

Establishing a Collaborative School Culture Through Comprehensive School Reform

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Over the last decade, much research has been conducted regarding how successful school improvement can be achieved. One focus of this research has been the development of schools that are inclusive and meet the educational needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Research has shown that school change that improves teacher practice and student outcomes may be achieved through Comprehensive School Reform. Key aspects of this reform include the development of a collaborative culture, the use of high-quality professional development to improve teacher practices, and strong leadership for school improvement activities by the principal and other school leaders. The implications of these findings for research and practice are discussed.

Over the last 40 years, policymakers have called for school reform that improves the practices of teachers and other professionals and increases student achievement (Elmore, 1995; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Goodman, 1995; Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA], Public Law 108–446, 2004; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). Initial attempts at school reform did not achieve the desired results as teacher classroom practices were seldom changed and student achievement remained stagnant or declined (Cuban, 1996; Elmore, 1995; Goodman, 1995; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This has been especially true in special education as outcomes for students have been less than desirable (D. Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; McLeskey, Skiba, & Wilcox, 1990; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Will, 1986), and research-based practices have been infrequently used by teachers to improve student outcomes (Cook & Schirmer, 2003; Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997).

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The limited success of these school improvement efforts led researchers to examine how change could be accomplished in schools to improve teaching practices and increase student achievement. Although this research has provided much useful information regarding how schools are successfully changed (for an extensive review of this literature, see Fullan, 2007), a key finding relates to the critical role of collaboration in the school change process. More specifically, the professional literature includes descriptions and analyses of school improvement experiences that address collaboration in relation to a range of education initiatives, including developing inclusive education for students with disabilities (Cole & McLeskey, 1997; Fisher & Frey, 2003; Fisher, Grove, & Sax, 2000; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998; Wallace, Anderson, & Bartholomay, 2002; Weller & McLeskey, 2000), improving student literacy using faculty teams (Irwin & Farr, 2004; Richardson, 1996), and increasing student achievement through collaborative teacher learning and professional development (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, & Many, 2006; Englert & Tarrant, 1995). In each of these examples, successful school change was dependent on a high level of collaboration among professionals.

Fullan (1999, 2007) has described how such collaboration develops in a school as he suggests that rather than restructuring a school, “re-culturing” is required. A school culture may be defined as the guiding beliefs and expectations evident in the way a school operates (Fullan, 2007). To change a school culture and create a more inclusive school, educators must question their beliefs about teaching and learning for students who struggle to learn and engage in a collaborative change process that results in new values, beliefs, norms, and preferred behaviors (Fullan, 2007; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, 2002a, 2006).

The outcomes of re-culturing are demonstrated through new forms of interaction and professionalism surrounding activities such as joint problem solving, data sharing and analysis, shared decision making, and distributed leadership (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000). These collaborative activities result in added value by generating multiple solutions to complex problems and by providing opportunities to learn from others as school professionals express and share expertise. When these endeavors are part of a school change initiative, research has revealed that such a collaborative culture or community leads to higher levels of trust and respect among colleagues, improved professional satisfaction, improved instructional practices, better outcomes for all students, and school change that is maintained over time (Dufour et al., 2006; Fisher & Frey, 2003; Fisher et al., 2000; Friend & Cook, 2007; Joyce & Showers, 1995, 2002; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002a; McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson, & Loveland, 2001; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998; Waldron, McLeskey, & Pacchiano, 1999).

There are no simple answers regarding how a school develops a collaborative culture. Moreover, it is likely that the particulars regarding such change

vary depending on the context of a given school. Even under the best of circumstances, these changes are difficult to achieve and may take several years to accomplish (Fullan, 2007; McLeskey & Waldron, 2006). What we provide in this article is a brief description of a process for Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) that we have used to facilitate the re-culturing of schools as they develop collaborative cultures and address school improvement with the purpose of developing more effective, inclusive schools (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, 2002a, 2006). This is followed by a description of the most critical manifestation of this change process, high-quality professional development. We then address the need for leadership from the principal and others in a school that supports high-quality professional development and other collaborative school improvement efforts.

BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM (CSR)

The work we have done related to school improvement has focused on improving teacher practices that result in improved outcomes for all students. This work has placed significant emphasis on addressing the needs of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (i.e., inclusion). We have provided detailed information regarding this change process in previous publications (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2006) and have also written about the successful outcomes of these school improvement efforts for students and teachers (Cole & McLeskey, 1997; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, 2002a, 2006; McLeskey et al., 2001; Waldron & McLeskey, 1998; Waldron et al., 1999). Thus, only a brief description of this CSR process is provided here.

The first step in the process of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) that we have employed is a discussion among the entire school community regarding the importance of engaging in CSR to improve outcomes for all students. To a large degree, this step is the beginning of an ongoing discussion regarding why it is important to engage in school improvement that results in the development of more inclusive placements and improves outcomes for all students. When CSR focuses on the development of effective, inclusive schools, we have found that these discussions are most beneficial if there is a focus on a clear explanation of what inclusion is and what will be expected of teachers in inclusive classrooms. In addition, these discussions should serve to convey to teachers that they are empowered to make the necessary changes to improve their school and classrooms. These discussions begin to give teachers and other professionals ownership of the school improvement activities and continue until teachers and other school professionals are well informed.

Following this initial discussion and agreement of the principal and other professionals in the school to participate in CSR, a team is formed to lead the change process. This team consists of the principal and other professionals who are leaders in the school, representing a range of perspectives on the issues being addressed. We have included general and special education teachers, school psychologists, the school principal, and other school professionals on this team. The size of the team has ranged from 8 to 20, depending on the size of the school and level of interest among the school staff (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000).

Once a team is formed, one of its first activities is to examine available data on student achievement and focus efforts on those groups of students whose academic achievement is below desirable levels (often disproportionately students with disabilities and those from high-poverty backgrounds). The team may also focus on behavioral issues that exist in the school (e.g., a large number of office referrals and suspensions) and make a determination that these issues should be addressed as part of CSR. The team members then examine their school to determine the current capacity to address student needs and how well this capacity is being used. School capacity is “the collective power of the full staff to improve student achievement school wide” (Newman, King, & Youngs, 2000, p. 261). This entails the examination of factors such as student grouping, the quality of core instruction in the general education classroom, teacher assignments, and so forth. The team also might examine the extent to which seamless tiers of high-quality support are available for addressing student academic and behavioral needs (Eber, Sugai, Smith, & Scott, 2002; L. Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007; Jimerson, Burns, & VanDeHeyden, 2007).

The CSR team then explores options for school change by consulting with school staff and outside experts on curriculum, instruction, school organization, and so forth. Members of the team also may visit schools that have achieved success in meeting student needs. This information is then used to develop a plan to increase the capacity of the school to address student needs. A critical aspect of increasing capacity is improving the skills of professionals to meet student needs through professional development. Once this plan is developed, it is shared with the entire school staff for reactions and changes. This process may entail several meetings to ensure that the majority of the school staff is engaged in planning and thus is more likely to assume ownership of the proposed changes.

These activities are then followed by extensive professional development for school staff to get ready for the school change. Critical areas of professional development when developing inclusive programs include areas such as co-teaching, differentiating instruction, and evidence-based approaches for reading instruction (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002b). Once the changes are implemented, the CSR team takes responsibility for monitoring the changes to ensure they are working and to make additional changes

as needed. This monitoring includes examining student outcome data and obtaining feedback from participating teachers and administrators regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the program (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, 2002a). Through this process, teachers and other school professionals are empowered to make changes in school practices and are encouraged to take risks and experiment with options for increasing capacity and improving practices.

In our work, the CSR team has provided the foundation for developing a collaborative school culture as an effective, inclusive school is being developed. In these schools, the CSR team has provided the initial model in a school for a learning community as it has built a sense of trust, developed and implemented a plan for CSR by collaborating with teachers and administrators schoolwide, modeled collaborative problem solving to other professionals in the school, empowered teachers to make changes in school practices, and set the stage for teachers to take risks and experiment with options for increasing capacity and improving practice (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, 2002a, 2006).

One of the clearest manifestations of the extent to which re-culturing has begun to occur in a school and a collaborative culture is emerging is the quality of the professional development activities that occur to support CSR. High-quality professional development is of critical importance in ensuring that teachers and other school professionals have the necessary skills to implement and sustain new practices that are needed to support inclusive programs. We address the components of high-quality professional development in the next section.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CSR

A component of CSR that is integral to the development and maintenance of a collaborative culture as well as the continuous improvement of a school is high-quality professional development. Delivering this type of professional development has proven more difficult than most educators anticipated as many schools and districts use traditional forms of professional development activities that have proven largely ineffective (Joyce & Showers, 1995, 2002; Lang & Fox, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Richardson & Placier, 2001). For example, after reviewing research related to professional development, Joyce and Showers (2002) concluded that 5–10% of teachers used practices that were presented using traditional forms of professional development. Research in special education has reached similar conclusions (e.g., D. Fuchs, Fuchs, Harris, & Roberts, 1996; Gersten et al., 1997).

Traditional professional development is built upon several assumptions that likely contribute to its lack of success. These assumptions include (Guskey, 2003; Lang & Fox, 2003; Richardson, 2003) the following:

1. Knowledge (e.g., research or evidence-based practices) is produced by researchers from outside of schools, and teachers are consumers of research;
2. Professional development is a linear process, with information moving from an outside expert to a teacher to the teacher's classroom;
3. Professional development consists of describing and demonstrating for teachers practices that have been proven effective by research; and
4. Teachers use effective practices in their classrooms with little or no change in how the practices are implemented.

When traditional forms of professional development are employed, teachers are viewed as passive recipients of research-based classroom practices, which are typically presented to large groups of teachers (i.e., 20 or more) in short-term professional development workshops. After teachers receive information regarding effective practices, it is assumed they will apply this information in their classrooms with fidelity, with little or no need for attention to contextual factors or follow-up support. This type of professional development violates many of the assumptions regarding decision making in a school with a collaborative culture. Perhaps the most basic of these assumptions relates to the teacher as a passive recipient of information rather than as an active decision-maker. To further illustrate this point, Richardson and Placier (2001) note that when traditional professional development is used, change is viewed as a very difficult process, professionals from outside the classroom hold "the power over change, and teachers are often characterized as recalcitrant and resistant when they do not implement the suggested change" (p. 906).

Research on alternative forms of professional development has shown that when these activities are deeply situated within collaborative school cultures, they are much more effective in changing teacher practices and improving student outcomes (Boudah & Mitchell, 1998; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Guskey, 2003; Joyce & Showers, 2002; Lang & Fox, 2003; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002b; Richardson & Placier, 2001). For example, Joyce and Showers (2002) found that up to 95% of teachers implemented new practices when this form of professional development was used. Researchers in special education (Boudah & Mitchell, 1998; Englert & Tarrant, 1995; Gersten et al., 1997; Vaughn & Coleman, 2004) have confirmed these findings for special education teachers as collaborative forms of professional development result in significantly higher levels of implementation than traditional forms of professional development.

Collaborative forms of professional development are designed with a constructivist approach to adult learning as a framework and assume that teachers actively participate in all aspects of professional development, including the determination of the topics that will be addressed and delivering the professional development. Furthermore, it is assumed that collabora-

tive professional development (Boudah & Mitchell, 1998; Garet et al., 2001; Guskey, 2003; Lang & Fox, 2003; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002b; Richardson & Placier, 2001)

1. Is coherent and focused (i.e., not fragmented);
2. Addresses instructional practices and content knowledge that improve student outcomes;
3. Is collaboratively built upon the practices and beliefs of teachers, ensuring high levels of teacher buy-in;
4. Is school based, job embedded, and long term;
5. Provides extensive follow-up (e.g., coaching) in teachers' classrooms; and
6. Is actively supported by the school administration.

In spite of the effectiveness of collaborative professional development, more traditional forms of professional development continue to be widely used in schools (Lang & Fox, 2003; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002b; Richardson, 2003), and teachers do not develop and use in their classrooms the necessary new skills to effectively support students, especially those with disabilities, in improving learning and behavioral outcomes (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002b). Thus, the use of traditional approaches to professional development may undermine efforts to improve schools and create effective, inclusive programs.

Several researchers have speculated regarding barriers that might exist related to the implementation of more collaborative forms of professional development. For example, collaborative professional development is much more time consuming and expensive than traditional forms of professional development (Lang & Fox, 2003). Thus, it can be implemented only slowly and with far fewer teachers and schools than traditional professional development. A second barrier to the use of collaborative professional development is the lack of a collaborative culture within many schools (Richardson, 2003). Many schools in the United States continue to be characterized by teachers working in isolation, infrequently opening the classroom door and strongly protecting their individualism (Richardson, 2003). If collaborative professional development is to be effectively implemented in a school, teachers must willingly open their classroom doors and work with, teach, and learn from others. As Lang and Fox note, collaborative professional development relies

heavily on peer-to-peer support and promotes reflection, dialogue, and collaboration about teaching practices. Collaborative strategies provide the context for teachers to explore, question, and dialogue about practices in order to be able to integrate them into school life. These strategies also provide the social, emotional, and intellectual engagement with colleagues needed to change practice. (p. 21)

A final barrier to collaborative professional development is the lack of active support for and understanding of this form of professional development by the building administrator (Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005; Newmann et al., 2000). Our work in developing inclusive schools, as well as extensive research on models of CSR, has revealed that the principal is a key participant in ensuring the development of a collaborative culture, the use of high-quality professional development, and the successful implementation and maintenance of CSR activities (Firestone et al., 2005; Fullan, 2007; McLeskey & Waldron, 2000; McLeskey, Waldron, McDaniel, & Overly, 1996; Newmann et al., 2000). Furthermore, as we discuss in the next section, the principal ensures that teachers are empowered to make decisions regarding new practices that are implemented in their classrooms and is willing to take risks to implement these practices. Lacking such support, changes in teacher practices that are needed to develop and sustain effective, inclusive schools are not likely to occur.

LEADERSHIP TO SUPPORT A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

Although principals have long been the most important leaders in a school, the advent of site-based management and school improvement, which are dependent upon a collaborative culture, has increased the demands for leadership that are placed on them (Firestone & Riehl, 2005; Marks & Nance, 2007). Further, schools with collaborative cultures have increased the need for leadership not only from the principal but from other school personnel as well, including teachers, school psychologists, and counselors (Mangin, 2007). In this section, we address the critical role the principal plays in ensuring that leadership is distributed across a range of school personnel as well as the role of school leaders in supporting the development and maintenance of a collaborative culture, ensuring the coherence of changes, and building school capacity to address student needs.

Distributing Leadership

Much research has indicated that the many supervisory and instructional leadership activities that are the responsibility of the principal are too numerous for one person to adequately address (Fullan, 2001; Mangin, 2007). Further, the very nature of schools that have a collaborative culture requires a different type of leadership and decision making than traditional schools. As Scribner and colleagues (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007) have noted, in schools with a collaborative culture, “decisions are not made by a single individual; rather decisions emerge from collabora-

tive dialogues between many individuals, engaged in mutually dependent activities” (p. 70). These activities form the core of distributed leadership as principals in schools with collaborative cultures, of necessity, empower school personnel to share responsibility for decision making. This results in leadership that “occurs through the complex network of relationships and interactions among the entire staff of the school” (p. 68).

We have found that distributed leadership is indispensable in school change efforts that address the development of effective, inclusive schools. When these endeavors are undertaken, no single individual has the broad range of knowledge or skills regarding general and special education to provide leadership for every aspect of school change (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002a). Distributed leadership may include persons to provide leadership regarding the process of school change, changes in curriculum and instruction, the use of evidence-based practices in basic skill areas, classroom and schoolwide behavior management, and other areas (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000).

Principals support the development of distributed leadership by being explicit regarding their willingness to share leadership responsibilities with others and by empowering others to share in decision making regarding substantive issues. For example, when leadership is distributed it is assumed that teachers and other school personnel will take leadership roles and share in decision making regarding changes in instructional practices. In addition, teacher leaders are more successful when the principal provides vocal support for the teacher leaders, expresses an expectation that others will work with them, and frequently communicates the expectation of instructional improvement (Mangin, 2007; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

This form of leadership and decision making leads to increased teacher trust and buy-in for change initiatives as well as increased student achievement (Mangin, 2007; Scribner et al., 2007). However, many factors may impede the development of successful distributed leadership in a school. For example, Mangin found that teacher leadership was least successful in schools where principals had little knowledge of teacher leadership and models of distributed leadership and failed to communicate to all school personnel the importance of these roles. Furthermore, in these less successful settings, principals had little interaction with teacher leaders and were disinterested in the role. Thus, less knowledge, interaction, and support of teacher leaders were significant barriers to the development of the successful distribution of leadership responsibilities.

Supporting the Development of a Collaborative Culture

Although distributed leadership is perhaps the most significant action a principal can take to help develop and support a collaborative culture in a school, several other activities have been shown to be important. For

example, a collaborative culture cannot exist within a school unless the principal understands what a collaborative culture is and why it is important (i.e., knowledge regarding collaborative cultures) and actively supports the development and maintenance of such a culture (Mangin, 2007; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002).

A principal's actions must model and support a collaborative culture in many ways, both large and small, if such a culture is to develop and flourish. For example, a critical action a principal engages in to support a collaborative culture is to model collaboration in working with other professionals in the school. An excellent opportunity to model this collaboration occurs when goals for school improvement are being determined. As these goals are being addressed, a principal might present data regarding the extent to which students with disabilities are included in general education classrooms and academic outcomes for these students. After discussing these data with teachers, the principal then empowers teachers to work collaboratively to identify goals for increasing inclusive placements and improving student outcomes and determine how this will be achieved (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000, 2006). By working collaboratively with the school staff to determine these goals, the principal not only models collaboration but also empowers other school personnel to make decisions and ensures that a large proportion of the school staff buys in to the school improvement plan.

Through these and other similar activities, principals who successfully support collaborative cultures ensure that their active support for such a culture is obvious to all. The principal also plays a key role in a collaborative culture by ensuring that goals are explicit and continue to be clear to all as decision making occurs and that expectations for school improvement and student outcomes are high. Other actions taken by a principal to demonstrate this support include addressing issues such as developing a climate of trust within the school, ensuring that school personnel feel they will be supported in risk taking as they move toward school goals, and addressing dysfunctions in the collaborative culture, such as the appearance of "groupthink" (i.e., where members of a group insulate themselves from alternative ideas; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006).

Ensuring Coherence

A major responsibility of a principal in a school with a collaborative culture is providing direction and ensuring coherence as decision making occurs (Hoppey, 2006). This ensures that school improvement endeavors engaged in by school staff are coherent and manageable and that the focus of decision making remains on improving teaching practice and student outcomes as agreed upon by stakeholders in the school. Fullan (2000) has noted that schools with a collaborative culture do not take on the greatest number of new practices, but they are selective and work to ensure that the in-

novations implemented closely connect to the established goals the school is addressing. In short, schools with collaborative cultures actively attack incoherence as they focus on established goals and use resources effectively and efficiently.

To illustrate, Firestone and colleagues (2005) contend that coherent professional development should address fewer areas in more depth and thus allow for effective follow-up. This results in a consistency of focus and allows for more time and resources to be focused on carefully circumscribed professional development activities. Such an approach results in the opportunity to provide high-quality professional development that includes modeling of effective practices and follow-up support or coaching as practices are implemented in teachers' classrooms.

In addition, a principal in a school with a collaborative culture works to ensure coherence as school improvement endeavors are carried out. This relates not only to internal agreement on goals and the focus of activities by the school staff but also to managing demands that are placed on the school from external audiences (e.g., accountability standards mandated by state education agencies) that threaten coherence and successful school improvement (Honig & Hatch, 2004; Hoppey, 2006; Newmann et al., 2000). These demands may be managed by using a range of strategies, from buffering against external demands by making strategic decisions to engage these demands in limited ways, to bridging external demands by shaping the terms of compliance to align with goals of the unique school setting (Honig & Hatch, 2004; Hoppey, 2006). Thus, schools limit the influence of external organizations but do not eliminate these connections, as some of these demands require a response and also may offer resources for meeting school goals (Honig & Hatch, 2004).

We have seen many examples of principals working with staff to ensure coherence of change activities. In one instance, a principal met with outside change agents and school staff to determine if the timing for engaging in CSR to develop effective, inclusive programs was appropriate. After extensive discussion, the principal and staff determined that too many school improvement endeavors were being addressed and decided not to engage in CSR related to inclusion. Two years later, after completing several ongoing school improvement activities, the principal and staff of this school determined that the timing for CSR to develop inclusive programs was appropriate and successfully engaged in these activities.

If the principal is not successful in actively managing the coherence of school improvement activities, his or her school will have difficulty achieving school improvement goals (Fullan, 2000) as resources (both time and money) are diminished by focusing on activities that are not central to the goals of school improvement. Furthermore, fragmentation of these efforts often results in confusion for school professionals regarding the focus of improvement efforts and how the different components of school improvement relate

to one another. Thus, when fragmentation occurs, the capacity of a school to address student needs is diminished. School capacity is a final area where principal leadership is important to ensure a successful collaborative school change effort.

Building School Capacity

School capacity refers to the infrastructure and resources available within a school to address student needs. Capacity includes concrete and tangible elements such as finances, personnel, and scheduling as well as intangible elements such as school climate and vision. A critical role of the principal and other leaders in CSR efforts is to ensure that the focus of change efforts stays on building school capacity to address student needs. Indeed, this is the primary reason a collaborative culture exists (Fullan, 2006).

Addressing the extent to which a school's infrastructure is designed to meet student needs is a key element for building capacity. Materials and resources, professional roles and responsibilities, scheduling, and time are some of the components of school infrastructure. Changes to infrastructure serve to empower professionals and also support changes in classroom practice (Friend & Cook, 2007). When developing inclusive programs, this may involve using a new, evidence-based instructional practice or program; altering responsibilities of individuals or groups of professionals; regrouping students for more effective, efficient instruction; or changing daily schedules to include time for professionals to interact, plan, and deliver services (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000). When working to establish a collaborative school culture, infrastructure changes operate to both support the conditions for collaboration and to generate new possibilities for interaction.

One difficulty that often arises as teachers work on CSR activities and alter the nature and scope of their professional interactions with others is ensuring that time is available for these activities. This is especially important when general and special educators work to develop inclusive programs. Time is obviously a scarce resource in schools. As plans for CSR are developed, it is critical that leaders of these endeavors ensure that the school infrastructure is evaluated to reorganize available time and make appropriate time available for collaborative work (Irwin & Farr, 2004). When schools develop collaborative cultures, educators do not necessarily find new time, but rather they use time in new ways to focus on the work at hand (Khorsheed, 2007). Others have offered suggestions for how to address the time demands of collaboration (Friend & Cook, 2007; Khorsheed, 2007; Sever & Bowgren, 2007). These suggestions emphasize the organization of school schedules to provide common planning time, prioritizing activities that allow teachers to meet and collaborate, rethinking staff and student groupings to allow groups of professionals to collaborate, and designating time within the workday for professional learning.

CONCLUSION

Although we have made great progress in recent years in providing students with disabilities access to general education classrooms and curriculum (McLeskey, Hoppey, Williamson, & Rentz, 2004; Williamson, McLeskey, Hoppey, & Rentz, 2006), CSR shows great promise for ensuring the development of effective, inclusive programs that change teacher practices and improve student outcomes. These changes will require re-culturing schools to develop a collaborative culture, the delivery of high-quality professional development, and strong leadership within schools. School psychologists, counselors, special educators, and other professionals will play critical roles in these school improvement activities, ensuring that expertise is available and shared with collaborative partners to develop high-quality programs and improve teacher practices.

Our understanding of how collaborative school cultures develop and influence school improvement efforts has grown considerably in recent years as a result of research that has provided rich descriptions of individual schools as well as analyses of the characteristics and factors that either support or impede the change process. In spite of this progress, further research is needed to provide additional understanding regarding how successful school improvement efforts are developed and sustained over time. This is especially the case in relation to the development of effective, inclusive services for students with disabilities. Critical topics that research might address include these:

1. How are school improvement activities and a collaborative culture sustained in a school with significant teacher and administrator turnover (Fisher et al., 2000; Gates et al., 2006; McLeskey, Tyler, & Flippin, 2004)?
2. What is the context of schools and school districts that support (or inhibit) the delivery of high-quality professional development as inclusive schools are being developed (Joyce & Showers, 2002)?
3. What are leadership roles that school psychologists, counselors, teachers, and other school personnel may take to facilitate the development of a collaborative culture and the implementation of CSR activities as inclusive schools are developed?
4. What are unique issues faced in CSR activities when addressing the development of inclusive programs to improve teacher practices and outcomes for students with disabilities?

Ultimately, accomplishing the goal of providing students with disabilities and other struggling learners with the educational options that will enable them to achieve their potential requires deep and sustainable partnerships among school professionals. CSR is an effective means of creating school culture that permits these dreams to become reality.

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