Beyond the Education Wars

Evidence That Collaboration Builds Effective Schools

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Foreword

For a public policy to have a chance at success, it needs to be based on ideas that have been proven to provide results. All too often, however, policy advocates start out by latching on to an ideology, and then go in search of whatever evidence they can find that supports their point of view; some never get even that far, instead simply defending their position as an article of faith. Nowhere is this practice more common than in the realm of today's education policy.

The education reform debate recently has been dominated by policy approaches that are top-down in nature: rather than growing from a base of factual evidence, they stem from attempts to apply a particular ideology to an educational setting. Being ideologically based, many of these reform ideas are divisive, as they frequently pit one point of view or group against another, place blame rather than promote effective solutions that all can live with, and try to coerce or punish "the enemy" rather than reward success. Policy created in this way, no matter how well meaning, is doomed to failure.

What Greg Anrig has done for this book is to flip this problematic process on its head, instead sifting through the available evidence to find what actually works in making better schools, in order to build a policy from the ground up. Beyond the Education Wars: Evidence That Collaboration Builds Effective Schools is a presentation of the available research on how creating an organizational culture based on intensive collaboration among teachers and administration not only improves student performance, but removes district conflict as well. While this approach has been applied successfully elsewhere, such as in manufacturing and health care, it has been largely overlooked in the education sector. There have been a few instances in which districts have worked toward collaborative cultures, however, and Anrig details how they have shown signs of success, arguing that they should be further studied and even emulated. A particular appeal of the concepts covered in this book is that they can be applied in many settings, including traditional public schools, charter schools, and even private or

parochial schools, regardless of whether the schools are unionized.

Beyond the Education Wars takes its place alongside much of The Century Foundation's recent work in education policy in that it keeps a tight focus on providing evidence of successful strategies for improving school performance. Over the past dozen years, for example, our senior fellow Richard D. Kahlenberg has kept a keen eye on the positive effects of socioeconomic school integration on student performance, and in the process has played a major role in bringing the concept to national prominence as an education reform proposal. Starting with his 2001 book, All Together Now: Creating Middle-Class Schools through Public School Choice, and more recently including a volume he edited, The Future of School Integration: Socioeconomic Diversity as an Education Reform Strategy, Kahlenberg's work has measured the success of this promising policy idea as it spread from a handful of districts to more than eighty, educating over 4 million students. Our work has also included studies like Gordon MacInnes's In Plain Sight: Simple, Difficult Lessons from New Jersey's Expensive Effort to Close the Achievement Gap, which looks at such issues as the state's attempts to improve student performance in the disadvantaged "Abbott" districts and its efforts to provide quality preschool, as well as the particular success of Union City in closing the student achievement gap.

We have looked not only at reform ideas that are successful, but also have studied efforts that have failed, have been overblown, or have been based on popular myths about education. Among our works in this vein are Kahlenberg's edited volumes Improving On No Child Left Behind: Getting Education Reform Back on Track and Public School Choice vs. Private School Vouchers, as well as Richard Rothstein's The Way We Were? The Myths and Realities of America's Student Achievement. We have also looked at the ups and downs of the charter school movement, publishing Jeffrey R. Henig's book, Spin Cycle: How Research Is Used in Policy Debates: The Case of Charter Schools, and the recent report, Diverse Charter Schools: Can Racial and Socioeconomic Integration Promote Better Outcomes for Students? by Richard D. Kahlenberg and Halley Potter.

As with any policy debate, it is essential that the discussion of education reform remains grounded in solid facts. The body of evidence presented in this book is the result of a careful look at how an organizational culture that stresses collaboration over conflict can greatly improve our schools. On behalf of the Trustees of The Century Foundation, I thank Greg Anrig for this wonderful contribution.

— Janice Nittoli, President
The Century Foundation
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Foreword, by Janice Nittoli

1 ○ **Introduction**

The eight-day teachers union strike in Chicago at the outset of the 2012 school year reinforced the popular view that debates over public school reform in the United States have devolved into what are commonly described as "education wars." But U.S. public schools have continuously served as political battlegrounds since their inception in the nineteenth century, and in many cases past conflicts were more intense and seemingly intractable than today's. By comparison to, say, the 1968 Ocean Hill-Brownsville strikes that shut down New York City schools while inflaming passions over racism, anti-Semitism, and union-busting, or the 1974 stoning of school buses carrying black students outside of South Boston High School, warfare metaphors seem hyperbolic in the current environment. Issues such as busing, community control, school prayer, and school financing have often pitted different segments of American society against each other in the past. The stakes are not nearly so high for most parents with respect to current debates over charter schools, tenure, teacher evaluation, and accountability— the items foremost on the agenda of today's self-described reformers. It is telling that the Chicago school strike ended in something of a whimper, with onlookers generally uncertain about who won, or what the dispute was even about.

Today's debates may be acrimonious, but the underlying source of hostility is not a deep tension in American society roiling up through school-based conflicts that arouse the passions of parents. Rather,

the bellicosity stems from prominent politicians and other critics of public schools who have purposefully targeted teachers unions as the primary impediment to the reforms that they believe would improve the quality of education. In the past, the assault on teachers unions was led mostly by conservatives who historically have distrusted public school systems as monopolistic, anti-competitive institutions. But in recent years, many formerly supportive Democratic politicians, including Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel, have embraced similar rhetoric that blames teachers for putting their own interests ahead of their students. The drumbeat of criticism from all sides, combined with cutbacks in school funding, has left teachers unions in something of a state of siege, ceding ground in many settings on the ideas pushed by the reformers.

Those ideas remain largely unproven, however. To date, for example, there is negligible evidence that charter schools—which are predominantly nonunionized—perform better than conventional public schools with a comparable mix of students.[1] Most studies comparing unionized versus nonunionized public schools have found that student outcomes are modestly higher in those with unions, after taking into account student demographics.[2] Yet, teachers unions continue to be vilified for looking out for themselves rather than their students, even as they resist proposals that do not appear to help children learn.

While the conflicts between reformers and teachers unions continue to dominate media coverage, largely unnoticed research has mounted showing that one of the most important ingredients in successful schools is the inverse of conflict: intensive collaboration among administrators and teachers, built on a shared sense of mission and focused on improved student learning. This book synthesizes the findings of those studies, while arguing that student outcomes are much more likely to improve when educational stakeholders strive to pivot away from counterproductive arguments over unproven reforms and instead emulate the team-based approaches implemented in many effective schools. Shifting from a culture of conflict to one built on trust and cooperation inevitably takes years and involves often-

difficult discussions and personnel transitions, but schools that have embarked and persisted on such a path have demonstrated impressive results over time. Learning from the experience of these schools is a much more promising route to improving student performance than remaining dug in the same trenches.

One strand of research highlighted in this book focuses on identifying districts and individual schools that appear to produce relatively strong outcomes compared to counterparts that educate students from a similar mix of socioeconomic backgrounds. By exploring commonalties among the schools with the best results, scholars have tried to identify approaches that have the potential to improve student performance elsewhere, if adopted more broadly. The main findings of the research examining successful schools focus on how teachers and administrators interrelate with each other, emphasizing a much higher degree of ongoing collaboration, communication, coordinated responses to testing data, and structured problem-solving than the norm. In contrast to the traditional institutional design of schools dating back to the nineteenth century—in which each teacher has enormous autonomy, isolated in a classroom and working under a rigid administrative hierarchy—many of these successful public schools share the traits of modern, high-performance workplaces, fostering cultures built on teamwork and a shared sense of mission. It is noteworthy that similar research in the health care sector, which was strongly influential in the development of the Affordable Care Act, found that cost-effective medical institutions deviated from traditional hierarchical systems toward more deeply collaborative approaches. As with successful schools, those studies found better results in institutions that emphasized improved communication and integration of technology to facilitate diagnosis of problems and effective responses.[3]

In education, pursuing organizational strategies built on collaboration also usually implies cooperation between teachers unions and school district administrators (health care settings are much less likely to be unionized than public schools). Where union–district relationships are highly contentious and distrustful, which has

historically been the norm—particularly in urban areas—there are no pathways toward pursuing fundamental organizational changes built on cooperation. But, as the cases examined in this book convey, there have been many examples of once-dysfunctional labor-management relationships that over time became less conflicted, usually in the aftermath of a crisis or leadership change. In the past couple of years, the two leading teachers unions, the federal Department of Education, and important foundations and nonprofits have all begun to actively push for greater collaboration between district administrators and unions, recognizing the connections between labor peace and constructive institutional change. But to a large extent, those preliminary steps have been taken without a clear presentation of the evidentiary reasons to believe that such reforms will improve student performance.

Another area of research highlighted in this book examines the impact of initiatives that were aimed at enhancing collaboration among teachers, as well as between administrators and teachers. Those studies, which entail a wide variety of methodologies conducted in disparate settings, further bolster the case that team-oriented management practices, focused particularly on continuous improvement of student instruction, have a positive impact on outcomes. Although no "gold-standard" evaluation definitively proves that enhanced collaboration directly raises test scores, the critical mass of research summarized in this report strongly points in that direction.

Given the consistent findings of studies identifying the centrality of organizational culture in distinguishing the best schools from the rest of the pack, and the increasing interest from the federal government and labor unions in pursuing initiatives built on collaboration, why are so few politicians, advocates, journalists, and educational reformers attentive to the subject? Four main explanations appear to be responsible. One reason is that fundamentally transforming any institution's internal relationships is inherently difficult, requiring energetic leadership, cooperation from parties accustomed to entrenched practices, and protracted effort day-in and day-out over the course of years. In contrast, the kinds of school reforms that

dominate mainstream debate seem relatively simple and typically bank on sticks—as opposed to carrots—that intuitively sound like they have a good chance of creating pressures that will incentivize the desired results. A second reason is that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to transforming an organization's culture. The process will inherently vary somewhat from one school to the next—although important commonalities can help guide the transformation—confounding everyone's preference for finding a magic pill that everyone can swallow to feel better.

A third reason is that reforms focused on administrative and organizational practices do not conform to the ideological framework that pervades so much educational advocacy. Many school reform supporters have risen to prominence by "talking tough," leaving them with little use for wimpy sounding concepts such as collaboration and teamwork. Indeed, their diagnosis that teachers unions are the root cause of America's educational problems provides no opening for contemplating collaborative approaches, regardless of what the evidence shows. Former Washington, D.C., school superintendent Michelle Rhee, who may be the most well-known face of the school reform movement, has said, "cooperation, collaboration, and consensus-building are way overrated."[4] Finally, the absence of a definitive study proving that collaboration raises test scores leaves supporters of other priorities with a rationale for adhering to their existing agenda rather than reconsidering their thinking—even though the evidence in support of their ideas is much weaker than the research buttressing the effectiveness of collaboration.

To varying degrees, those same issues applied to the health care sector as well, before reforms were adopted in the Affordable Care Act that attempt to transform the stagnant organizational cultures in medical institutions so that they more closely resemble those that are characteristic of highly cost-effective providers. In medical settings, as in public schools, fundamentally changing professional relationships in ways that enhance collaboration and communication is enormously difficult and demanding. In medical settings, as in schools, the nature of organizational changes will vary widely and organically, absent a

highly detailed, etched-in-stone roadmap for each medical provider to follow. In health care, as in education, ideologically driven advocates fiercely resist reforms that do not conform to their belief system. And in health care, as in education, the abundant weight of research evidence indicating the importance of organizational culture does not include definitive randomized clinical trials involving control groups.

So, for those in the educational sector who might cite any or all of those four concerns about pursuing reforms focused on transforming the organizational culture of schools, it is important to recognize that those very same objections were raised throughout the debate over the Affordable Care Act, and they ultimately were overcome. It is also important to recognize the virtues of reforms oriented toward changing institutional culture as a way to move beyond the problems engendered by more familiar ideas. Those virtues, atop the evidence supporting the effectiveness of these transformations, help explain why changing organizational culture became such an important element of health care reform. One virtue is that such reforms do not entail vastly higher financial investments, ultimately holding out the potential for producing better results for a comparable level of spending. Given the near certainty that all levels of government—federal, state, and local—are likely to remain austere for many years to come, pursuing promising strategies that do not require a large infusion of additional spending has enormous appeal. To the extent that additional funding might be required, there is ample evidence that those costs are outweighed by financial as well as educational benefits over time.

Another virtue is that administrative reforms do not stoke intense, ideologically driven battles related to the role of government versus markets, or other hot-button issues. Even conservative governors and mayors who would benefit politically from improved public school test scores under their watch may be amenable to relatively uncontroversial administrative innovations undertaken in a climate of relative peace between teachers unions and school districts. Indeed, many of the successful schools and districts described in this report transformed in politically conservative settings.

An added attraction of these approaches is that they can be pursued in a highly decentralized way, with the potential to catch on broadly if they eventually pass a tipping point where they come to be more generally recognized as effective. Heightened political polarization, combined with the Senate's filibuster rule, may make the Affordable Care Act one of the last major federal domestic initiatives for some time. But the pursuit of public school administrative reform strategies can bubble up from state and local efforts that demonstrate effectiveness and spread with relatively limited federal leadership. Since public education in the United States remains primarily a state and local responsibility, Washington gridlock need not be an insurmountable roadblock to transforming schools for the better. And indeed, the federal Department of Education's recent efforts to promote greater collaboration between teachers' unions and school districts has largely occurred off the media's radar screen without raising objections from Congress.

Finally, particularly for progressive advocates of good government, connecting the dots between administrative reforms that demonstrably produce improved results in different sectors of public policy can help to forge a fresh, distinctive, politically compelling vision for advancing societal goals. Previous well-meaning efforts to "reinvent government" bogged down for a multitude of reasons, but the research base for the kinds of reforms discussed in this report is much stronger than the grab-bag of ideas aimed at improving governmental performance that have been pursued in the past.

Education Meets Management Theory

The debate between education reformers and their opponents is often painted as a battle between hard-headed proponents of business rationality on one side, and entrenched, complacent, soft-headed teachers on the other. Much of the discussion of the Chicago strike followed that pattern. "They don't have the sword of Damocles hanging over them," wrote David Brooks in his *New York Times* column about the striking teachers, comparing them with businesspeople honed

by accountability mechanisms and competition. "Rigorous teacher evaluations will give reformers a profound measuring tool."[5] In reality, though, it is important to realize that the education reform agenda closely adheres to one particular school of business management thinking—one that, even on its own productivity-oriented terms, has a dubious track record. Indeed, some of the highest-performing firms in modern history have espoused a management philosophy that is diametrically opposed to the carrot-and-stick approach being pushed onto the education system.

To understand the divergence between these two schools of management thinking, it helps to begin by looking back to Progressive-era America. In the early days of the twentieth century, an engineer by the name of Frederick Winslow Taylor revolutionized the world of industrial work in the United States—beginning from a standpoint of distrusting workers. "Hardly a competent workman can be found," Taylor said, "who does not devote a considerable amount of time to studying just how slowly he can work and still convince his employer that he is going at a good pace." Taylor's approach to fixing this problem relied heavily on metrics—by way of a stopwatch and a slide rule—as a means to evaluate the performance of workers and to precisely define for them how they should best do their job. His system of "scientific management" focused on making each employee function as efficiently as possible in performing repetitive tasks, in part by tying pay to individual productivity. Taylor was revered by the Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis and ranked alongside Darwin and Freud as a father of modernity by business guru Peter Drucker. He played a major role in the invention of both the modern business school and the profession of management consulting. In recent years, though, researchers have found that Taylor often contrived data and results.[6]

Decades later, another American consultant—a plainspoken Iowan named W. Edwards Deming—made his way to Japan after World War II to help rebuild the country's industrial base. He became every bit as influential in that country's business sector as Taylor was in the United States, but his message was in many respects

diametrically opposed to Taylor's. Deming argued that long-term business success required constant incremental progress, the kind that could only occur when workers and management were deeply engaged in sharing information and ideas with each other. Many traditional organizational structures, Deming argued, tend to narrowly define each worker's responsibilities according to decisions handed down through layers of management, an arrangement that discourages communication, reinforces inertia, and allows ineffective practices to continue indefinitely. So Deming focused heavily on strategies that enhanced trust by building what is now commonly known as *social capital* (the benefits of greater communication and cooperation between individuals and groups). As a statistician, Deming also believed strongly in metrics, but he concentrated on systemic rather than individual results, looking for ways to use data to inform course corrections. And he abhorred the tactic of tying pay to competitive performance evaluations, feeling that the practice isolated workers from each other and from management, instilled fear, and undercut collaboration and trust.

By the time Deming died at age 93 in 1993, he had compiled an impressive track record. Among his early students were the founders of Toyota and Sony. In the 1980s, Ford Motors adopted his philosophy of "total quality management." More recently, Southwest Airlines and Kaiser Permanente have led a cadre of firms that have largely adopted Deming's management approach, which has evolved into a set of practices that now fall under the rubric of "high-performance work systems." Meanwhile, some of the contemporary exemplars of Taylor's management style include most bill collection firms, customer service and call centers, national retail chains, some websites, and any number of other low-productivity, low-margin institutions that equate the quality of individual workers with the volume of closings, sales, or clicks he or she produces.

Unfortunately, many of the advocates who for years have been driving the national political debate over school reform are testament that Taylorism is still very much in vogue. Their critiques of public schools are built on the premise that administrators, teachers, and

their unions are overly complacent. Inducing those educators to produce better results, they argue, requires threats of job loss, public embarrassment, stigmatization, de-unionization, losing students to competing schools, school closings, and other analogues to private market forces associated with bankruptcies and firings. The current unproven hobby-horse of merit pay—linking each teacher's pay to the improvement in the test scores of his or her students, which the Obama administration has endorsed—also rests on a market-inspired belief in the power of carrots and sticks.

The assumption behind merit pay is that offering higher compensation to teachers whose students improve the most based on test scores will induce all teachers to work harder, and thereby elevate the performance of students and schools as a whole. The phrase "race to the top," which the Obama administration has embraced in a variety of contexts beyond education as well, underscores the emphasis on creating competition to generate better overall outcomes. But the evidence has become abundantly clear that incentives in the absence of concrete, proven mechanisms that enable teachers to work more effectively are much more likely to induce ulcers than improve student test scores. Competitive pressures will not generate progress in the absence of *evidence-based* systems for promoting ongoing learning and social capital creation within organizations, including schools. The growing body of evidence presented here suggests that the highest-performing schools, even in poor socioeconomic settings, are precisely the ones that have been striving to create collaborative systems.

The Century Foundation, the publisher of this book, recognizes the need to base reform proposals on strong evidence of their success. For many years, we have supported work led by senior fellow Richard D. Kahlenberg arguing that socio-economic integration of public schools greatly improves outcomes for low-income students while providing a path toward restoring greater economic opportunity and reducing inequality in the United States. We remain completely committed to that perspective, which is backed by abundant research accumulated over many decades. This book serves as a complement

to that work, in that it explores how schools, given whatever mix of students they might have, could organize themselves to become more effective. Our view is that districts should strive to enable low-income students to attend middle-class schools while also applying lessons from the best available research about how school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders can work most effectively together.

A Brief Overview

This book's presentation of research that examines the role of organizational culture in U.S. public schools proceeds in seven chapters. Chapter two discusses the theoretical underpinnings of school reforms that focus on enhancing social capital, drawing connections to the work of scholars in the late 1980s and 1990s who analyzed the shortcomings of the management of private companies in the context of heightened economic globalization and rapid technological advances. At the time, a new crop of reformers argued that the rigid, slow-to-adapt hierarchies of schools were becoming as anachronistic as the shrinking U.S. manufacturing sector's long-standing assembly-line methods for producing goods. W. Edwards Deming wrote, "We will never transform the prevailing system of management without transforming our prevailing system of education. They are the same system." Just as corporations could become more productive through enhanced teamwork that facilitated communication and enabled problems to be resolved quickly, Deming and others argued, schools that promoted deeper relationships among teachers and administrators could more effectively address challenges with their students. As the front-line workers in schools, teachers gain distinctive expertise that can benefit their colleagues when they have an opportunity to share their insights on an ongoing basis.

The sociologist James Coleman, famous for his seminal work documenting the strong relationships between the socioeconomic composition of schools and test score results, was also central to the evolution of thinking about organizational culture in schools. He added important depth to the concept of social capital, emphasizing

how the presence of high degrees of trust in an institutional setting like schools can enhance learning processes. More recently, Carrie Leana, professor of organizations and management at the University of Pittsburgh, wrote in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*: "When the relationships among teachers in a school are characterized by high trust and frequent interaction—that is, when social capital is strong—student achievement scores improve."

This chapter also explores the obstacles to pursuing reforms focused on organizational transformation. One central challenge is the continuing preoccupation among politicians and journalists with strategies focused on using sticks rather than carrots to induce change, even though such reforms consistently have failed to produce positive outcomes. The fundamental problem with those approaches is that applying pressure cannot induce teachers to become more effective in classrooms unless they have some kind of ongoing support that enables them to perform better. They are unlikely to be able to improve in isolation, no matter how much their job security and incomes are threatened. Just as medical professionals, lawyers, and journalists develop their skills over time through ongoing guidance from peers and supervisors, teachers become better at their craft when they interact on an ongoing basis with colleagues who help nurture their capabilities.

Another major impediment is that fundamentally changing the culture of any institution is inherently difficult, requiring strong leadership, buy-in from key parties, personnel changes, and ongoing investments of time and energy. Compounding those hurdles is the reality that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to enhancing social capital in school settings. The process is inherently dynamic and will vary significantly from institution to institution. Still, the results strongly suggest that confronting such difficulties will pay off over time for America's students.

Chapter 3 synthesizes the highlights of the most ambitious and rigorous studies that examine commonalities among schools that consistently outperform their counterparts with comparable student demographic characteristics. One of those studies draws

from an unusually deep trove of data collected by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, extending over the course of more than a decade, which enabled it to distinguish features of elementary schools that improved over time from those that failed to show significant performance gains. That analysis led the researchers to conclude that five organizational features of schools are essential to advancing student achievement: (1) a coherent instructional guidance system, (2) an effective approach to building professional capacity, (3) strong parent-community ties, (4) a student-centered learning climate, and (5) an interplay of instructional and "inclusive-facilitative" leadership. The authors identified building *relational trust* as a central concern of leaders in the more successful schools.

Another major study summarized in chapter 3, conducted by a department of the nonprofit company that sponsors the ACT college admissions tests, entailed an extensive examination of high-performing public schools serving large numbers of low-income students in California, Michigan, Florida, Texas, and Massachusetts. After a careful screening process to identify unusually effective high-poverty schools, the study found that the major similarities among those successful schools included mentoring support for new teachers, mechanisms for promoting ongoing collaboration among teachers, and using tests as diagnostic tools to monitor the progress of teachers and students alike, as well as to quickly respond to problems that even low-stakes quizzes can identify. As with the Consortium on Chicago School Research study, extensive data mining combined with qualitative analysis pointed to institutional culture as decisive in separating successful schools with a high proportion of low-income children from less effective counterparts.

A third study summarized in chapter 3, sponsored by The Century Foundation, focused on high-performing, low-income school districts in New Jersey. Its findings share many of the same elements that emerged in the Chicago and ACT studies: a collaborative organizational culture focused on improving student learning is central to making progress, the use of frequent assessments as diagnostic tools to detect and respond to difficulties that teachers are encountering as well as

students, and explicit commitments of significant time dedicated to enabling robust internal communication and extra assistance to those who are struggling.

Chapter 4 presents highlights of other studies that in different ways try to examine whether efforts to instill a more collaborative culture in schools, along the lines of the approaches conveyed in chapter 3, produce positive outcomes. Again, no conclusive gold-standard "randomized clinical trial" has yet been conducted, but a wide variety of relevant studies have been published that add to our understanding of relationships between organizational culture and student outcomes. Much of this research focuses on efforts to implement initiatives labeled as "professional learning communities," "communities of instructional practice," and "instructional leadership teams." Over the past two decades, those terms and similar constructions have been applied in education circles to encompass a variety of strategies that entail promoting collaboration within schools and between school personnel and parents. Because the meaning of those terms can vary significantly, and have often been applied to initiatives in which relatively little additional collaboration has actually been undertaken, the labels have limitations when assessing whether the pursuit of organizational reform "worked" or not. One school's attempt to create professional learning communities may entail very different actions from another school's efforts. The details of implementation explain more about success or failure than simply looking at the performance of schools that said they were going to create professional learning communities.

Even in that context, quantitative research has reinforced the validity of efforts to promote enhanced collaboration while providing insights about the challenges connected to those undertakings. Those studies range from assessments of the impact of large-scale reforms in major cities to initiatives pursued in small rural schools. They collectively add important nuance to understanding the dynamics of how changes in school culture can improve the educational experience of students while clarifying that some forms of collaboration appear to be more constructive than others. Among the studies summarized

in this chapter: a comprehensive report on Cincinnati's Students First initiative by University of Pennsylvania professor Jonathan A. Supovitz; an assessment of Philadelphia's Children Achieving reforms by Tom Corcoran and Jolley Bruce Christman; an evaluation of Iowa's experimentation with a highly collaborative instructional model called Authentic Intellectual Work; a 2005 review of research on professional learning communities; and several studies by Carrie Leana, a professor of organizations and management at the Katz Graduate School of Business at the University of Pittsburgh. Those reports, and others described in the chapter, consistently support the strong connections between enhanced social capital in schools and improved student performance.

Chapter 5 focuses on one highly promising strategy for enhancing professional development of teachers, bridging polarization between administrators and faculty, and tackling the politically volatile issue of teacher tenure. Known as Peer Assistance and Review (PAR), this strategy was originally devised in the early 1970s by Dal Lawrence, the former president of the Toledo, Ohio Federation of Teachers. PAR is a system that assigns designated "expert" teachers to work closely with both new and struggling teachers to help them improve. It also creates a process for transitioning tenured teachers who do not respond sufficiently to that additional support out of the school. This chapter looks in depth at how PAR has worked in the districts where it has been tried.

In addition to Toledo, the major urban school districts in the United States that have implemented some form of PAR over an extended period are Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Montgomery County, Maryland; Rochester and Syracuse, New York; and San Juan County, California. The process for deciding to pursue the PAR approach in the first place and then determining the details of how it would work tended to be arduous, evolving in fits and starts, and with frequent conflict. Yet once established, the PAR systems have persisted, and administrators and unions both generally express strong enthusiasm for the innovation. One Harvard University study summarized in the chapter concludes that the

benefits of PAR programs that include mechanisms for expediting the transition of ineffective tenured teachers out of the school system are clearly cost-effective.

Chapter 6 focuses on two particular school districts—Cincinnati, Ohio, and Springfield, Massachusetts—where extensive efforts have been made to develop more collaborative cultures, and in which student test scores have been significantly improving in conjunction with those initiatives. The case studies convey details about the challenges connected to transforming institutional culture and the ways in which those efforts appear to be producing better results. Because Cincinnati has been a pioneer in collaboration going back more than two decades, while Springfield only recently began to pursue collaborative strategies in the aftermath of a state takeover of the school system in 2004, both the contrasts and similarities between the two settings are instructive.

The brief final chapter conveys several specific ideas for promoting much more widespread efforts in public schools to embrace cultural change built on intensive collaboration. It highlights encouraging new steps taken by the U.S. Department of Education to promote union-district partnerships and other collaborative strategies, primarily through national conferences and efforts to educate stakeholders about lessons learned from different state and local initiatives. It also discusses a promising new grant provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to the National Education Association Foundation aimed at promoting union-district collaboration. The chapter recommends building on those important preliminary actions with more ambitious ideas aimed at creating new mechanisms for educating stakeholders about the payoffs to such reforms, building a larger corps of advisers and support networks to provide guidance to school districts about implementing such changes, and de-emphasizing or eliminating existing policies that discourage collaboration.

The evidence provided in this report makes a compelling case that U.S. public schools would greatly benefit from applying lessons learned from the study of other categories of organizations as well as schools. Effective internal collaboration, coordination, and teamwork

lead to better performance, in schools as well as virtually every other institutional undertaking. The debate over school reform will become much more productive when it at long last focuses on that reality.