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Lessons Learned from Special Education Leadership Development:

Knowledge Diffusion and Schools as Organizations

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The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) aims to provide students with disabilities meaningful participation in the general education curriculum. This objective is made explicit in the regulatory requirement that students with disabilities may be removed from the general education setting only if the provision of supplementary aids and services fails to support them. In addition, students with disabilities are to be educated with their non-disabled peers and to be included in the life of the school such as membership in school-sponsored clubs, athletics, and extracurricular activities, where appropriate. In order to facilitate the provision of these guarantees, Congress enhanced the team decision-making framework required for individualized educational planning (IEP) by identifying specific roles to be filled by school personnel, by defining topics of deliberation, and by extending the participation rights of parents.

The challenge of successfully implementing this legislation is that many school principals and teachers, both general and special, are unaware of IDEA's many requirements. Historically, special education advocates have attempted to alleviate this problem by diffusing new legal, curricular, and pedagogical knowledge to individual school personnel. However, this individualistic approach to reform has resulted in limited systemic change for schools (Fullan, 1991; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996; Knapp, 1997). Hence, scholars have started to acknowledge that individual educators are embedded in a context of patterned relationships (Jacob, 1999), vertically and horizontally within school organizations (Bolman and Deal, 1993; Earle and Kruse, 1999; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996; Tyack and Cuban, 1997). Educators certainly act as empowered and knowledgeable individuals, but they also act as members of an organization, subject to a variety of constraints due to the recurring patterns by which the school as a whole accomplishes its work (Earle and Kruse, 1999). Consequently, administrators and teachers must be both informed about new special education knowledge and skills and assisted in reworking the patterns by which they interact organizationally to provide services to students with disabilities.

## INTRODUCTION

Faculty at the University of Akron (UA), Department of Educational

Foundations and Leadership, recognized that to facilitate the successful implementation of IDEA provisions in local schools, educators need a sound conceptual understanding of congressional intent and best practice and opportunities to collaborate in new ways with school organization colleagues. To this end, the State Superintendent's Task Force for the Preparation of Special Education Personnel awarded UA a \$25,000 grant to provide school teams, rather than individuals, with the needed skills to implement the IDEA in their organization. Six area school/districts were invited to send a four-person team to attend a series of four weekend workshops centered on the law and on the attitudes, competencies, and dispositions necessary to bring about the promise of systemic change in school structure and culture embedded in the IDEA. Each team's professional staff consisted of an administrator, special educator, and a general educator. As workshop planners understood that

professionals and parents jointly contribute to the IEP process, each team also included a parent with a special needs student, who attended the school. Coupling educators and parents in the process also encouraged questioning policy and practice from a variety of perspectives.

The structure of school/parent teams was virtually duplicated in the workshop planners/facilitators team; it consisted of UA faculty from the Departments of Educational Foundations and Leadership and Counseling Psychology and Special Education with expertise in education law, organizational theory, and disability advocacy. Practicing public educators on the planning/facilitation team included an elementary school principal from a suburban school district, a special education teacher from an urban school district, a general educator who was the mother of a child with a disability, and a professional parent advocate who also was the parent of a child with a disability.

### PROJECT EDUCATIONAL DESIGN

The grant planners set out to develop a core of model school teams who could affect change within their school organization and, potentially, serve as a resource to the rest of their district. Additionally, it was hoped these teams might also serve as a resource for other districts. The grant planners hoped to achieve this result through having the teams attend 4 workshops, which began in Fall, 1997 and concluded in Spring, 1998. The four workshops attempted to: one, disseminate substantive knowledge and skills about IDEA and, two, provide experientially opportunities for team members to develop new ways of collaborating organizationally. The workshops focused respectively on creating inclusive environments, building climate and community, developing inclusive curriculum and instructional strategies, and building leadership skills. A brief overview of each workshop theme follows.

#### Creating Inclusive Environments

The objectives for this session required that participants identify the current practices used in implementing special education in their settings and expose the assumptions that were intrinsic to them. Participants were led in a series of reflective activities designed to help them understand the history and experiential origins of personal beliefs and assumptions about special education/disability. Lastly, teams were asked to distinguish between equity and equality and identify examples of each in their schools.

#### Building Leadership Skills

In this second workshop, participants were expected to gain an awareness of their own leadership styles and the leadership styles of others. They also systematically explored leadership strategies through small group decision-making and were encouraged to identify ways to utilize their own leadership skills, as well as the skills of others on their team, when planning for school organization change.

#### Curriculum and Instructional Strategies

The objectives of the third workshop were for participants to understand the teaching and learning problems posed by the traditionally sequenced curriculum; to gain skill in assessing individual student strengths and needs; to use defined strategies to "bridge" traditional curriculum; and to plan for student academic success. The school district teams were given practice time using Internet tools to identify curriculum and disability resources for teachers, families, and students.

### Building School Communities

Participants in this last workshop were given opportunities to explore the relationship between their district/building mission statements and its impact on educating students with disabilities; to examine the inherent meaning of the concept of "parent participation;" to identify ways in which teacher unions have responded to inclusion (i.e., placement in the general education setting for all or most of the school day); and to review the myths and realities of organizational change. In preparation for this last workshop, each team was required to develop an action plan with goals and strategies for to achieve the goals. Alternatively, teams could choose to refine and formalize their current building/district goals and strategies. The purpose of the action plan was to provide a structure to help each team sustain their collaboration beyond the workshops and assist them in making plans to successfully implement targeted changes in their school organization.

### Additional Workshop Features

The workshops incorporated two additional features to improve each team's ability to collaborate effectively in their school organization. One, a major emphasis through most of the four workshops was on the team decision-making model built into the IEP process. A stress was placed on the contribution that all members of the team make to the IEP process in helping solve problems of teaching practice and student learning. Two, the planner/facilitator team attempted to embody and model in their own team process a collaboration and decision-making style that would be conducive to promoting trust and tolerance amongst team members. For example in preparation for the workshops, the planner/facilitators worked cooperatively to develop a consensus about the assumptions that would guide the design of each workshop. The planning/facilitating team modeled this process during each workshop by encouraging fellow team members to openly comment about various discussion topics and they consistently worked at listening respectfully to the diverse perspectives expressed by team members. Also, team members took turns in addressing workshop participants and facilitating workshop activities.

### Resources Manuals

Finally, to assist in the process of diffusing IDEA knowledge and skills to the teams, the grant planners created four resource manuals (i.e., one for each workshop session). Each manual summarize key information from its respective workshop, additional knowledge related to the topic areas, and other possible literature, organizations, and Internet sites related to the workshop theme. Also, the resources manuals were for wider dissemination among school district staff; administrator knowledge, growth, and induction; staff development; planning and building community with parents, professionals, and others; problem solving and decision-making; and for other strategies available for the provision of creative alternative service delivery settings for children with disabilities.

## PROJECT EVALUATION DESIGN

The project evaluation design was generally informed by the principles of an illuminative evaluation (Parlett and Hamilton, 1976; Worthen, Sanders, Fitzpatrick, 1997). Illuminative evaluation puts an emphasis on "process, subjective information, and naturalistic inquiry" (p. 159). It attempts to provide a rich and accurate portrayal of a project or program by triangulating different types of data sources. Consequently, the evaluation of this project employed data from 3 different sources: questionnaires,

participant written narratives, and interviews. The data from these three sources was designed to assess the project's efficacy regarding knowledge diffusion and organizational change in each team's school.

A questionnaire and written participant narratives helped to evaluate the success of the knowledge diffusion. At the conclusion of each workshop, participants filled out questionnaires. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale, with ratings from poor to excellent, and was used to quantify participants' evaluations of the sessions' content organization, presentation clarity, encouragement of exchange of ideas and alternative views, and quality of activities, discussion, and materials. Immediately following the conclusion of each workshop, participants also were asked to identify the most important concepts they had learned that day and to summarize their experience in a written narrative. Both these data sources were collected and reviewed for the purpose of adjusting methodology, structure, focus, and activity so that the participants' needs were considered in the development of each workshop.

To triangulate (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) the questionnaire and participant narrative data, relative to the knowledge diffusion goal, an external evaluator interviewed 75% of the participants. The interviews lasted anywhere from 20 minutes to 40 minutes. Members from all six teams were interviewed. Due to other commitments at their school, one team left after finishing the second workshop. One member from this team was interviewed. At least three members from each of the five remaining school/district teams were interviewed. The interview questions focused on the educational effectiveness rendered by the planner/facilitator team and the transfer of knowledge to their individual professional lives.

Additionally, the external evaluator interviewed participants about the extent to which the workshops influenced systemic change in each team's school organization. These interview questions focused on the effectiveness of the team's organizational processes and the development and implementation of the team's action plans in their school organization. As the interviews were the only data source regarding organizational change, the external evaluator made certain to interview at least three members from each of the five remaining teams. This enabled the external evaluator to triangulate (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) the data on organizational change (three perspectives on the same team phenomena).

## EVALUATION RESULTS

The discussion below focuses on the results from the questionnaires, participant written narratives, and interviews as they pertain to the success of the project's knowledge diffusion and its influence on school organization processes. To protect the confidentiality of the team members, pseudonyms are used in any of the participant quotes below.

### Knowledge Diffusion

The workshop planner/facilitators hoped to diffuse key knowledge and skills about IDEA to the workshop participants. The results indicated that they successfully achieved this goal. This was apparent in the responses to questionnaires, participant narratives, and interviews.

Questionnaires and Participant Written Narratives. At the conclusion of each workshop, questionnaires were administered to participants. The questionnaire employed a Likert scale, with ratings from poor to excellent, to quantify participants' evaluations of the sessions' content organization, presentation

clarity, encouragement of exchange of ideas and alternative views, and quality of activities, discussion, and materials:

96% rated Organization of Content as outstanding or excellent

96% rated Clarity of Presentation as outstanding or excellent

91% rated Encouragement of Exchange of Ideas and Alternative views as outstanding or excellent

100% of the participants rated this workshop outstanding or excellent concerning the Quality of Activities, Discussion, and Handouts.

Immediately following the conclusion of each session, participants were also asked to identify the most important concepts they had learned that day and to summarize their experience in writing. These qualitative narratives provided the grant team with a great deal of positive reinforcement and assurance that students were learning and understanding. Some examples are:

"Everyone has a history that affects their decision-making and actions."

"Our belief systems play a huge part in the success of children."

No one has the 'best' answer. There is great freedom in knowing this and in knowing others struggle with these issues, too."

"We have an obligation to address the traditional ways of teaching all kids."

"If we break down the traditional barriers to learning for students without disabilities, then the barriers to including kids with special needs will be much more easily done."

"I have greater confidence in taking to my staff the right things we all must do to improve instruction for every child."

"The diversity of those in attendance made the interactions interesting and well-rounded."

"I have really been left thinking about my building and what it needs and how I can help."

In sum, all participants found the year-long workshops to be either a very worthwhile (89%) or worthwhile (11%) use of their weekend time

Interviews. Upon completion of all four workshops, an external evaluator interviewed 75% of the participants to determine the degree of educational effectiveness rendered by the grant team and the transfer of knowledge to their individual professional lives. (Other data gathered from the interviews will be discussed below under the heading of school organization change.) The results supported the findings from the questionnaire and written narratives. The grant team was quite successful at their general goal of knowledge diffusion. Analysis of the interview data revealed that participants found that the content and pedagogy of the workshop leadership team over the course of the four workshops were educationally effective and allowed for the transfer of knowledge to individual practice.

The content of the four workshops provided participants a thorough overview of issues relevant to special education. Eighty-two percent of the interviewees indicated that the workshops provided very complete coverage of key issues germane to the placement of students in the general education setting for all or most of the academic day. They indicated this through comments such as, "The workshops were very comprehensive. I can't think of a thing that might have been included, but wasn't." The remaining interviewees also regarded the workshops as very thorough, but thought that more coverage might have been devoted to inclusion teaching and scheduling practices currently used by actual districts and schools in Summit and Cuyahoga Counties.

The workshop leaders were found to have employed a range of pedagogical approaches that engaged participants and helped them learn. Ninety-four percent of the interviewees complimented the workshop leaders on their teaching techniques with comments such as, "Not once was I bored; the different activities kept things moving even on a Saturday morning," and "The wide range of teaching techniques helped accommodate the different learning styles on our team." Many of the interviewees reported that learning to adapt their individual learning styles in their own teams was facilitated by the diverse membership of the workshop leadership team and their interactions with the school-based teams.

All participants reported successfully transferring knowledge from the four workshops to professional situations. With a high degree of consistency, they identified several substantive topics that proved especially applicable: curriculum, instruction, and assessment modifications for both students in special and general education; legal issues related to placement requirements; and issues related to the IEP processes or meetings. Frequently, interviewees mentioned the first three issues in conjunction with one another.

The interviewees indicated that they took the information from the workshops concerning the need to make modifications and applied it in a variety of ways. Both general and special educators reported using modifications learned in the workshops in their work with students; they also reported transmitting information about these modifications to their colleagues. Administrators reported sharing the information with faculty at staff meetings; talking with individual faculty members in a knowledgeable and competent manner; and encouraging the application of this information within inclusion classrooms. Parents, teachers, and administrators reported that they applied this information during discussions about IEPs as well.

Educators and parents reported transferring knowledge about legal issues to their professional practice. Teachers, administrators, and parents indicated that they took the information from the workshops about special education legal issues and used it to inform their discussions with colleagues and each other. Discussions occurred informally (e.g., over lunch, on the phone), and formally (e.g., IEP and staff meetings). By virtue of possessing updated and correct understandings about legal issues, parents, teachers, and administrators indicated that they believed themselves to be more confident and comfortable protecting the interests of students with disabilities in a variety of situations.

Furthermore, teachers, administrators, and parents reported transferring knowledge about IEPs and team decision-making to improve their individual practices and processes at their schools. They often used a list of quality IEP indicators developed for the workshop to assess in their IEP development, documentation, and practices. These improvements consisted of including a wider group of people present at meetings, resulting in a properly constructed team. Teachers and principals alike stated that they paid more attention to the concerns of parents at these meetings and found that they elicited

more input from the various people attending the IEP meeting. Additionally, educators saw themselves as possessing the ability to provide a larger pool of potential modifications to benefit students and in examining and describing modifications more explicitly. As an outcome of this knowledge transfer, teachers and administrators reported that they were doing a better job of protecting the rights of students of disabilities and were educating colleagues about the IEP process.

### School Organization Change

In addition to making inquiries regarding knowledge diffusion and individual participants, interview questions also asked participants about their team's ability to transfer new patterns of shared practice to their school organization. The workshop planners/facilitators hoped to influence some of the school organization patterns of decision-making regarding services provided to students with disabilities. This was the reason for inviting school teams to the workshops and a guiding principle in the design and delivery of each workshop. Analysis of the interview data indicated that there were successes and problems encountered in attempting to achieve this goal. The project had considerable success with regards to: (1) the modeling and implementation of effective team processes and (2) facilitating the awareness of leadership styles and their implementation in team processes.

Modeling and Implementation. All of the participants indicated that in their interactions with each other, the workshop facilitators modeled processes and values that were congruent with effective team functioning and the concept of inclusion. In the words of one participant, "They practiced what they preached." For example, participants noted that when the workshop facilitators spoke to one another, they "Listened and respected one another." "They were open to hearing different opinions from each other." "They were really good role models for tolerating and respecting a range of different perspectives," and "One person added something and another joined in. They complemented each other and modeled the values of the workshop."

Workshop facilitators provided effective models for how the team members might interact with one another and this influenced the school teams. Eighty-two percent of the interviewees indicated that based on this modeling they tried out new behaviors in dealing with team members. "I watched what they did with one another and then I gave it try. I'd say it worked." "They set a tone in how they talked to each other. It seemed to change the dynamics between us." "We talked about what they did sometimes on the way to the workshops. I remember someone saying to someone else, 'You sound like Dr. Samuels and Dr. Livingston.' We were chuckling a bit after they said it, but it was also clearly a compliment."

Leadership Style Awareness and Implementation. Educators and parents reported transferring knowledge about leadership styles to their work in schools and/or special education endeavors. Forty-seven percent of the interviewees reported several benefits from learning about leadership styles that they were able to apply in school settings, often related to special education issues. They noted that they had a new appreciation of the need for a variety of different leadership styles in a group and/or an IEP meeting. Interviewees indicated that the knowledge they learned about different leadership styles enabled them to interact more successfully with other educators in communicating information about special education issues. They also indicated that they modified their own leadership styles to improve the communication patterns in a group and/or an IEP meeting.

Additionally, all of the interviewees indicated that they were able to take their new awareness about leadership style and implement this to some extent in their own team. For example, "I realized that

Allen had a very different leadership style than I did once we had gone through the activity. But I also got a sense from the activity that different styles can make different contributions to the group. It helped me to accept Allan and work more easily with him." Another participant made a similar comment. "Sheila used to really bother me, the way she got overbearing. The leadership style activity helped me to see that Sheila wasn't really doing this on purpose. She was a certain kind of leader. We weren't the same. I think she began to see me in new way. We started to get along better and work together better."

The project achieved mixed results with regards to other issues related to the teams and systemic school organization change. Participants indicated successes and problems with regards to team membership, team coordination outside the workshops, team collaboration on school IEP processes, and creating and implementing team action plans.

Team Membership. The project planners initially wanted a four-person team from the same school to attend each of the four workshops. The ideal was that an administrator, general education teacher, and special education teacher who commonly worked together in the same building would make up the core of each team. However, the workshop planners experienced difficulty in getting teachers, administrators, and parents from the same school, who were willing to give up four Saturdays during the academic year. Ultimately, five teams out of an initial six completed the four workshops. Of the five teams, only two were made up an administrator, teachers (general and special), and a parent from the same school. The other three teams were constituted as follows: one team was made up of a parent and 3 teachers (2 general and one special) from the same building (one of the teachers aspired to be an administrator); the next team was made up of two teachers (general and special) and a parent from the same building and an administrator from another school; and the last team was made up of two teachers (general and special) and a parent from the same building and a district administrator. This less than ideal membership pattern proved to be significant regarding the success of the teams in bringing about systemic school organization change.

Team Coordination Outside the Workshops. The two teams with the principal, teachers, and parents from the same building reported that the workshops helped provide "significant support" in enabling them to coordinate their work together outside the workshops. Members from these two teams noted that "We set up meetings back at work to get going on the things we talked about in the workshops." "We jelled and started doing things together." Or "The workshops helped us be organized at school. We came to the table and worked." The other three teams reported problems that limited their working together effectively within their school/district over the time span of the four workshops. Two of these teams indicated that not having their building administrator on the team made it difficult to effectively "implement" some things back at their school. They noted that with a team member in a different building within the district, it was difficult to get together to do joint work and planning. They also found it difficult to find time outside of the workshops to communicate and coordinate their efforts with teammates back at the district/school. The members of the team with the three teachers indicated that the large size of their school and their lack of proximity to one another made it difficult to coordinate their efforts outside the four workshops.

Team Collaboration on School IEP Processes. The two teams with the principal, teachers, and parents from the same building indicated they were able to start improving their IEP process in a more systemic manner. With their principals' support and participation these teams started to address the way their building handled the IEP process, rather tackling the process one IEP meeting at a time. "With Brad [the principal] on board, we could talk to teachers and move things in the right direction as a school." "I [the

principal] told them [the staff] that attending to the needs of students with disabilities, inclusion, was a priority. With my team's help, the IEP process started to shape up."

The other three teams had more mixed experiences regarding their collaboration on IEP processes. Having the opportunities to participate together in the workshops helped the teachers collaborate in preparing for and being at IEP meetings. Each of the three teams mentioned something like the following comment: "Because of the workshops, Barb and I sat down with very similar ideas about what we needed to do. We could really implement some of the things we learned." However, each of the three teams without a building principal indicated difficulty in getting small groups of teachers, let alone teachers from the building as a whole, to "buy into" thinking about inclusion and IEP process in new ways. In particular, these three teams noted that veteran teachers in the building were especially hard to convince that changes were necessary.

Creating and Implementing Team Action Plans. The two teams with the principal, teachers, and parents from the same building stated that they experienced success at developing their action plans. Each of these two teams created goals and strategies for future organization change. However, only one of these teams successfully implemented their action plan. The successful team used the opportunity of action planning to extend and further improve the inclusion practices in their building. They reported that the action plans had helped to improve IEP development, strengthen Intervention Assistance Teams, and work at building community among the professionals and parents involved in special and general education in the school as a whole.

The other team with a principal and teachers from the same building successfully created an action plan for future change, but at the time of the interview it had not been implemented and its future implementation seemed uncertain as well. Toward the end of the academic year the team's building principal was promoted to the district office. The remaining special education and general education teachers still considered themselves part of a team, but due to time constraints and the uncertainty of their new principal's priorities, they were not clear when they might have an opportunity to collaborate on implementing the action plan.

Each of the three teams without a building principal had difficulty in developing and implementing their action plans. Two teams misunderstood the directions related to developing action plans because they did not have extensive previous experience with action planning. Instead, these two teams developed an overview of the current inclusion practices in their building/district. Also, both of these teams, due to different problems (e.g., team members were in different buildings, one member went on maternity leave, and another resigned to take a position in another district), were unable to sustain themselves as a team. The third team without a building principal was able to develop an action plan, but due to time constraints and limited help from the rest of their building has been unable to implement their action plan in any significant way.

## DISCUSSION

The results discussed above are the product of an evaluation study, rather than a rigorous research design. Consequently, caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions from the data. However, the results do offer some suggestive foci that might inform future research and the implementation of IDEA in schools.

### Knowledge Diffusion

The workshops instituted by the UA planners/facilitators provide a solid example of what well designed and executed knowledge diffusion can accomplish. Clearly, the interviews, participant narratives, and questionnaires indicated that the workshop facilitators were highly successful in diffusing knowledge about IDEA. This was indicated by participant responses to the comprehensiveness of the workshop content, the clarity by which the content was communicated, and the pedagogical effectiveness of the workshop facilitator team.

Even more importantly, the success of the knowledge diffusion was reflected in participants' remarks about transferring IDEA knowledge to schools settings. Participants indicated that they applied their new knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment modifications to assist both special and general education students. Additionally, they employed their new legal knowledge in discussions about placement and appropriate interventions for special needs students. And, they utilized their new knowledge to improve IEP processes and meetings. Finally, many of them also reported diffusing their new knowledge to professional colleagues in their school.

### School Organization Change

Additionally, the workshop planners/facilitators were able to help the teams cultivate interpersonal processes and leadership style awareness. Each of the five teams clearly indicated this enabled them to function more effectively as a group. More critically, nearly half of the participants indicated they were able to apply this new interpersonal and leadership knowledge in school settings, even towards the improvement of special education services.

Despite the obvious successes discussed above, only one of the five teams achieved something resembling systemic change at implementing IDEA within their school organization. This team was able to: learn new patterns of working together with regard to IDEA, bring these patterns back to their school, generate an action plan to implement these patterns throughout the organization, and follow through with the action plan. Recent research suggests that this team was successful because the UA workshops helped them to develop and employ three features considered key for achieving school-wide change: professional community (Louis and Kruse, 1995), strong administrative leadership (Louis, Marks, and Kruse, 1996), and a sustained, collective focus (Newman and Associates, 1996).

Professional Community. The successful team was made up of participants from the same school. (The other team that achieved a nearly similar level of success also had all of its members from the same school. The teams with members from other buildings struggled to coordinate their efforts outside the workshops.) On the surface this seems fairly obvious. However, recent reform literature argues that having a school staff come together to develop shared beliefs and practices about learning, teaching, and working with students, what scholars term professional community, is foundational for organizational change (Louis and Kruse, 1995). The workshops helped the successful team to start developing a professional community based on shared beliefs and practices for serving special needs students in accord with IDEA. And, in fairness to the workshop planner/facilitators, the professional community literature informed their desired ideal for each team to be constituted by participants from the same school. However, the loosely-coupled nature of school organizations (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995) meant that achieving this ideal was difficult.

Strong Administrative Leadership. The successful team had strong administrative leadership that enabled the team to legitimately focus on a school-wide implementation of IDEA. School administrators have the positional authority in an organization to play this kind of role (Earle and Kruse, 1999). The building administrator on the successful team was able to help her team move forward to change the IEP process in the building as a whole, rather than in a piecemeal fashion. Similarly, the other team that contained a building administrator was also able to initiate school-wide change. In a negative way, the critical nature of strong administrative leadership was also highlighted because this team was unable to implement their action plan once their building administrator left. Similarly, the teams without their building administrator labored fruitlessly to have their school as a whole implement IDEA. Again, the reform literature strongly supports strong administrative leadership as an important feature in the development of school organization change and, not surprisingly, it is also crucial for supporting professional community (Fullan, 1991; Louis, Marks, and Kruse, 1996). And, once more, in fairness to the workshop planner/facilitators, the literature did inform their initial wish for each team to have their own building administrator.

Sustained Collective Focus. Finally, the successful team was able (by virtue of having members from the same building and strong leadership) to provide a sustained, collective focus on learning about IDEA and implementing it in their school. Researchers have found that a change is more likely to be institutionalized in a school's daily practices, when a staff jointly commits to a long period of time to enact a specific reform in their building (Newman and Associates, 1996). The membership and leadership of the successful team enabled it to do this over the course of more than a year. Again, the other team with members from the same school and their own building administrator were also able to coordinate their activities outside the workshops and, consequently, sustain themselves until their principal was promoted to another position. The teams without these two characteristics had trouble coordinating themselves outside the workshops and, consequently, making a sustained commitment to changing their school organizations, let alone doing the small bit of outside work required by the workshop planner/facilitators. And, once again, the workshop planner/facilitators set out to have all the teams constituted by participants from the same building, including the building administrator. The hope was this configuration of participants would provide the support needed to promote a sustained, collective focus—a hope that appears born out by the successful team.

As noted earlier, this is only an evaluation study, so the discussion above is merely suggestive for improving future efforts to implement IDEA in school and conducting research on the institutionalization of IDEA. This study counsels that knowledge diffusion can play an important role in implementing IDEA in schools. However, this study also supports a growing body of literature that indicates knowledge diffusion, by itself, has a limited effectiveness for achieving systemic change in schools (Fullan, 1991; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996; Knapp, 1997). Stigler and Hiebert (1997) nicely captured this when they wrote, "if teaching could be changed by just disseminating ideas, the record of reform in the U.S. would be more successful than it is" (p. 19). As a worthy supplement to knowledge diffusion, this study advises placing an increased focus on the school as an organization when investigating and implementing IDEA, particularly on organizational features such as professional community, strong administrative leadership, and a sustained collective focus.

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