting permission from traditional authorities. There was a sense of not knowing what policies were and looking for guidance and training from someone outside the faculty, in most cases the principal or the teachers' union.

At the LSC level, discussions often revolved around those same themes, organizational (structure and purpose) and curricular issues. But, their

discussions included many other, more general issues as well. The need for training in budget and parliamentary procedure, district organization and resources, overcrowding, a new school building, uniforms, gangs, and local politics also occupied their time. Some discussions related to how they connected to various other entities, notably other schools in their geographical area, the subdistrict LSC Council, CPS central office, and UNO.

At the central and subdistrict office, administrators were steeped in a struggle for identification during that first year. Central office, from the superintendent on down, was involved in a struggle for existence and in justifying its actions. Except for the principal, those at the school site knew about what was happening to central office only through the press. This was true before reform and that didn't change during this first year of restructuring. Teachers and the principal seemed to have vague notions of what the subdistrict was for or what it was doing. Central and subdistrict offices were perceived as switching from policy making/decision making roles to a resource role. The teacher survey indicated that sixty-seven percent believed that resources to the school had increased during the first year of reform.

The CPS central office was described by some participants in civic and business groups as a patronage arm of the city government reserved for politically rewarding Blacks who had supported mayoral administrations. According to some, the political agreement cut several administrations ago was that City Hall jobs were for rewarding Whites and the school system was for rewarding Blacks. This shake-up of central office then, was perceived

by some as displacing the traditional Black leadership. In this restructuring effort, Hispanic groups came into reform as a definite minority, but politically emerged stronger from their participation in supporting it.

Within this outer layer of reform which included central office, subdistrict councils, and the Central Board of Education, the role of the Central Board had also changed, although how, still remains to be seen. The only sure thing is that it is not the same as it was before the 1989 legislation. Its power and function in relation to the Local School Councils is still to be determined. The Interim Central Board formed by the 1989 legislation to oversee reform implementation in the District was expanded to fifteen members in order to better represent the city's diverse population and the permanent Central Board members were still to be appointed by the Mayor of Chicago. This appointment power has traditionally made a strong link between city government and the school system. In addition to mandated representation on the Interim Board of Education, the present Mayor appointed an Hispanic as Deputy in charge of Education Affairs. Membership on the Central Board of Education and city offices was a very political, symbolic issue for various communities, particularly minority communities.

Those involved in the next layer of school reform, the civic and business community groups and coalitions, were concerned with even broader issues. Discussions and minutes of various coalition groups centered on strategic, longer term concerns. Their purpose had been to draft and push through reform legislation, and now they monitored, evaluated, reported,

trained, and lobbied. A number of newsletters and monitoring reports were put out by the groups for parents and the community at large to provide information on legislation, implementation of reform, and to identify obstacles to reform. Once identified, the groups had the wherewithal to plan strategy to overcome those obstacles, to lobby appropriate targets, and affect needed changes. These groups also provided training to parents and community, particularly LSCs, in leadership and parliamentary procedure, budget, and aspects of legislation. All of these groups and coalitions brought tremendous political power and know how to the reform movement and, in fact, were the driving forces behind reform legislation. Those at the local school sites were not the ones who initiated reform legislation. The following summarizes some of the groups and issues they were concerned with.

Alliance for Better Chicago Schools (ABCs) Coalition - leadership development, monitoring (Report Card), identifying obstacles, School Board appointments, superintendent and central office.

Leadership for Quality Education (LQE) - Testimony to School Board, monitoring of budget, leadership training, budget training, leadership & finance issues.

Designs for Change - Election information & training, skills training for LSC, publications (Schoolwatch), research & reports, advocacy, & training.



Chicago Panel - Research, policy, budget, reports, assistance and training to LSCs.

United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) - community organizing, political leadership, plans for organizing and obtaining resources (Cluster Plan), training for LSCs and community at large, advocacy, lobbying.

City Wide Coalition - strategy for dealing with Central Board, fund-raising, publicity, program, misuse of funds; much broader range of concerns than others; works to provide resources & support to public schools and LSCs. Received reports from other groups, briefings from superintendent, central office, public policy, political strategy; concerned with reducing inequities, multicultural curriculum, broadening committee to make it more ethnically and racially inclusive.

Consensus within the ranks of these movers and shakers was that impetus for change in schools had to come from outside the school system and they took responsibility for that. Teachers were only minimally represented in these coalitions. The City Wide Coalition had a Teachers' Task Force and teachers were involved in other groups, but representation was not widespread. In interviews with at least one research group, when asked if they were interviewing teachers in their studies, the answer was that they were interviewing "only the absolutely key people" in reform and therefore had only a small sampling of teachers in their interviews. The

relative lack of involvement of teachers was a concern in a review of the Chicago effort by Stanford's Michael Kirst (Catalyst, November 1990).

Teachers in the case study building themselves perceived a limited role for themselves in the initiation and implementation of reform outside of their classroom. For example, only two teachers at the case study school had been involved in the reform movement prior to that first year of implementation in the school. One had been involved through the teachers' union and another through a university connection in meetings about legislation. The role of the teachers' union was described as one of protecting teachers' welfare and of damage control, not of initiating reform. Educators in the classroom were not the prime movers in this restructuring. According to survey data at this school, teacher involvement plans and receiving more resources from central office. On the positive side, however, these teachers did perceive that collaboration in decision making at the school level could be a strength of the reform effort.

Generally, the issues identified by each group fell into the following categories: Curriculum, Organization (purpose and procedures), Policy Making, Strategic Planning, Training, and Advocacy. These major categories and how they appeared at each layer are outlined in the chart below.

	Curr.	Organ.	Policy	Strat.	Plng.	Train.	Advoc.
<b>Teachers</b>							
PPAC	X	X				X	
LSC	X	X				X	
<b>CPS</b>							
Cent. Off	X	X				X	
Subdist.	X	X				X	
<b>Community</b>							
UNO	X	X	X	X		X	X
Civic			X	X		X	X
Business			X	X		X	X
Coalitions			X	X		X	X

As shown in the chart, training was an issue identified by all groups. Teachers and LSC members described a need for training while central and subdistrict administrators, civic and community groups described training they provided for school site personnel. There were also subtle differences in perceptions of what should be included in the content of training. For example, LSC members repeatedly asked for training on developing budgets. Several respondents from groups offering training, however, resisted this because they felt LSCs did not have to make budgets, they just had to approve them. It seemed that those who understood the process of formulating budgets did not see that people felt at a loss to approve something which they didn't totally understand.

The United Neighborhood Organization was the only group which was involved at every level and with every category of implementation. It not only had plans and training which addressed curriculum and organizational issues, it was directly involved in the policy making, strategic planning, and advocacy at the city and state levels. It should be noted that there were other Hispanic community organizations also involved in various aspects but they were not a part of this study.

### Discussion

If control of schooling would indeed change and be in the hands of the school's inhabitants and community, it would be reasonable to assume that there would be a difference in the delivery of schooling. With different actors making important decisions, the decisions would be expected to better reflect the needs and concerns of those at the school site level, particularly the parents and students. However, if decision making takes place at various levels and outcomes are results of complex interaction among all actors at all levels, then everything is not so simple. Decisions may still be different, but the picture will be much more complex than "control at the school level" implies.

In Chicago where the thrust of the reform is absolutely toward making the Local School Council the center of governance, there were definitely more Hispanics participating in school and neighborhood levels of reform. This was true in all schools in Chicago with student populations between thirty-three and ninety-five percent Hispanic except for neighborhoods with magnet schools (Lewis & Taylor, 1990).

However, those who were making policy, giving direction, and making funding decisions for the reform were not those at the school site. Actors at the outer layers initiated and defined the reform while school site personnel reacted to plans others had caused to be enacted. Actors in the outer layer were not the same as those at the school site, at least not in ethnic and cultural background. The movers and shakers were not reflective of the student population at this building. So, how are issues important to those at the school site promoted or addressed in the outer layers? Or, do they have to be? Is it enough just to have a structure that allows building level people, including community, to make their own curricular, and to some extent, personnel decisions? Does the type of restructuring being tried in Chicago allow a minority group to affect its own destiny?

How does the individuality of the school shine through in the implementation of massive restructuring? Each school's culture and climate is shaped by those who live and work within it, both students and staff (Haywood Metz, 1978, 1986; Sarason, 1982). District mandates and state legislation may set parameters for school personnel but those who work inside the school interpret and implement outside mandates on their own terms, based on their own beliefs, perspectives, and values.

Schools also exist within neighborhoods and are impacted by the larger context of the city as well. Chicago, like any other city, is made up of extremely diverse neighborhoods, culturally, economically, socially, racially and ethnically. This diversity is a characteristic of urban areas that is often overlooked in educational research because of our propensity to search for clean, quick, and easy solutions to "problems." District

wide data which give us averages is collected and believed, but the fallacy of this is that the mythical average school does not exist. Averaged data does not explain what happens in schools that are very different from one another. Does the "averaged" data explain what happens in a predominantly Hispanic school like the one in this case study? It seems ludicrous to think that any city wide reform effort is going to impact each neighborhood and school in the same way given the reality of the city's diversity.

Even though some of the groups/layers like the Chicago Public Schools central office and the city "movers and shakers" would be the same for all the city's schools, the connections or chain between each school and the outside groups is inherently different for each school since the combination of actors, their issues, needs, and everything else about them is different. Each school is unique in its combination of students, neighborhood, and relationships to the larger context. Only by studying each school and its chain of reform can we begin to get a comprehensive picture of Chicago's, or any city's, reform effort. Success or failure must be measured at each school site.

In order for the urban characteristic of diversity to be acknowledged and given its place, there has to be effective communication between the layers with a clear understanding of everyone else's role, and there has to be effective and meaningful representation of school site people at all levels of the reform effort. The only group that appeared to be actively addressing the critical question of connections between layers was the community organization, UNO. For example, one of its proposals to address the matter of furthering this school's agenda was a plan which would

cluster schools in that area of Chicago. This consortium of schools would hopefully be able to attract and more effectively utilize resources from business and civic groups. There were provisions for sharing educational personnel and expertise among the consortium schools as well. Other examples of UNO's efforts to bridge the schools with the larger system were training programs in the political process and in campaign organization for potential LSC candidates. It was interesting that UNO was sometimes criticized in the press and by teachers in the building during the first year of implementation for being "political" and promoting people to run for LSC office.

The connecting role of community organizations in this restructuring effort is an important one. This type of collective actor and its connecting role is not one that has been a part of reform efforts in the past. Research and literature on educational reform has demonstrated "loose coupling" within layers of school districts. Now research will have to account for a much more active role of community, business, and civic groups. Community groups can be particularly effective in addressing the representation of ethnic minority groups.

There is also a growing body of research on the importance of connecting families with public schooling (Schorr, 1989). Specifically addressing the student population at the case study building, there is also significant research on connecting Hispanic families with schooling (Garcia, 1988; Moll, 1989; Wong-Fillmore, 1990). This suggests a need to involve a whole spectrum of actors (families and neighborhood communities) not traditionally researched as a part of reform.

Again, as reflected in the literature on school change, the school principal is a key figure, retaining the traditional role of linking with central office for resources and serving as the gatekeeper between those inside the school and the outside world. However, the outside world of the school has expanded in this type of restructuring to include closer ties with community groups, civic and business groups, and the school's neighborhood. In this case study school, at the beginning of the school year the principal talked about central office as the group he had to answer to. By the end of the year, his orientation had changed and it was the LSC he was concerned about communicating with. Now the principal has to be the connector from the building to the LSC and community in more direct ways than before. Does it help for the principal to be from the same ethnic and cultural background as the community? In this case study, the bilingual skill of the principal unquestionably was an asset in dealing with the LSC and community. In playing the role of key connector between school and community in this closer relationship, a deeper understanding of both the education world and the community's world seems a necessary requisite for success.

Aside from community groups, notably UNO, and the principal, findings from this case study indicate that in spite of all efforts to make the school house the center of reform, the gap between the inside of the school and the forces surrounding it may still be as wide as that historically reported in the literature on change in school systems (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Griego Jones, 1990; House, 1974). Teachers especially felt on the fringe and not involved in the effort as measured by their



participation in key areas of the reform legislation and their own descriptions. These descriptions revealed a gap between the movers and the shakers and those in classrooms with school site personnel reacting to what had been done outside of the school by civic, business, and community groups.

### Summary

The complicated interaction at a number of layers in implementation of reform needs to be documented and clarified if school site reform is to be understood. The influence, activities, and involvement of actors within each level and ways in which levels connect with each other determine the outcome of school reform at the school site level. Much of the popular press and scholarly journals write about school reform as if the classroom is the only place where change action takes place. In reality the activity in most major reform efforts is at a variety of levels. It would be helpful to spend more time defining and clarifying relationships or connections between levels to explain what happens at the school site. This shifting of power and realignment of actors offers opportunities to reconceptualize public education.

Add to this the fact that every school's chain of connections is different from every other. The way in which any reform effort plays out is going to be different from school to school. This is contrary to approaches to reform in the past. Much of the reform effort in this country has been based on the assumption that all schools are alike and that one version of reform will take care of all schools.

The focus on individual schools also has to take into account the important and growing literature which documents the significant impact of cultural differences between various ethnic minority group students and the "mainstream" public schools (Haywood Metz, 1990; Ogbu, 1983). In this particular case, the growing body of research and knowledge about Hispanic student populations and effective schooling for them is waiting to be utilized (Griego Jones, 1991; Orfield, 1986).

Mountains have been written about Chicago school reform, its legislation, and district wide data has been compiled. The real focus though, eventually, has to be a hard and honest look at each school and its student population if rhetoric is to be believed. Thoughtful analysis of chains of reform for individual schools will give insight as to what crucial connections are not taking place. This would allow actors to alter patterns before this too passes into the next round of school reform.

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