**Instructions – personal critical thinking**

Create your own Curriculum of the Future that focuses on five main areas of study. You don't have to choose the typical areas (Math, Science, Lang. Arts, etc.) but instead you might choose curriculum that you feel would be useful (i.e. technology, music, personal finance, etc.) The curriculum is totally up to you-you just need to justify why you think your curricular areas are appropriate for students in the future.

Describe each area that you chose and then explain how you think these areas of study will prepare students to meet future challenges. You will likely have 4-6 paragraphs per curriculum area. This paper should be 4 pages in length plus title and reference page.  It does not have to be in APA format but spelling and grammar do count.

Use only one source attached below and you personal opinion, no internet sources.

Source information: chapter 14 from textbook: Tozer, S., Senese, G., & Violas, P. (2013). School and Society - Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 9780078024405

pages432-446

School and Society: Teaching and Teacher Leadership in the 21st Century Chapter Overview Chapter 14 situates the study of school and society in the personal choice that people make to become teachers. The chapter first reminds the reader of one of the key messages of the book: that from the early national period to the common-school era; from the progressive era through the cold war to the post–cold war period of contemporary school reform; from agrarianism to industrialism and urbanization; from urbanization to suburbanization and the postindustrial computer age; from classical liberalism to modern liberalism to neoliberalism—the story of public schools in the United States has been marked by a tension between the ideals of democratic equality versus practices of unequal schooling that decade after decade reward power and privilege with educational resources far superior to those of the nonprivileged majority. But this raises the legitimate question: So what? What does this mean for me as a teacher? What this means for each teacher is partly dependent on why the individual may choose, or has chosen, teaching as a profession. Some people do it for personal reasons having to do mostly with their own individual skills, dispositions, and job opportunities, which may have little to do with goals for students or for society. For others, it’s all about student learning, with less regard for themselves and little attention to issues of social structure or political–economic inequality. For others, social issues are paramount, and they see teaching as a political act that can change society. It might be argued that no teacher can be motivated purely by just one of these perspectives, and that it is always a matter of emphasis. True enough; but this chapter raises the question of how teachers can think about, and how they can accomplish, their professional goals, whatever they might be. For thinking well about achieving one’s goals, it is important to understand the connection between how one teaches and what kinds of outcomes such teaching is most likely to achieve. That is, teachers need to have a “theory of impact,” or a way to see what their teaching is likely to amount to—for themselves, their students, and for society. And for teachers who wish to increase their impact, it is argued, collective action and leadership are necessary. In this connection, some teachers emerge as leaders—leaders who are much needed if teachers are to achieve their educational goals.

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For example, if you assign mathematics homework to elementary school students, you should have an explanation for how assigning such homework will be likely to lead to a specific result—such as learning mathematics, or learning to like mathematics, or learning that a little practice makes you better at something. In fact, researchers have tested that theory, and have shown that mathematics homework can have a positive impact on student learning.1 A second example is the conviction embodied in most teacher education programs that if teachers study material in the social foundations of education—something about the social contexts of schooling—they will be more effective as teachers. One way to express a (condensed) theory of impact for study in the social foundations of education is this: 1. Teachers are more likely to teach effectively if they understand their students well. Understanding students well—like understanding a quotation, a book, or a historical event—depends on understanding relevant context. 2. Studying the social foundations of education is likely to help teachers understand their students well, because who students are is not simply a

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Introduction: So What? The Importance of a Theory of Impact At this point in a textbook such as this, it is fair to ask: What does this all add up to? After thousands of facts and footnotes, and dozens of competing viewpoints, what’s the point? Will any of this make a single teacher or school more effective? Will any of it help a single third-grader read better, or a would-be high school dropout stay in school? To answer that effectively, we need a theory that would explain how a book like this would lead to some kind of results in schools. That is, we cannot simply assume that a teacher who reads and understands this book will be more effective; we must have a plausible, even persuasive explanation that shows how one thing is likely to cause another. Such an explanation is often called a “theory of action,” or “theory of impact”—an explanation of how something might cause a result. Ideally, the theory of impact should be testable. We should be able to conduct some kind of investigation to find out if the theory really works in practice.

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matter of genes; it is also a matter of culture—for students as for all of us, culture is our primary context. Students’ language, beliefs about the world, values, habits, and countless other things that are rewarded and punished in schools are shaped by their cultural context. Social foundations study can therefore help teachers understand, for example, what students mean even if they don’t say it in standard English; or that students’ intelligence manifests itself in many different ways; that students’ ways of demonstrating intelligence are affected by cultures that don’t always match the school culture; that different students need different kinds of support to succeed academically, depending on their home and community lives; that teachers can effectively partner with parents to help their children succeed in school; or that when teachers and schools fail to act on such understandings, decade after decade, schools can become “sorting machines,” in which children from different social groups will have predictably different success experiences in school—and different life outcomes in society.2 Such social foundations understanding is also likely to provide data and support for the beliefs and dispositions that many teachers have, that all children really are capable of academic success, even if they do not always show it—and that teachers can commit themselves individually and collectively to finding ways for children to succeed academically, whether or not the economic, ethnic, or linguistic background of the students matches that of their teachers. 3. When teachers understand their students well as products of culture just as teachers are a product of their cultures—and when they act individually and collectively to find ways to bridge the cultural gap between the school and the child—low-income and ethnically diverse children can succeed with challenging academic material. Students who were not learning become students who learn well. The evidence for such academic success is overwhelming.3 Social Context: Understanding Students, Self, and a Theory of Impact While the above three points sketch out a theory of impact for how social foundations study can help teachers better support student learning, there are other dimensions to the theory of impact. For example, social foundations study can help teachers understand not just the students in social context, but themselves and their work in social context as well. If schools have been acting too much as “sorting” institutions in which students’ socioeconomic status predicts pretty well how they will succeed (or not) in schools, then teachers can examine their own contributions to the sorting functions of the school as opposed to educational functions. Teachers can critically examine their own work to see how they can do more than simply be agents of a mass testing society, for example, and instead become allies of parents who want their children to succeed against the historical odds.

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In other words, social context understanding can help teachers better understand their own impact, how to think about the impact they wish to have, and how to achieve that impact in ways that are not reducible to test scores. Social foundations study can help teachers develop their own theories of impact that are consistent with the social contexts in which they find themselves as well as consistent with their own highest aspirations to have a positive influence on the life chances of children and youth. In this connection, you may remember the Ron Edmonds remark from Chapter 13: How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of poor children? If your answer is more than one, then I suspect that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that basic pupil performance derives from family background instead of the school response to family background.4 Edmonds went on to make what seemed in 1979 like a bold claim: We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far.5 Now, 30 years later, Edmonds’s claim is no longer so surprising. A significant number of schools throughout the nation have shown what low-income and minority kids are capable of achieving, if the right school conditions are provided.6 The social foundations theory of impact outlined earlier has been tested and demonstrated many times over since Edmonds’s day: If we do not limit student learning solely in the child, but rather in how the culture of the school responds to the child and the child’s culture, the child’s chances for academic success improve dramatically. So the theory of impact for this book is this: Those teachers who best understand what this book has to offer are in a better position to help improve student learning because they will understand students, schools, and themselves in the social contexts that affect the meanings and interactions among these three components of educational processes. To frame and execute their purposes well (as Dewey said in Experience and Education) teachers will likely have to situate their work in the context of the society as a whole, the specific community in which they work, and their school as an organization of adults who need to work together if the needs of children and youth are to be served. They will also need knowledge of subject matter, techniques for teaching it, and the dispositions to communicate care and commitment to students.7 Notice we did not say “such teachers are likely to have a powerful effect on ending racism, gender bias, and economic discrimination in America.” We would like to see such inequities as these come to an end, of course, but we don’t think our theory of impact supports such a claim. Although this book documents such inequities, it does so not to show that teachers can transform society, but rather to show that despite such social evils, teachers can (and sometimes do) succeed in helping students realize their full potential as learners and as persons. That in itself is a significant social change. But to do this, teachers have to really know what they are doing—and in most instances, they have to know how to do it together. This position is a disappointment to some people who view the point of teaching primarily as a lever to change an inequitable social structure. We do not reject the idea that teachers can change society, but we think the theory of impact for that view is much less clear than the theory that you as a teacher can teach students effectively regardless of their socioeconomic background. Decades of statistics tell us that it is hard enough to accomplish even that ambitious goal. Teaching to change the world, as one popular textbook is titled, is harder still; and more difficult, too, to support with a plausible theory for how a teacher is likely to have such an impact.8 But as we will show, it is not unreasonable to believe that teachers can change themselves, change their students, and change society. It’s just that a different theory of impact—a different explanation of how one thing leads to another—is needed for each. You and Your Theory of Impact So what did the first 13 chapters of this volume tell us about school and society in the United States that a teacher needs to know? These chapters have shown that from the very beginning, the United States has been divided about how much we have wanted to support public education, and certainly divided about how much we believe all children are entitled to equal resources for their education. The Constitution made it a state responsibility, rather than a national priority. And later, states commonly made the funding of schooling a local matter, leading to all manner of inequalities. In the early

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1800s, Jefferson couldn’t get the state of Virginia to support universal public education. When Massachusetts led the nation in supporting public schools at a state level, the system of private schools continued to serve the wealthy. While state-supported schools eventually took hold in the South, African Americans were prevented from attending them prior to the Civil War, and from the Civil War until the 1950s were not allowed to attend “White only” public schools. And so the book continues. From the early national period to the common-school era; from the progressive era through the cold war to the post–cold war period of contemporary school reform; from agrarianism to industrialism and urbanization; from urbanization to suburbanization and the postindustrial computer age; from classical liberalism to modern liberalism to neoliberalism— the story of public schools in the United States has been marked by a tension between the ideals of democratic equality versus practices of unequal schooling that decade after decade reward power and privilege with educational resources far superior to those of the nonprivileged majority. (Special note to students: It would not surprise the authors if your professor selected that sprawling sentence as an essay prompt for your final exam. If you can explain every term and the relationships among them to your most tolerant friend or family member, you should be in great shape.) As a consequence, what neighborhood you are born into today—the day we are writing, and the day you read this page—is a powerful predictor of not only what kind of schooling you will experience but where you will end up in the social and economic hierarchy of the United States. The volume also tells us that it need not be that way. As Rochester, New York, local AFT president Adam Urbanski said, “Socioeconomic status is a powerful predictor of student achievement in school—in the absence of good instruction.”9 In other words, when schools are organized to provide high-quality instruction to lowincome youth, high-level learning results. As a number of independent researchers have told us over the past 30 years, and as outstanding schools have repeatedly shown us—we know why kids learn well in some schools and not others, and we know how to produce those kinds of learning environments. But by and large, we don’t produce them. The discussions of political economy and ideology in this volume help us understand why. They help us see, for example, that some people would prefer to spend their local property taxes on their own schools at three times the support level that other schools in their state receive, rather than on equalizing schools throughout the state. The history of liberalism from classical to neoliberalism helps us understand why people would defend such inequalities as “the American way” by saying that the competitive market should be left to operate, and that it is a violation of freedom to make people use their money for other people’s neighborhoods and children. We might not agree with that defense, but we can understand it in the political– economic and ideological context of U.S. history. And it would be surprising if our current education system did not reflect the history of genocide against American Indians, or enslaving African Americans, or progressive era schools that consigned working-class kids to mind-numbing vocationalism. It would be surprising because those days were not so long ago. John Dewey, for example, one of the founders of modern schooling, was alive when the authors of this book were children. Yet Dewey was born before the Civil War, only 33 years after Jefferson’s death. Many people today remember clearly when the last of the ex-slaves died in the 1960s. So on the one hand, the message of this book is that we can understand where we are today by looking at our past. But another message is that, if we are to honor the best of the work that educators have done before us, we have a lot of work to do. If “all men are created equal” was a sentiment that could fuel the civil rights movement, the women’s equality movement, for example, and the integration of races, cultures, and sexes in today’s schools, it did so only through struggle. People devoted countless hours to strategizing together, protesting together, and politicking together to make our social institutions operate consistently with the ideals of democracy. Many of them were humiliated or lost their livelihoods; some were beaten; some were killed. Those struggles should remind teachers and administrators today that if we wish to see schools serve all kids’ learning needs, and not primarily those fortunate enough to be born into economic privilege, then someone—a lot of someones—will have to work for change. It may be that the most important changes you can bring about are in your own school. And it is almost certain that any important changes you bring about will be the result of your working collectively and strategically with others—parents, teachers, staff, administrators—rather than working alone. But it’s also possible that this is not at all why you got into teaching. Your theory of impact may not be about issues of democracy and equity: It may be about teaching English as well as you can. Or it might be about just getting a job after college. So on the one hand this

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volume shows how our current schools got to be the way they are, and on the other hand it shows that schools, like other social institutions, can change to better serve the needs of citizens. But that change agenda might not be your agenda. Why Teach? There are many different motivations to become a teacher, and to stay in teaching. One is tempted to say that there are as many different reasons to teach as there are teachers—or to get really romantic about it—as many different reasons as there are students. People have career motives, economic motives, “summers-off motives,” political motives, psychological motives, and so on. But the reason for examining this question of “why teach” is not to examine human individuality. Rather, it is to theorize a bit about the realities of impact: what you can actually accomplish as a teacher, and how what you can accomplish is determined so greatly by what you want to accomplish. Why do people go into teaching, and why do they stay there? For the purposes of this analysis, we might say there are three big reasons, and rarely does a teacher hold only one of them. But they differ enough that different people emphasize different ones in their motives to teach. The many legitimate reasons to be a teacher might be said to fall into these three categories: • It’s mostly about me. • It’s mostly about the kids. • It’s mostly about social change (or democracy, or social justice). We need to resist the temptation to impose a moral hierarchy on these motives, as if the first one is purely selfish and the third one is selfless and saintly. As individual cases are examined, such judgments may not be valid at all. First of all, people will rarely if ever be motivated by only one of these considerations—generally two or more will operate, with one or two receiving the greatest emphasis. Second, there may be good and bad reasons to gravitate toward any of these three orientations. If someone is “mostly about social change,” for example, he or she may be attracted by playing the role of the social change agent, but not be aware of the real day-to-day work that this requires. Sometimes people leave the profession precisely because their motives don’t match the skillset and the opportunities needed to act on them. Some people choosing to teach could be “mostly about me” because they have vowed to be the first in their families to earn a college degree and because teaching was what they always wanted to do since they were small children—so becoming a teacher is a fulfillment of a dream, rather than primarily being about helping others fulfill their dreams or having a social impact. One would hesitate to say that such an individual was selfish or morally suspect. In fact, one could imagine such an individual becoming a powerful force in kids’ lives. Whether you are making a simple vocational choice because you have to earn a living, or you just want a job that has to do with mathematics because you love it (both “mostly about me”); or you are driven by the learning needs of low-income kids and want to make a difference in their life chances (“mostly about the kids”); or you believe, as George Counts wrote, that “schools can build a new social order,” you owe it to yourself to have a clear theory of impact undergirding your work and your goals.10 Without an explanation of how your work is going to result in certain outcomes and not others, you risk just going through the motions, and you risk being sorely disappointed in what you actually achieve. A theory of impact, quite simply, makes you smarter about what you do. Orientations to Teaching and Theories of Impact Given how our teacher preparation programs are set up in colleges and universities, many teachers make their decision to enter the profession at a very young age— some still in their teens—as a vocational decision without much of a theory of impact at all. They are dealing with the more immediate realities of choosing a major and choosing a career track when it would be an exaggeration to say they have a burning desire to choose any one direction over another. Sometimes it’s just a process of elimination (“I’m not going to be a doctor or a lawyer, but I am going to do something with the degree”). In other instances, there are more distinct personal reasons, such as liking kids, or liking a particular subject matter. It’s often said, rightly or not, that elementary school teachers like to teach kids, while high school teachers like to teach subjects. Sometimes becoming a teacher is about finding a professional identity. In the late teens and early 20s, for example, people are about deciding who they are going to be in life. Increasingly,

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career-changers are making midcourse corrections in their own professional identities. None of these examples is unusual. Nor can any of them be said to be a case of a teacher who has clear goals for having an impact on students, or aspirations for changing society in some way. These are examples of teachers who go into teaching for more immediate, personal reasons in which “It’s mostly about me.” You could say there’s nothing wrong with that, but at the same time we would hope that such teachers will come to look beyond their own needs to the needs of their students, and this is usually what happens. However, in 50 years combined experience of working with teachers, we have found that not every teacher develops clear goals; not all teachers have a clear explanation for how their work will have consequences for students. Instead of a theory of impact, such teachers have a hope or a faith. American historian Henry Adams, born during the common-school era and living until well into the progressive era, captured this sentiment well: “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.”11 While this may be a comforting thought, and certainly a famous one, it is not a substitute for a theory of impact. You might call this the “ripple in the pond” theory, if it can be called a theory at all: You disturb the pond’s surface and the ripples move on their own beyond your control. But if you want to do more than reassure yourself that you might be having an impact of some unknown kind, then it’s a good idea to get clearer about what your theory of impact is. It’s useful to get strategic about exactly what impact you are seeking to have on your students’ thinking, valuing, understanding, skills, and life chances—and how you could actually achieve those consequences in your classroom and school. Examining teachers for whom “It’s mostly about the kids” might be a better place to seek such a theory of impact. It’s Mostly about the Kids For many teachers, even those who begin their careers with “It’s mostly about me” as their orientation, the focus of their work and worry is their students. For such teachers, “It’s mostly about the kids.” Their primary orientation is to try to make a difference in the lives of their students. The difference might be purely learning-focused, such as awakening as many children as possible to the love of literature, or the belief that they really can do algebra. Or it might be about affecting children’s life chances, as in taking whatever steps are necessary to help a child and child’s family see college as a real possibility, when they had thought otherwise. For teachers who measure their own success by their impact on children, having a theory of impact becomes particularly important. Social foundations of education becomes especially relevant, because it helps teachers understand why it is said that “in education, it’s never too early and it’s never too late.” That is, social foundations helps teachers understand that the ability to learn is not simply determined by genetics (except in relatively rare cases of birth defects of certain kinds) but is greatly influenced by the learning experiences that people have in their cultural contexts. This means that no matter how far behind grade level one’s students might be, there is strong reason to believe they are capable of learning difficult academic material. That is, skill level is not the same as ability to learn—it is more an indicator of the kinds of learning experiences that a student has had in the past, and those experiences are deeply influenced by race, ethnicity, language, and class. Here, too, teachers are in a good position to reflect on how their own cultural experiences are a good “fit” with the students’ needs, and whether the school as a whole is sufficiently responsive to the students’ ways of learning. Having a strong theory of impact, for such teachers, may well mean: • becoming clear about having ambitious learning goals for their students, • learning about what must be done in their classrooms and in the school more generally to help the students achieve those goals, and • becoming clear about how they are going to assess whether those goals are being reached. Having a theory of impact in helping struggling kids reach new heights of learning might require having a theory of teacher learning. That is, it may be important to pay attention to the literature on professional learning communities as places where teachers learn together how to meet the needs of their students, because it is rare that any single teacher has all the know-how necessary to help all kids succeed. But together, teachers can share what they know, influence one another’s thinking, push each other to new professional levels, and so on. Teacher educator Peter Murrell wrote recently about

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a particular kind of teacher know-how that we still do not see often enough in schools: The “know how” to which I refer is based upon a deep understanding of what it means to make community. Obviously, people make communities—and people living in community have to work at maintaining it. But, I refer here to community building as thoughtful, intentional, and collaborative professional action.12 Note those words: “thoughtful, intentional, and collaborative professional action.” For teachers who are “mostly about the kids,” the research and knowledge base are deep and compelling: Teachers who work together to frame and execute common goals, and assess whether those goals are being achieved, have a compelling theory of teacher learning, and this theory of teacher learning is part of a theory of impact. We know a great deal about how kids learn, under what conditions they learn best, and what teachers can do individually and collectively to support them. Teacher learning is an enormous part of this. One of the richest single sources of theory and data on these matters is the work of the Consortium on Chicago School Research (http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/content/index.php). The consortium’s work supports the notion of “professional learning communities” (PLCs). One good way to see what is meant by that term is to use the following scoring rubric on a school you are familiar with. The criteria are instructive: They not only describe what a professional learning community looks like; they allow you to assess the degree to which a PLC has developed or is developing in a given school. (See Exhibit 14.1.) It’s Mostly about Social Change (or Democracy, or Social Justice) It’s one thing to say that we know a lot about supporting student learning, regardless of family background; it’s another to say we know a lot about how schools can change society. In Part 1 we read an article by John Dewey claiming that schools do not lead social change, but educators can become “allies” of social changes in the making. The idea that there is a direct link between teaching and social change is a popular one. Like Henry Adams mentioned previously, American author Henry James penned a famous statement about the teacher’s influence: To believe in a child is to believe in the future. Through their aspirations they will save the world. With their combined knowledge the turbulent seas of hate and injustice will be calmed. They will champion the causes of life’s underdogs, forging a society without class discrimination. They will supply humanity with music and beauty as it has never been known. They will endure. Towards these ends I pledge my life’s work. I will supply the children with tools and knowledge to overcome the obstacles. I will pass on the wisdom of my years and temper it with patience. I shall impact in each child the desire to fulfill his or her dream. I shall teach.13 Again we have a viewpoint that sounds appealing, but that is not very useful as a theory of impact. “I shall impact in each child the desire to fulfill his or her dream,” and “they will save the world,” in part by “forging a society without class discrimination.” One problem with this sort of high-sounding rhetoric is that there is little or no evidence to support it. We don’t have a good theory of impact that would lead us to believe that teachers can bring about such changes because, as Dewey pointed out, schools are controlled by those who most benefit from the social order as it is. There is no reason to expect anyone in power to support schools that would overturn that state of affairs, either quickly or slowly. A good theory for how the power structure of the modern world will be dramatically changed by teachers simply has not been put forward in any compelling way—though schools can certainly be shown to have made their contributions to educating students who are less racist and less sexist, once those social movements were under way and supported by legislation. A second problem is that those who become teachers to make a visible impact on the social order—those who teach to change the world—can easily be disappointed when they see how difficult that is. It’s difficult enough to change the behavior of a high school sophomore, let alone Western capitalism as we know it. So teachers who enter teaching without a realistic appraisal of what can actually be accomplished in the teacher’s role can be frustrated in their efforts. At the same time, teachers who are fully committed to student learning often have to lead change in their own schools to achieve it. We do want to encourage such institutional change for the results that can be achieved—for the outcomes that a good theory of impact can support. A low-performing school CAN become a high-performing school, as a great deal of research shows.14 And teachers should not wait for the revolution for this to happen, because teacher leadership

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typically attributed to anthropologist Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”15 What is at issue for us as educators is what it means to “change the world.” If schools can be changed for the better in this neighborhood and that one, School Characteristics Rating Rating Scale: 1—Nonexistent; 2—Barely underway; 3—Evidence of progress; 4—A school strength; 5—Truly exemplary, ready to demonstrate to other schools 1. Mission: Evidence that learning for all is school’s core purpose. Learning outcomes are clearly articulated to all stakeholders in the school, and each student’s attainment of the outcomes is carefully monitored. Practices, programs, and policies of the school are continually assessed on the basis of their impact on student learning. 2. Shared Vision: Do we know what we are trying to create? Staff members routinely articulate the major principles of the shared vision and use those principles to guide their day-to-day efforts and decisions. 3. Shared Values: How must we behave to advance our vision? The values of the school are embedded in the school culture. They are evident to new staff and to others outside the school, and they influence all policies and practices in the school. 4. Goals and Priorities: All staff pursue measurable performance goals as part of their routine responsibilities. Goals are clearly linked to the school’s vision. Staff celebrate goal attainment and demonstrate willingness to pursue challenging stretch goals. 5. Collaborative Culture—Teachers: Teachers function as a team (or in teams). They work collaboratively to identify collective goals, develop strategies to achieve those goals, gather relevant data, and learn from one another. 6. Collaborative Culture—Administrator-Teacher Relations: Staff are fully involved in the decision-making processes of the school. Administrators pose questions, delegate authority, create collaborative decision making, and provide staff with the information, training, and parameters they need to make good decisions. 7. Parent Partnerships: The school–parent partnership moves beyond open communication to enabling parents to assist their children in learning. Parents are full partners in the educational decisions that affect their children. 8. Action Research: Topics for action research arise from the shared vision and goals of the school. Staff members regard action research as an important component of their professional responsibilities. Teachers frequently try to learn from their colleagues. 9. Continuous Improvement: Everyone in the school participates in an ongoing cycle of systematically gathering and analyzing data to identify the gap between actual and desired results, setting new goals, developing strategies to achieve them, and monitoring results. 10. Focus on Results: Teams of teachers are hungry for information on results. Teachers themselves gather relevant data and use these data to set goals and monitor progress toward them. 11. Overall PLC Development: This principle is deeply embedded in the school’s culture, representing a driving force in the daily work of the school. Source: Condensed and adapted from R. DuFour, R. DuFour, R. Eaker, and G. Karhanek, Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don’t Learn (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree, 2004). Exhibit 14.1 Self-Assessment: Professional Learning Community Continuum in this city and that one, and thousands and even millions of children are getting the chance to learn who once were not, that’s a different world—and an achievable one. But change will likely have to start at home, in one’s own school, demonstrating how things can indeed be different. The scholarship on such schools grows year by year.

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Teacher Leadership and Professional Learning Communities We conclude with a brief word about teacher leadership, a theme that is visited again in our Primary Source Reading. It is a truism that leadership is necessary to any organization achieving its goals, whether the leadership is vested in one person or many together. It is also true that your goals as a teacher are most likely going to be achieved, or not, in an organization called “school.” Contemporary research is demonstrating that those schools that most succeed “against the odds” of poverty and racism are those in which the principal is not the only leader in the building; teacher leaders are proving to be crucial. What is teacher leadership? One way to define it is the willingness and ability of teachers to take responsibility for school outcomes outside their own classrooms. Those are the individuals to whom other teachers and administrators turn to help lead a school in new and better directions. What kinds of goals can teacher leadership make it possible to achieve? We now know that teacher leadership can help teachers collaborate to evaluate the effectiveness of their work together, to make decisions about how to make it better, and to implement new approaches in ways that improve student learning. When enough teacher leaders are so engaged, that will be a social change of considerable significance. Teacher leadership can be part of a compelling theory of impact for how schools can better serve populations of students that historically have been ill-served by school and society. Primary Source Reading Organizing Schools for Improvement Research on Chicago school improvement indicates that improving elementary schools requires coherent, orchestrated action across five essential supports. Anthony S. Bryk Alexander Elementary School and Hancock Elementary School began the 1990s as two of the worst schools in Chicago in terms of math and reading achievement. Only two miles apart, the schools are in bordering neighborhoods and appear similar in many ways. Both enrolled nearly 100% minority students from families considered low income. During the 1990s, both launched an array of initiatives aimed at boosting student achievement. Hancock moved impressively forward, while Alexander barely moved the needle on improvement. How did Hancock “beat the odds” while Alexander failed to do so? This puzzle led us to undertake a systematic longitudinal investigation of hundreds of elementary schools in Chicago, just like Alexander and Hancock. Beginning in 1990, the Consortium on Chicago School Research initiated an intensive longitudinal study of the internal workings and external community conditions that distinguished improving elementary schools from those that failed to improve. That unique 15-year database allowed us to develop, test, and validate a framework of essential supports for school improvement. These data provided an extraordinary window to examine the complex interplay of how schools are organized and interact with the local community to alter dramatically the odds for improving student achievement. The lessons learned offer guidance for teachers, parents, principals, superintendents, and civic leaders in their efforts to improve schools across the country. Five Essential Supports for School Improvement Students’ academic learning occurs principally in classrooms as students interact with teachers around subject matter. How we organize and operate a school has a major effect on the instructional exchanges in its classrooms. Put simply, whether classroom learning proceeds depends in large measure on how the school as a social context supports teaching and sustains student engagement. Through our research, we identified five organizational features of schools that interact with life inside classrooms and are essential to advancing student

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academic and social supports, and the hiring and development of staff. They establish strategic priorities for using resources and buffer externalities that might distract from coherent reform. Working in tandem with this, principals build relationships across the school community. Improving teaching and learning places demands on these relationships. In carrying out their daily activities, school leaders advance instrumental objectives while also trying to enlist teachers in the change effort. In the process, principals cultivate a growing cadre of leaders (teachers, parents, and community members) who can help expand the reach of this work and share overall responsibility for improvement. Using extensive survey data collected by the consortium from teachers, principals, and students, we were able to develop school indicators for each of the five essential supports, chart changes in these indicators over time, and then relate these organizational conditions to subsequent changes in student attendance and learning gains in reading and mathematics. Among our findings: • Schools with strong indicators on most supports were 10 times more likely to improve than schools with weak supports. • Half of the schools strong on most supports improved substantially in reading. • Not a single school weak on most supports improved in mathematics. • A material weakness in any one support, sustained over several years, undermined other change efforts, and improvement rarely resulted. This statistical evidence affords a strong warrant that how we organize schools is critical for student achievement. Improving schools entails coherent, orchestrated action across all five essential supports. Put simply, there is no one silver bullet. Dynamics of Improvement Schools are complex organizations consisting of multiple interacting subsystems (that is, the five essential organizational supports). Personal and social considerations mix deeply in the day-to-day workings of a school. These interactions are bound by various rules, roles, and prevailing practices that, in combination with technical resources, constitute schools as formal organizations.

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1. Coherent instructional guidance system. Schools in which student learning improves have coherent instructional guidance systems that articulate the what and how of instruction. The learning tasks posed for students are key here, as are the assessments that make manifest what students actually need to know and provide feedback to inform subsequent instruction. Coordinated with this are the materials, tools, and instructional routines shared across a faculty that scaffold instruction. Although individual teachers may have substantial discretion in how they use these resources, the efficacy of individual teacher efforts depends on the quality of the supports and the local community of practice that forms around their use and refinement. 2. Professional capacity. Schooling is a human resource–intensive enterprise. Schools are only as good as the quality of faculty, the professional development that supports their learning, and the faculty’s capacity to work together to improve instruction. This support directs our attention to a school’s ability to recruit and retain capable staff, the efficacy of performance feedback and professional development, and the social resources within a staff to work together to solve local problems. 3. Strong parent-community-school ties. The disconnect between local school professionals and the parents and community that a school is intended to serve is a persistent concern in many urban contexts. The absence of vital ties is a problem; their presence is a multifaceted resource for improvement. The quality of these ties links directly to students’ motivation and school participation and can provide a critical resource for classrooms. 4. Student-centered learning climate. All adults in a school community forge a climate that enables students to think of themselves as learners. At a minimum, improving schools establish a safe and orderly environment—the most basic prerequisite for learning. They endorse ambitious academic work coupled with support for each student. The combination allows students to believe in themselves, to persist, and ultimately to achieve. 5. Leadership drives change. Principals in improving schools engage in a dynamic interplay of instructional and inclusive facilitative leadership. On the instructional side, school leaders influence local activity around core instructional programs, supplemental

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Meaningful parent and community involvement can be a resource for solving problems of safety and order; but, in a reciprocal fashion, these ties are likely to be stronger in safe and orderly schools. This reciprocity carries over to leadership as the driver for change. While a principal commands formal authority to effect changes in the four other organizational supports, a school with some strengths in these four supports is also easier to lead. Arguing for the significance of one individual support over another is tempting, but we ultimately came to view the five supports as an organized system of elements in dynamic interaction with one another. As such, primary value lies in their integration and mutual reinforcement. In this sense, school development is much like baking a cake. By analogy, you need an appropriate mix of flour, sugar, eggs, oil, baking powder, and flavoring to produce a light, delicious cake. Without sugar, it will be tasteless. Without eggs or baking powder, the cake will be flat and chewy. Marginal changes in a single ingredient—for example, a bit more flour, large versus extra large eggs—may not have noticeable effects. But, if one ingredient is absent, it is just not a cake. Similarly, strong local leadership acting on the four other organizational elements constitutes the essential ingredients for spurring school development. Broadbased instructional change and improved student learning entail coordinated action across these various domains. Correspondingly, student outcomes are likely to stagnate if a material weakness persists in any of the supports. The ensemble of supports is what’s essential for improvement. Taken together, they constitute the core organizational ingredients for advancing student engagement and achievement. Building Trust Effecting a coherent improvement plan across the essential supports can be a daunting challenge. Embracing a coherent improvement plan challenges longstanding norms about teacher autonomy in the classroom and a laissezfaire orientation toward professional development and innovative practice. Not surprisingly, cultivating teacher buy-in and commitment becomes a central concern in promoting the deep cultural changes required for such an initiative to be successful. At this juncture, concerns about building relational trust come forcefully into play. Some of the most powerful relationships found in our data are associated with relational trust and how it operates as both a lubricant for organizational change and

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In a sense, almost everything interacts with everything else. That means that a true picture of what enables some schools to improve and others to stagnate requires identifying the critical interconnections among the five essential supports: How do these five essential supports function together to substantially change the odds for enhancing student engagement and academic learning? Schools that improved student attendance over time strengthened their ties to parents and community and used these ties as a core resource for enhancing safety and order across the school. This growing sense of routine and security further combined with a better-aligned curriculum that continually exposed students to new tasks and ideas. Engaging pedagogy afforded students active learning roles in the classroom. High-quality professional development aimed to enhance teachers’ capacity to orchestrate such activity under the trying circumstances that most confront daily. When this combination of conditions existed, the basic recipe for improving student attendance was activated. In terms of the organizational mechanisms influencing academic achievement, this can be told in two contrasting stories. Schools that stagnated—no learning improvement over several years—were characterized by clear weaknesses in their instructional guidance system. They had poor curriculum alignment coupled with relatively little emphasis on active student engagement in learning. These instructional weaknesses combined with weak faculty commitments to the school, to innovation, and to working together as a professional community. Undergirding all of this were anemic school-parent community ties. In contrast, schools in which student learning improved used high-quality professional development as a key instrument for change. They had maximum leverage when these opportunities for teachers occurred in a supportive environment (that is, a school-based professional community) and when teaching was guided by a common, coherent, and aligned instructional system. Undergirding all of this, in turn, was a solid base of parent-community school ties. There is a logic to reading the five essential organizational supports from left to right—leadership drives change in the four other organizational supports—but the actual execution of improvement is more organic and dynamic. Good teachers advance high-quality instruction, but developing good teachers and retaining them in a particular school depends on supportive school leadership and positive work relations with colleagues.

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contexts fade into the background. Some school reform advocates believe only instruction and instructional leadership matter. This perspective assumes that a school’s social and personal connections with local families and communities play a small role in reform. Our evidence, however, offers a strong challenge. To be sure, instruction matters—a lot. But social context matters too. We have documented that strength across all five essential supports, including parent–school–community ties, is critical for improvement to occur in all kinds of urban schools. Unfortunately, we have also learned that this organizational development is much harder to initiate and sustain in some community contexts than others. As data accumulated in Chicago and school-by-school trends in attendance and student learning gains became clear, a complex pattern of results emerged. Improving schools could be found in all kinds of neighborhoods varying by socioeconomic and racial/ethnic composition. Stagnating schools, in contrast, piled up in very poor, racially isolated African-American neighborhoods. We became haunted by the question, “Why? What made reform so much more difficult to advance in some school communities?” Our analyses led us to two different answers. First, the social capital of a neighborhood is a significant resource for improving its local school. We found that the latter was much more likely in neighborhoods where residents had a history of working together. In contrast, the absence of such collective efficacy in the surrounding community increased the likelihood that a troubled school would continue to stagnate. Correspondingly, communities with strong institutions, especially religious institutions, were more supportive contexts for school improvement. These institutions afford a network of social ties that can be appropriated for other purposes, such as improving schools. They also create connections that can bring new outside resources into isolated neighborhoods. So, differences among neighborhoods in their bonding and bridging social capital help explain why the essential supports were more likely to develop in some neighborhoods than others. But this was only a partial answer for a subset of the school communities. A second mechanism was also at work. We found that the proportion of children who were living under extraordinary circumstances—neglect and abuse, homeless, foster care, domestic violence—also created a significant barrier to improvement in some schools. To be clear, these students were learning at about the

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a moral resource for sustaining the hard work of local school improvement. Absent such trust, schools find it nearly impossible to strengthen parent–community ties, build professional capacity, and enable a studentcentered learning climate. The reverse is also true: Low trust is linked to weaker developments across these organizational supports. Given the asymmetry of power in urban school communities, principals play a key role in nurturing trust formation. Principals establish both respect and personal regard when they acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others, actively listen to their concerns, and eschew arbitrary actions. If principals couple this empathy with a compelling school vision, and if teachers see their behavior as advancing this vision, their personal integrity is also affirmed. Then, assuming principals are competent at managing routine school affairs, an overall ethos conducive to building trust is likely to emerge. Such leadership uses power constructively to jumpstart change. In the initial stages, school leaders cultivate low-risk collaborations among faculty members who are predisposed to working together. School-based professional development is designed to advance instructional improvement and enhance a sense of community and shared commitments among faculty. Similarly, principals engage parents and other community members in activities that enable participants to contribute to the school and advance the learning of their own children and thus experience a sense of efficacy. “Small wins” gradually build a school community’s capacity for the greater challenges (and higher-risk social exchanges) that may lie ahead. On balance, as principals seek to initiate change in a school, not everyone is necessarily affirmed or afforded an equal voice. Relational trust can emerge only if participants show their commitment to engage in the hard work of reform and see others doing the same. Principals must take the lead and extend themselves by reaching out to others. On occasion, they may be called on to demonstrate trust in colleagues who may not fully reciprocate, at least initially. But in the end, principals also must be prepared to use their authority to reform the school community through professional norms. Interestingly, such authority may rarely be needed once new norms are firmly established. Unrecognized Challenges In many recent discussions about school reform, ideas about parent involvement and school community

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same rates as their classmates in whatever school they were enrolled. So, the learning gains for these particular students were not depressing the overall results for their schools. But the odds of school stagnation soared when a concentration of these students appeared in the same place. On balance, schools are principally about teaching and learning, not solving all of the social problems of a community. However, when palpable personal and social needs walk through doors every day, school staff can’t be expected to ignore those needs. Our evidence suggests that when the proportion of these needs remains high and pressing, the capacity of a school staff to sustain attention to developing the five essential supports falls by the wayside. A few schools managed to succeed under these circumstances, but most did not. In sum, a nettlesome problem came into focus on improving student learning to truly disadvantaged communities where social capital is scarce and human need sometimes overwhelming. These schools face a “threestrike” problem. Not only are the schools highly stressed organizations, but they exist in challenged communities and confront an extraordinary density of human needs every day. Our findings about schooling in truly disadvantaged communities offer a sobering antidote to a heady political rhetoric of “beating the odds” and “no excuses.” To be sure, we believe that all schools can and must improve. Such claims represent our highest, most noble aspirations for our children, our schools, and systems of schools. They are ideas worthy of our beliefs and action. But there are also facts, sometimes brutal facts. Not all school communities start out in the same place and confront the same problems. Unless we recognize this, unless we understand more deeply the dynamics of school stagnation, especially in our most neglected communities, we seem bound to repeat the failures of the past. Our concluding point is straightforward—it is hard to improve what we do not understand. We need more attention on how to improve schools in these specific contexts. All plausible ideas for educational improvement deserve serious consideration. Absent systematic analysis of not only where we succeed but also where and why we fail, we will continue to relegate many of our students and their teachers to a similar fate.

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Belief and Doubt Our work has been motivated by a deep belief that schools can and must do much better if we are to revitalize the American dream of opportunity for every child. A good education is now more important than ever in creating the pathway to this opportunity. Unfortunately, for far too many, this pathway is now closed, and opportunity dies early. Thomas Jefferson’s observation about America’s noble experiment in democracy—“If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be”—is truer today than ever before. However, a belief in the power of schooling and in our ability to improve this institution must also coexist with a modicum of doubt—a critical perspective—about the wisdom of any particular reform effort. Virtually every initiative involves at least some zone of wishful thinking, and even good designs typically require executing a strategy for which there is no established game plan. We now know, for example, that some schools, especially in poorer African-American neighborhoods, were disproportionately left behind. This is a brutal fact that had to be told; our role as an agent informing reform meant bringing it to light. Absent our inquiry, this result could easily have remained hidden in a more casual accounting of the overall positive test score trends. But we must also do more than just tell the facts. We must seek to understand, and we must also ask why. To see race and class differences in rates of improvement and to just stop there without probing deeper simply creates more fodder for conflict among critics and apologists of the current state of affairs. This dysfunctional discourse advances no common understandings and helps no children and no families. What is really going on in these school communities, and why are the important tasks of improving schools so difficult to advance? Asking these questions, bringing evidence to bear on them, and in the process advancing public discourse about the improvement of public education is a vital role that applied social inquiry can and should fill in a technically complex and politically diverse democratic society. In the end, melding strong, independent disciplined inquiry with a sustained commitment among civic leaders to improve schooling is the only long-term assurance that an education of value for all may finally

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