What happens when improvement programs collide

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Introduction

The century that began with the one best system [1] is ending with concerns about whether there is any system at all. Teachers and schools today are besieged by a host of often competing demands and responsibilities. While in their own right, many new practices, policies and reform efforts may make sense, in reality teachers and schools are often left to try to integrate and coordinate these varied initiatives when they have neither the resources nor the time to do their work well in the first place. Unfortunately, the cumulative demands and resulting fragmentation and incoherence can undermine the capacity of schools to make the very improvements so many desire.

Among the responses to this problem have been initiatives to encourage schools to take advantage of the services and resources of programs and organizations designed to promote whole-school reforms or changes in the teaching of particular subjects such as English, mathematics or science. Specifically, in 1998, Congress created the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD), in which 145 million dollars was earmarked for schools that sought to work with one or more improvement programs or to create their own strategy for comprehensive reform. Many of the improvement programs mentioned in the CSRD legislation and guidance such as Success for All/Roots and Wings, Accelerated Schools, High Schools that Work, and the Modern Red Schoolhouse -- the can point to some affiliated schools which have made substantial improvements in operations and student performance. Furthermore, it is clear that these kinds of improvement programs can provide a variety of useful resources and services and can serve to motivate and inspire some staff, students, and parents.[2] But it remains unclear whether efforts to increase the number of schools working with improvement programs will lead to more effective reforms on a larger scale and the kind of school level coherence and capacity for increased student learning that so many desire. Too often, programs are simply added on to the many initiatives already in place instead of being integrated into a focused effort.[3] In the process, rather than contributing to substantial improvements, adopting improvement programs may also

contribute to the endless cycle of initiatives that serve to sap the strength and spirit of schools and their communities.

Today, many schools may be trying to juggle the demands of implementing several improvement programs at the same time. For example, in a 1998-99 survey of the principals of schools in one District in the San Francisco Bay Area (with 77% responding) over half of the respondents (52%) reported that they were involved with three or more programs or partnerships that were created by nationally-known or local groups and organizations;15% reported that they were involved with six or more different programs or partnerships. Surveys in three comparison districts in California and Texas showed that, of the responding schools in all districts, 63% were engaged with three or more improvement programs, and 27% with six or more. In one district, 18% of schools were working with nine or more different programs simultaneously. The programs and partnerships with which schools were involved included whole school reform programs like Success for All, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination), and programs like Reading Recovery and Connected Mathematics that focused on improving student performance in specific subjects. In the Bay Area District, locally developed programs included the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) -- which provided funds, technical assistance and network participation to schools that passed through a portfolio application procedure; Joint Venture Silicon Valley (JVSV) -- which offered funds and resources to schools interested in coordinating their curriculum and assessments with other schools in their feeder pattern; and a local university which offered Professional Development School partnerships.

Of course, schools are trying to put these programs in place at the same time that they are trying to respond to the rising standards and new demands of numerous state and district initiatives that have been established in the last few years. For example, in the Bay Area District, schools have had to deal with a variety of new initiatives including new district graduation requirements in mathematics, science, and foreign languages (in order to correspond with entrance requirements for University of California system) and the development of exit exams in a

number of subjects (with a requirement for high school students to complete 40 hours of community service to be added in the coming years). From the state, schools have had to contend with major new policies like class-size reduction, elimination of many bilingual education programs, and the recent passage of the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) which has created a system of tests, incentives, and support to encourage schools to improve their performance.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that many teachers and administrators in the Bay Area District feel stretched to the limit. According to one Assistant Superintendent, frustration and anger at the school level have never been higher. Over and over again, he told us, principals and teachers are saying "We don't want anything else. We're over our heads...

It is easy to blame the principals for getting involved in too many initiatives, the district for failing to coordinate their own initiatives, and the improvement programs for making unrealistic demands. But the problems of fragmentation and overload experienced in schools in the Bay Area District and elsewhere around the country may be a feature of an educational system in which schools, districts, and improvement programs face numerous, often conflicting, demands from diverse constituencies, experience frequent changes in policies and personnel, and have significant constraints on the time, resources and funding available to them.[4]

As a consequence, efforts to improve the implementation and integration of different initiatives face a basic paradox: while creating new incentives for improved performance and aligning some policies may motivate or smooth the way for some school reform efforts, it takes capacity to build capacity at the school level. Ironically, although improvement programs can provide some of the inspiration, resources, services, and expertise that can help many schools develop the capacity to change, the adoption of improvement programs themselves can bring new demands, requirements and costs which schools do not always have the capacity to meet. As a result, schools and improvement programs often have to figure out how to address a series of catch-22" s in order to make implementation successful :

1) in order to select appropriate programs schools have to develop substantial knowledge of the programs approach and demands even before implementation begins;

2) implementing these programs often requires more time, resources, and flexibility than schools normally have readily available;

3) schools need to have a good understanding of their own approach to learning and to school improvement in order to figure out how to integrate the initiatives of improvement programs into their own work.

While it is not impossible to address these issues, our conversations with a small number of principals, administrators, and improvement program staff members in the Bay Area District and a review of the introductory materials that 44 different improvement programs make available to schools provides a glimpse of the complexity of the problems.[5]

Knowledge for improvement

Without adequate knowledge of the approaches, requirements, resources, and expected outcomes of improvement programs, schools cannot make a wise choice about which ones are likely to meet their needs. Yet, given the time and resources that schools have available, it can be very difficult for schools to develop sufficient knowledge about different approaches before they make that choice.[6]   As the principal explained of Phoenix Elementary School described it, A lot of times you just have to go on faith. You don t know exactly how its going to work. So [in one case] when the opportunity came up in the district, hey, who wants to be a Professional Development School? and this is vaguely the concept of it...   I said hey, that s an opportunity that s not going to take a lot of paperwork, so we went.

The problems of developing adequate knowledge about a program in order to determine whether or not it fits a school s needs is compounded by the fact that the more unusual and unconventional an approach, the harder it is to learn about it and the longer such learning will

take. In fact, if school members have relatively little knowledge about an approach, they may have considerable difficulty recognizing the value of the approach in the first place, and they may not be interested in learning more about it.[7] As a result, schools that truly want to change their curriculum or make comprehensive changes -- not just minor modifications -- have to make a substantial investment up-front in exploring different improvement programs and building their knowledge about them.

In recognition of the importance of these problems, many improvement programs try to ensure that schools are ready by requiring them to participate in exploration processes in which they study the philosophy and approach of the improvement program, to agree to a memoranda of understanding (MOU), or to produce a school portfolio or other form of application. Such processes do have the potential to enable schools to develop some of the knowledge and commitment needed for successful implementation, but they can also take considerable time and effort with no guarantee of success. As the principal of Charleston High School pointed out, her faculty has drafted their commitments for a Memoranda of Understanding with one organization five different times, but it has yet to be accepted. The principal of Tucson Elementary finally gave up trying to work with one improvement program after their school portfolio failed to meet the appropriate criteria twice.   I can t afford to work on a portfolio that meets all the criteria and hire someone to do that when we can t teach our kids to read, she explained.

Furthermore, almost all exploration processes end with a vote in which the teachers, school staff, or larger school community are given a chance to decide whether or not to move ahead with the implementation of the program; but these buy-in votes are often little more than perfunctory exercises that can easily be manipulated by principals or other powerful members of the school community. As the Phoenix Elementary principal said, You work with the [school] leadership and get their buy-in and the rest of them will more or less come along.   Thus, rather than demonstrating whether or not a school actually has learned enough about a program to make an informed choice, these votes may simply reflect the effectiveness of the campaign to support the program.

Adding to the complications, the more time and money a school invests in exploring one program, the less time and money they have to invest in examining alternative approaches and the more difficult it may be to choose <u>not</u> to pursue that approach. If a school abandons an approach, they will have spent considerable time and money but may be no closer to making significant changes. Given the considerable pressures many schools face to produce improvements in student performance in short periods of time, saying no may cost too much.

Under these conditions, both schools and improvement programs have to balance the time and money they have available for exploration with the depth of the knowledge needed to make implementation work. Too little time and money, and schools could adopt a program that will cost them far more than they bargained for and improvement programs may end up working in schools where they contribute more to overload and fragmentation than to increased performance. Too much time and money, and a school may not be able to afford the initial commitment.

As a result, for the implementation of improvement programs to work on a larger-scale, many improvement programs -- and their funders -- have to recognize that their own success may rest as much on a school s capacity to select <u>other</u> programs as it does on the number of schools who adopt their program. If schools do not understand their options, they are more likely to continue to base their selection on superficial features and factors like availability, accessibility, and ease of use, without developing the knowledge they need to implement the programs effectively. For their part, districts have to allow schools to spend the necessary time involved in exploring the options, and they have to be willing and able to support the many different plans and choices that may emerge, even if they do not match the districts own beliefs about which ones will be successful.

The time and resources for improvement

Without time, resources, and flexibility, schools cannot make the reassignments in personnel, the re-allocation of professional development and meeting time, and the other changes that many improvement programs see as crucial to success. Yet many initiatives, particularly in

the early stages of implementation, involve far more time, effort, and resources than many schools have readily available.[8] For example, even though Madison Middle School is only involved with two improvement programs, the principal and staff have to consider carefully whether or not they have the capacity to carry out another partnership with a local technology company designed to enhance their curriculum. We want to be known as having the best technology and the best training in the district, the principal told us. Having [the computer company] come in will keep us on that path. The company is offering $100,000 of equipment (including 60 computers), internet access, and training that the partnership with the company could be central to the schools improvement efforts; but to take advantage of those resources, the school has to have a critical mass of teachers willing to commit to thirty hours of training and willing to participate in developing curriculum for the new technology. So it looks like this wonderful gift, the principal explained. But is it going to be more work than the gift is worth?... A hundred thousand dollars would be nice, but we may not be able to handle the commitment.

Every time they consider a new initiative, principals and schools have to wrestle with this trade-off between the possible benefits of the resources, expertise, and positive publicity that can come with working with many improvement programs and the possible costs of the time and commitments required. Right now, the Associate Superintendent explained, some schools in the Bay Area District are caught in a double bind because they cannot afford to take on the additional work required in order to get the additional money and resources they need.: [Principals] need the money so they can hire people on their staff to do things, he told us. The difference is now, unlike five or six years ago, they can t use the money to pay teachers in the afternoon to do teaming and to do professional development activities, because the teachers don t have time. They re too burned out trying to keep on top of what they re expected to do." One principal put it even more simply: It reaches a point where it doesn t make any difference what the money is. You don t have any more time and energy.

When schools do decide that an initiative is worth the effort, the principals we talked to suggested they often have to expend considerable efforts to try to negotiate down the demands

and requirements of their partners in order to make the programs doable. At Madison Middle School, it meant that the principal had to tell the staff members of their school-university partnership that she could not adopt the governance structure that was central to the partnership approach. I told them I can t do it. I ve got a governance structure that I have to design for [another program], a governance structure for the school, and a governance structure for the federal magnet program. I m not going to do that. You want too much blood from us for this reform effort.

Adding to the difficulties, even though many improvement programs try to make explicit the requirements and costs of implementation and to discourage schools from adopting the program if they cannot meet these expectations, a close reading of the introductory materials of many improvement programs suggests that there are numerous requirements of successful implementation that are either left implicit or that schools will have to address largely on their own. In many cases, the explicit requirements suggest that schools need to have in place many of the baseline conditions that are often cited as critical for successful implementation such as the support and commitment of school staff, school leadership and parents. Yet many programs themselves do not have the capacity to ensure that these conditions can be met. Even many of the comprehensive, whole-school programs such as the school designs supported by New American Schools can be undermined if these conditions are not addressed, and few can provide the resources, services, and expertise to address all of these conditions equally effectively.[9]

Finally, the implementation of many programs may involve a variety of other hidden costs that come simply with the passage of time and the inevitable changes in funding, personnel, policies, and economics. Most obviously, schools that get grants to implement programs often have to expend considerable time and effort to raise more funds even before they can demonstrate the expected improvements. These kinds of concerns contributed to the principal of Madison Middle Schools difficulty in deciding whether or not to participate in the new technology initiative. What happens if they come in and do us for a year, she wondered, and put all those computers in. Can it be sustained after that year, or is it going to drain all of our funds to

maintain the technology?

Changes in the offerings and strategies of the improvement programs themselves can also wreak havoc on a schools efforts to implement and integrate initiatives. Although these changes often reflect the programs efforts to improve their effectiveness, they may also contribute to confusion at the school level as well. For example, Charleston High School had to deal with the fact that two of the improvement programs they were working with began to emphasize the need to address equity issues in order to improve student achievement. From the perspective of these programs, this new thrust was a response to what they were learning in many of their partner schools about how to make implementation successful. But, from the school s perspective, the new emphasis brought new demands that diverted attention from ongoing efforts instead of deepening them. We ve gotten mixed messages, the principal explained. The initial idea of working on curriculum and student achievement and best teaching practices is now changed... On the larger scale it s just shifting people s focus and it s confusing.

The hidden costs related to the turnover of school staff that takes place every year in many schools can also take their toll on efforts to sustain and deepen the implementation of any improvement program. Schools with substantial turnover run the risk of finding themselves constantly stuck in what amounts to the first year of implementation having to re-build commitment to the program, re-train teachers, and familiarize students with the relevant approaches before the available funding runs out. As a result, the more innovative and comprehensive programs are, and the more initiatives a school has underway, the more difficult it may be to bring students and teachers up to speed . [10]

At Charleston High School, teacher turnover has been particularly problematic. Out of a staff of about 60, 17 new staff were hired in 1995; 15 in 1996; 13 in 1997; and 11 in 1998. That means that every year, a significant percentage of the staff are in what the principal calls the survival mode of the first two or three years of teaching. Many of those do not stay long enough to become meaningfully involved in the improvement initiatives or in the long-term

development of the school. With a district demand to reduce class sizes in math to a 20-1 student teacher ratio (which has increased the need for new staff) and a reduction in the number of days the state allots for staff development down to two a year, it is not hard to understand why the school needs the money that comes with BASRC and other partnership in order to pay teachers to participate in staff development activities in the summer or afterschool during the year.

Like toys and furniture that come stamped some assembly required , improvement programs almost always involve more work than seems evident at first glance. But it may be unreasonable for improvement programs to account for every cost or anticipate every requirement that schools have to meet to be successful. Furthermore, improvement programs have to deal with the problem that if they describe too many of the associated costs, requirements, and inevitable challenges, many schools may be discouraged from taking advantage of the resources and expertise those programs can provide. In fact, those programs that are less explicit about their demands may be more attractive to many schools. This problem is compounded by the fact that many improvement programs are under significant financial pressures and few have substantial long-term funding. Many of those that have established workable financial models have to match carefully their level of service and the number of their personnel to the number of schools with whom they work. Thus, while many programs can be more explicit about what it really takes to make improvements, district administrators, policymakers, funders, and others also have to develop a more realistic understanding of the costs involved and how long meaningful improvements can take.

Theories of learning, schooling and improvement

Every school and improvement program reflects beliefs and assumptions about how students learn, how schools should be run, and how change takes place. These beliefs and assumptions are expressed in program descriptions and presentations, in the design of resources and strategies (the curriculum requirements, strategic plan, professional development offerings etc.), and in the activities and behaviors of staff members. Taken together, these beliefs and assumptions constitute a program or organization s theories of action   implicit and explicit

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understandings of how a school or program can accomplish its goals.[11]

In order to develop the kind of focused, integrated approach that both school personnel and many improvement programs see as essential to success, schools need to have a good understanding of their own theories of action and those of the improvement programs that they choose to implement. If they do not, conflicts between different initiatives and their supporters are an almost inevitable result. Furthermore, it can be very difficult to figure out how different initiatives and programs can fit together in mutually reinforcing ways.[12] Unfortunately, while many schools have goals, mission statements and strategic plans, few have clearly articulated or well-examined theories of action. Similarly, although some improvement programs have tried to articulate their own theories of action, many of their beliefs and assumptions about how learning takes place, how schools should be run, and how change takes place remain implicit.

Theories of learning are perhaps the most well-articulated aspects of the approaches of many schools and improvement programs. Theories of learning encompass the assumptions and beliefs about how children develop, what they should be learning, and what kinds of outcomes they need to achieve. If initiatives within a school reflect substantially different theories of learning, controversy is a frequent result.[13] Consequently, some improvement programs (particularly those that are on one side or the other of debates over progressive or basic skills approaches to learning and teaching) warn schools not to adopt their model if they prefer a different approach. At the same time, school members need to have a shared understanding of their own theories of learning in order to make that kind of decision.

While conflicts among people and initiatives with different theories of learning are well-known, differences in the theories of schooling can also be problematic. Theories of schooling reflect the assumptions and beliefs about how schools should be organized and who parents, teachers, administrators, educational experts, students, or some combination can make the most effective decisions about how to educate students. Thus, a place like Charleston High School can be pushed in different directions by programs like the Coalition of Essential Schools and the Bay

Area School Reform Collaborative   which provide schools considerable flexibility in how they design their curriculum and organize their school   and those like Joint Venture Silicon Valley that may have more requirements or ask principals or school leaders to act in a more hierarchical fashion. At the same time, schools that are used to operating in a more conventional hierarchical way may find that programs that ask teachers and community members to take on more decision-making responsibility may find those programs to be too vague or may be uncomfortable with the amount of time that needs to be devoted to planning and developing curricula.[14] Ultimately, if a school undertakes initiatives with conflicting theories of schooling, mixed messages about who is in charge and how much the ideas of teachers, parents, students, and community members are valued and respected are likely to result.

Intertwined with theories of learning and theories of schooling are theories of change: the beliefs and assumptions about how innovation and improvement can take place. In particular, different initiatives within a school may reflect different views about the key problems that need to be addressed in order for improvements to takes place and the mechanisms and strategies that will make those improvements possible. In many cases, different theories of change are reflected in the ways that improvement programs as well as state and district initiatives use assessments to support school improvement. As a result, a school like Charleston High School can end up being evaluated by the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative on the basis of a Review of Progress BASRC sees as a focus for reflection and refinement of improvement strategies; assessed by Joint Venture Silicon Valley on the basis of the development of performance assessments that JVSV sees as crucial to the collection of appropriate data on student learning; and measured publicly on the basis of students scores on the SAT-9 which the state uses as a critical lever to motivate schools to improve.

In many ways, theories of change may be the most problematic aspects of the theories of action of both schools and improvement programs. For one thing, it may be much more difficult to coordinate theories of change than to identify and employ improvement programs and other initiatives with compatible theories of learning. Even implementing improvement programs and

initiatives with similar theories of change can be extremely difficult. In particular, many improvement programs and district and state initiatives assume that changes in classroom practices can be made most effectively by providing teachers with new resources and/or professional development experiences; yet, as the principals at Charleston and Madison point out, their teachers barely have enough time to take advantage of the offerings of a single new initiative let alone several.

At the same time, if school staffs negotiate the demands of a program or initiative down into something doable, they may also be dismantling the initiative s theory of change. For example, the theory of change of the Joint Venture Silicon Valley (JVSV) initiatives suggested that improvements in student performance depended upon involving all teachers in the development of integrated curriculum that focused on either science, language arts, or math. However, schools like Madison Middle School and Charleston High School implemented the JVSV program solely in their science classes. While the schools may have made this choice largely on practical grounds not enough time or training for everyone for example they effectively rejected the JVSV theory of change. In such cases, the question becomes what (and whose) theory of action is guiding the initiative?

In short, both schools and improvement programs may benefit from paying more attention to their theories of action, particularly their theories of change. But doing so will bring new challenges. While leaving these theories implicit can contribute to conflicts in philosophy and practice, making these theories explicit also creates the real possibility of polarizing those with opposing views and creating further fragmentation and incoherence. Leaving theories ambiguous, like the broad language of a diplomatic agreement, can make it easier for those with different views to believe that they share common ground and to support and rally behind the same improvement effort. Correspondingly, the need for schools to serve the interests of all their parents and students and the need for improvement programs to work with a range of schools and communities may also encourage them to craft their theories to appeal to the widest possible audience.

Back to basic questions

Despite the challenges outlined in this report, some schools can select, implement and even integrate improvement programs in effective reform efforts. Some schools do have the capacity to change and others manage to acquire it with the help of charismatic principals, superhuman efforts from faculty, or exceptionally strong leadership and support from the community. Furthermore, improvement efforts and many district administrators are striving to make it easier for schools to get the information and support they need to implement improvement programs and to coordinate them with other initiatives. To make the adoption of these improvement programs successful in a larger number of schools and a part of a large-scale strategy of school reform, however, much more needs to be done. Creating exploration and selection processes that build the knowledge and expertise of school communities, developing more realistic approaches to the costs and requirements of effective implementation, and making the theories of action of both improvement programs and schools more explicit may all be steps in that direction.

At the same time, the experiences of the Bay Area District and the analysis of the approaches of many different improvement programs suggest that it is unrealistic to expect improvement programs -- whatever their focus -- to provide schools with everything they need to change. These programs can, under the right conditions, help schools to change; but implementing these programs cannot solve the problem that, in many schools, the local conditions are not right. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that many schools have difficulty meeting the demands and requirements of so many initiatives from so many different quarters; nor is hard to understand why so many improvement programs have trouble scaling-up .

From this perspective, improvement has to begin with efforts to enable school communities to develop and exercise the knowledge, theories, and flexibility they need to implement improvement programs or to develop their own approach to improve their schools. Establishing such local capacity may depend on figuring out how, within the time and resources

that can reasonably be expected to be available, schools can develop theories of action that take into account -- not ignore -- the many different, and legitimate, perspectives, about how learning can take place, schools can be run, and change can take place. As Fullan puts it,

> school systems need integration, wholeness and at least periods of coherence. The paradox is that greater coherence in complex societies can only be achieved by grappling with differences and combining strategies that have hitherto been pursued independently from each other.[15]

In this view, a variety of theories of action will always be at work in schools, and those theories will be evolving and changing. Schools do not have to develop a single theory of action and make sure that all their initiatives reflect it; but there is no substitute for articulating and examining the theories of action at work in their own initiatives and those of the programs they seek to adopt. In Fullan s terms, these steps will help schools to become selectively innovative , identifying and taking advantage of whatever people, programs and resources they need to build their capacity and improve their performance.[16]

In a final paradox, however, while strong leadership and community support are key baseline conditions for successful implementation, the demands and requirements of improvement programs may undermine the very authority the school community needs to adapt and integrate programs and initiatives and to articulate their own theories of action. Thus, schools may choose amongst different improvement programs, but, whatever program they choose, they have to implement it in ways that are consistent with the philosophy and goals of the program or risk losing the support of the improvement program.[17] Similarly, while building support among school leaders and among parents and community members is one thing, enabling the school community to develop the capacity to craft and examine their own theories of action and sustain their own approach to improvement is another. Ironically, the true measure of whether or not a school has the capacity to take advantage of an improvement program may be whether or not the school community has the power to say no and the knowledge, flexibility, and theories to pursue another approach.

If we accept the idea that school communities and improvement programs should be able

to pursue theories of action that are truly different, then we have to come to terms with the fact that no single strategy for large-scale educational reform or single set of measures will support equally each one of these approaches. Some schools may choose to adopt the theories of action of an improvement program whose approach is relatively consistent with predominant policies, standards, and assessments; and these schools may benefit from detailed materials and plans that can be scaled-up across many different contexts and communities. But some schools may choose to work with the theories of action of improvement of programs that depart significantly from current policies and assessment practices; and those schools may benefit more from relief from district and state requirements and opportunities to affiliate with like-minded schools. Still other schools may develop their own theories of action; and those schools may benefit from conditions and policies that enable them to exercise their authority and ensure that resources and services -- whether they come from districts, improvement programs or other sources -- conform to their demands. All will benefit from the opportunity to use meaningful -- and multiple -- measures of progress and performance that are consistent with the theories behind their approaches.[18]

In the end, the educational system can be viewed as a mechanical system in which policies and practices can be aligned to produce a narrow set of outcomes. This view may be particularly appropriate in contexts where the beliefs and expectations of school communities, the initiatives they undertake and those reflected in state standards and accountability systems are all consistent. It can also be useful to view the educational system as a democratic political system in which diverse interests are constantly expressed. From this standpoint, establishing processes that schools can use to examine and negotiate diverse interests seem particularly important. But it also may be useful to view schools as part of an eco-system in which many different entities are trying to co-exist.[19] Viewed in this way, the initiatives of improvement programs, districts, and states cannot be considered as the start of change efforts. Changes are constantly underway. In this context, new initiatives, whether from the district, the state, improvement programs or others, have to be carefully examined in the same way that we have to consider how new species and new developments will affect the eco-systems into which they are introduced. Is there sufficient

capacity to absorb and carry out the new initiatives? Do they extend and deepen efforts already at work? Are there high demands and hidden costs that can contribute to harmful not just beneficial effects? In eco-systems vastly different approaches can be accommodated, but they cannot be pursued independently. But learning to deal with forces far beyond human control and becoming more aware of the interaction among the many initiatives and programs currently at work in schools may be more than a step in the right direction; it may be part of a movement that embraces the complexity of schooling and the diversity of approaches to it.

Acknowledgments

Endnotes

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5. It is worth keeping in mind that the programs reviewed for this study differ substantially in the demands they place on schools and how much capacity a school may need to carry them out. However, when these programs attempt to promote comprehensive changes or are used as a part

of a comprehensive improvement then these issues of school capacity become particularly critical.

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9. Bodilly, *Lessons from New American Schools Scale-up Phase: Prospects for Bringing Designs to Multiple Schools.*

10. Hatch, What Does It Take to Break the Mold? Rhetoric and Reality in New American Schools .

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15. Fullan, *Change Forces: The Sequel.*

16. Ibid.

17. Even many improvement programs that have relatively few constraints and requirements can choose to stop working with schools that they feel are not making enough progress or are not making an adequate effort to make changes that are consistent with their goals or philosophies.

18. For diverse perspectives on how schools should be run and how school change can take place see for example, Education Commission of the States, Governing America s Schools: Changing the Rules , (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 1999). Hill, Pierce, and Guthrie, *Reinventing Public Education: How Contracting Can Transform America s Schools.* Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti, *New Schools for a New Century,* ed. Diane Ravitch and Joseph P. Viteritti (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

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