7

COLLEGIALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

The fifth school-level factor is "collegiality and professionalism." This factor deals with the manner in which staff members in the school interact and the extent to which they approach their work as professionals. As shown in Figure 2.3 (p. 19), researchers use a variety of descriptive terms for this factor. Edmonds uses "administrative leadership"; Levine and Lezotte use "strong leadership" and "practice oriented staff development." Sammons calls it "professional leadership," "shared vision and goals," and "a learning organization"; Bosker and Scheerens and Marzano use "leadership" and "cooperation."

The early discussions of staff collegiality and professionalism were couched within the context of "school climate" in the 1970s. For some researchers, school climate was the umbrella defining effective schooling. This was certainly the case for Wilbur Brookover and his colleagues (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Brookover & Schneider, 1975; Brookover, et al., 1978; Brookover, et al.,

1979). In his analysis of the characteristics of effective schools versus ineffective schools (as defined by the academic achievement of those students from low socioeconomic backgrounds), Brookover and colleagues (1978) note

> . . . we believe that the differences in school climate explain much of the differences in academic achievement between schools that is normally attributed to composition. (p. 303)

Some researchers' descriptions of school climate are so broad as to encompass a wide variety of school-level factors such as leadership, classroom instruction, classroom management, the physical surroundings, and the nature and tone of relationships therein (Anderson, 1982; Gottsfredson, Hybl, Gottsfredson, & Castaneda, 1986).

What I refer to here as collegiality and professionalism is probably closest to Deal and Kennedy's (1983) conception of "organizational climate." They explain

> The organizational climate in a school has been defined as the collective personality of a school based upon an atmosphere distinguished by the social and professional interactions of the individuals in the school. (Deal and Kennedy, 1983, p. 14)

I use the phrase "collegiality and professionalism" instead of organizational climate for two reasons. First, it more accurately highlights aspects of previous treatments of climate that have strong statistical relationships with student achievement. That is, the studies that have found a statistically significant relationship between school climate and student achievement have focused on collegiality and professionalism. Second, it avoids confounding elements of the overall school climate with individual classroom climate. Some researchers believe that the overall school climate is little more than the aggregation of individual classroom climates (Johnson & Johnson, 1979). However, much research and theoretical evidence supports the convention of separating overall school climate from the classroom climate (Fraser, 1986).

To understand the impact of collegiality and professionalism on student achievement, let's consider each individually.

Collegiality

The specifics of this fifth school-level factor begin with collegiality—the manner in which teachers interact with one another. As Christine Villani (1996) notes

> Collegial behavior is demonstrated by teachers who are supportive of one another. They openly enjoy professional interactions, are respectful and courteous of each other's needs. (p. 44)

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) warn that collegiality cannot be "contrived" by requiring teachers to plan together or consult together, to engage in peer coaching, or the like. Rather, collegiality is characterized by authentic interactions that are professional in nature. According to Fullan and Hargreaves, these behaviors include

- openly sharing failures and mistakes,
- demonstrating respect for each other, and
- constructively analyzing and criticizing practices and procedures.

In effect, collegiality is characterized by tacit norms of professional behavior (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Lortie, 1975).

One important aspect of the definition of collegial behavior is what it does *not* include. Collegiality is commonly interpreted to involve social interactions and explicit friendships among teachers. Noah Friedkin and Michael Slater (1994) studied 17 elementary schools to examine the relationship between student achievement and the extent to which teachers discussed professional issues, sought advice regarding professional issues, and interacted as friends. The correlations between these types of interactions and student achievement are reported in Figure 7.1 (p. 62).

The most striking result is the negative correlation between student achievement and "friendship" interactions among teachers—the more friendship interactions, the lower students' academic achievement. Of course, findings based on correlations (with low numbers of cases involved at that) should be interpreted cautiously although they do cast doubt on the perception that teachers must

FIGURE 7.1

Relationship Between Types of Teacher Interactions and Student Achievement

Type of Interaction	Correlation
Discussion	0.326
Advice	0.222
Friendship	-0.252

Note that these are rank order correlations with n = 17
Rank order correlations depict the strength of relationship between the ranking by teachers of the importance of these factors with the ranking by principals of the importance of these factors.

Source: Friedkin, N. E., & Slater, M. R. (1994). School leadership and performance: A social network approach. *Sociology of Education*, 67, 139–157.

FIGURE 7.2

Percentage of Variance in Student Achievement Accounted for by Various Factors

Factor	Percentage of Variance Accounted for in Student Achievement
Home and family	49%
Teacher qualifications	43%
Class size	8%

Source: Darling-Hammond, L. (1997a). *Doing what matters most: Investing in quality teaching.* NY: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

be friends or engage in social interactions for the school to be effective. Referring to friendship and social interactions among teachers as "network cohesion," and the leadership of the principal as "advice centrality" Friedkin and Slater note

> Our evidence does not support the conclusion that teacher network cohesion has a strong effect on school performance independent of [the] principal's advice centrality. (p. 151)

Professionalism

Certainly one aspect of professionalism is a sense of efficacy on the part of teachers. Kent Peterson (1994) explains that, among other things, efficacy is grounded in teachers' perception that they can effect change in their schools. To do this, they must be a valued and critical part of the school's policy-setting mechanisms.

Another widely researched aspect of professionalism deals with the level of teacher experience. Ronald Ferguson (1991) performed one of the most frequently cited studies on the effects of teacher experience on student achievement. As Linda Darling-Hammond (1997a) describes the study:

> In an analysis of 900 Texas school districts Ronald Ferguson found that teachers' experience—as measured by scores on a licensing examination, master's degrees, and experience, accounted for about 40% of the measured variance in students' reading and mathematics achievement at grades 1 through 11, more than any other single factor. (p. 8)

The results of the Ferguson study (as reported by Darling-Hammond) are depicted in Figure 7.2.

The proportions reported in Figure 7.2 appear to contradict the basic model in Chapter 1 where I made the case that student background factors account for about 80 percent of the measured variance in student achievement while schooling accounts for about the other 20 percent. How can schools in general account for only 20 percent of the variance in student achievement when teacher qualifications alone account for 43 percent of the variance? This issue is discussed in some depth in Technical Note 5, p. 191, but I will briefly address it here.

The Ferguson study used *average* achievement for a school or a district as the primary dependent measure. Examining the relationship between average achievement for a district and the average score in a district for teacher qualification produces a correlation between these two factors that is much higher than if individual scores for students and teachers were used. Keep in mind that this form of data aggregation typically produces artificially high correlations. With the cautions above noted, it is useful to examine the research on the specific aspects of teacher experience that affect student achievement.

Teacher longevity and certification are often cited as experiential factors that have an impact on student achievement. For example, a study of high- versus low-achieving schools in New York City with demographically similar students found that years of experience and levels of certification accounted for 90 percent of the variation in student achievement at the school level (Armour-Thomas, Clay, Domanico, Bruno, & Allen, 1989). Teacher licensing certainly seems justified. Indeed, in a landmark report entitled *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1998), licensure was identified as one of three critical factors necessary to develop effective teachers. The report used the metaphor of a "three-legged stool" for quality assurance:

> The three-legged stool of quality assurance—teacher education program accreditation, initial teacher licensing, and advanced professional certification—is becoming more sturdy as a continuum of standards has been developed to guide teacher learning across the career. (p. 29)

Teacher subject-matter knowledge is also frequently cited as critical to student achievement (Andrews, Blackmon, & Mackey, 1980; Haney, Madaus, & Kreitzer, 1987; Schalock, 1979; Soar, Medley, & Coker, 1983). This was

also one of the primary findings in *What Matters Most*. However, its relationship with student achievement is not as straightforward as you might think. Reviews of the research commonly reveal a spotty relationship between teacher subject-matter knowledge and achievement. For example, Byrne (1983) found that in 31 studies only 17 showed a positive relationship between the two. Ashton & Crocker (1987) found that only 5 of 14 studies exhibited a positive relationship. Monk (1994) found that teacher subject-matter knowledge was related to student achievement only up to a certain point. That is, a minimal level of subject-matter knowledge was a prerequisite for effective teaching. However, after a certain level was reached, an increase in subject-matter knowledge was not related to enhanced achievement. These findings imply that it would not be accurate to assume that the more a teacher knows about the subject matter, the better teacher he will be. Again, a critical minimum level is certainly needed, but beyond this point the relationship between teacher subject-matter knowledge and enhanced student achievement begins to taper off. Additionally, it is reasonable to assume that the critical level of knowledge is different from grade level to grade level. The knowledge requirements to teach 5th grade mathematics are certainly different from those for 12th grade trigonometry.

Pedagogical Knowledge

While subject-matter knowledge in itself might not be consistently associated with student achievement, pedagogical knowledge is. As Darling-Hammond (2000) notes

It may be that the positive effects of subject matter knowledge are augmented or offset by knowledge of how to teach the subject to various kinds of students. That is, the degree of pedagogical skill may interact with subject matter knowledge to bolster or reduce teacher performance. (p. 6)

The importance of the relationship between pedagogical knowledge and student achievement is also reported by others (Brown, Smith, & Stein, 1995; Byrne, 1983; Cohen & Hill, 1997; Wiley & Yoon, 1995). In a related study of 200 teachers, Ferguson and Womack (1993) found that the amount of courses teachers took in instructional techniques accounted for four times the variance in teacher performance than did subject-matter knowledge. Similarly, in a study involving some 7,500 8th grade students, Harold Weglinsky (2000) found that teacher participation in professional development activities accounted for significant amounts of variation in mathematics and science achievement. In fact, teacher experience and involvement in professional development activities accounted for about as much of the variance in student achievement as did student background. Professionalism, then, includes a certain level of knowledge about one's subject area, but perhaps more important, it also involves pedagogical knowledge of how best to teach that subject-matter content.

Action Steps

I recommend three action steps to foster staff collegiality and professionalism.

Action Step 1. Establish norms of conduct and behavior that engender collegiality and professionalism.

Many researchers and theorists directly or indirectly recommend the overt establishment of norms of behavior for teachers and administrators (Blase and Blase, 2001; Blase and Kirby, 2000; Fullan, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1992; Dickman & Stanford-Blair, 2002). Some of the commonly recommended areas around which to establish norms include

- how staff will resolve conflicts,
- how staff will address and solve professional problems,
- how staff will share information about students,
- how staff will communicate to third parties about other staff members, and
- how staff will behave during professional activities (e.g., staff meetings, workshops).

Ideally, norms in these areas are arrived at by teachers and administrators through consensus. Once established, these norms are made highly visible (e.g., as a reminder at staff and faculty meetings or prominently displayed in the staff handbook).

Action Step 2. Establish governance structures that allow for teacher involvement in decisions and policies for the school.

For teachers to develop a sense of efficacy, they must be represented in governance structures that establish direction and policy for the school. Again, Comer's School Development Program provides a noteworthy prototype. Recall that Comer's model employs three governance mechanisms: (1) the School Planning and Management Team, (2) the Student and Staff Support Team, and (3) the Parent Team. Two of these directly involve teachers. The School Planning Team is headed by the principal and includes teachers, parents, professional support staff, and paraprofessionals. This team is responsible for establishing major policies and directions. The Student and Staff Support Team involves teachers, school psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, counselors, and other support service staff. It provides direct input to the School Planning and Management Team and is charged with ensuring that the school environment supports learning and the concerns of individual classroom teachers.

Action Step 3. Engage teachers in meaningful staff development activities.

Perhaps the most obvious way to address the issue of professionalism is to engage teachers in meaningful staff development activities. Although many schools have regularly scheduled staff development sessions, much of what is done in these sessions is not necessarily meaningful or useful in terms of impacting student achievement. As Judith Little notes

Much staff development or inservice communicates a relatively impoverished view of teachers, teaching, and teacher development. Compared with the complexity, subtlety, and uncertainty of the classroom, professional development is often a remarkably low-intensity enterprise. It requires little in the way of intellectual struggle or emotional engagement and takes only superficial account of teachers' histories or

circumstances. Compared with the complexity and ambiguity of the most ambitious reforms, professional development is too often substantively weak and politically marginal. . . . Professional development must be constructed in ways that deepen the discussion, open up the debates, and enrich the array of possibilities for action. (p. 14)

Michael Garet and his colleagues (Garet, Porter, Desmone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001) conducted one of the most extensive studies on the effects of staff development activities. Their survey of 1,000 teachers revealed that those features of staff development with the strongest relationship to reported change in teacher behavior are (1) focus on content knowledge, (2) opportunities for active learning, and (3) overall coherence of the staff development activities.

Focus on content refers to the extent to which staff development activities address specific strategies for specific subject areas. This is not to say that staff development activities must be subject-specific (e.g., staff development for mathematics, staff development for science), though this is certainly an effective option. At the very least, pedagogical knowledge must be presented to teachers in the context of their specific subject areas. Staff development activities that present generic strategies and do not provide opportunities for classroom application are probably not very effective in terms of actually changing teacher behavior.

Opportunities for active learning elaborates on the notion that teachers are able to apply the pedagogical knowledge they learn. The best application task they might engage in is to actually try out a particular instructional strategy. This means that they return to their classrooms and actually use the strategy in an action research environment—an environment in which they informally examine the impact of various strategies on student achievement.

Overall coherence means that the staff development program is perceived as a coherent, integrated whole with "staff development days" building on one another. Length and number of staff development activities are positively correlated with change in teacher behavior. Thus, the more staff development provided, the greater the change in teacher behavior.

It is easy to become disheartened with the staff development efforts in most schools. In my experience, most schools and districts violate virtually every principle in Garet's study by (1) presenting staff development sessions that are not tied to specific subject areas, (2) not providing opportunities for teachers to translate generic strategies into the context of specific subject areas, (3) not providing opportunities for teachers to field test the strategies presented during staff development days, and (4) providing only a few staff development days that are unrelated and disjointed.

The pattern of staff development as practiced in the United States stands in sharp contrast to that in Japan. Stevenson and Stigler (1992) note: "By Japanese law, beginning teachers must receive a minimum of twenty days of in-service training during their first year on the job" (p. 159). Additionally, Japanese staff development activities employ hands-on efforts to change specific lessons and units. Stigler and Hiebert (1999) note that this is done in the context of what the Japanese refer to as "lesson study" or *jugyou*

kenkyuu, which is an aspect of *kounaikenshuu*, a comprehensive set of activities that form the crux of school improvement. While engaged in *kounaikenshuu*, teachers work together on various teams with various roles and functions:

> One of the most common components of *kounaikenshuu* is lesson study (*jugyou kenkyuu*). In lesson study, groups of teachers meet regularly over long periods of time (ranging from several months to a year) to work on the design, implementation, testing, and improvement of one or several "research lessons" (*kenkyuu jugyou*). By all indications, lesson study is extremely popular and highly valued by Japanese teachers, especially at the elementary level. It is the linchpin of the improvement process. (pp. 110–111)

Although it would probably be difficult to perform a wholesale transplant of lesson study as practiced by Japanese educators into the U.S. system, certain characteristics might be readily transported. To do this, Stigler and Hiebert recommend that teachers organize themselves into teams based on common interests or issues in teaching their subjects. They then systematically employ specific techniques in the context of specific lessons and observe each other doing so. They give each other feedback regarding what worked well and what could be changed in these trial lessons. Finally, they capture and archive collective knowledge gained from these efforts for others to build on.

Summary

Defining features of collegiality and professionalism includes the manner in which teachers interact with one another and the nature, scope, and sequence of professional development activities. Collegiality and professionalism involve interactions between teachers that are collaborative and congenial.