LET'S SEE A SHOW OF HANDS: HOW PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL REFORM

AFFECTS TEACHERS' WORK

by

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Arguably, the most popular current in school reform today is around "small schools". Small schools reforms are predicated on a body of research that suggests students learn better in smaller schools – or, schools of about 400 students or less – rather than large, "comprehensive" high schools. While existing studies of these reforms highlight the benefits for students and the challenges associated with school restructuring, they avoid a frank discussion of how school change affects teachers. Further, these studies fail to address how the politics of change affect prospects for sustainable success. This project redirects the focus of school reform research back towards teachers' work and the importance of democratic teacher participation via an examination of the Oregon Small Schools Initiative, an Oregon-based small schools reform. Using original survey and interview data, I examine how the politics of reform mediate the effects of school conversion on teachers' work. My data suggest that teachers from schools that engaged in

a democratic change process fared better than their peers from schools where change was implemented in a more authoritarian fashion. I found that the relationship between politics and work is largely based on that fact that, in democratic schools, teachers had more power and voice regarding school conversion, and school administrators were more likely to listen to and incorporate teachers' feedback into the restructuring process. By viewing teacher criticism as constructive input – as opposed to simply "resistance" – personnel from democratic schools were better able to decide upon a locally appropriate model of reform that fit the needs of both their teachers and students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE

A Tale of Two Schools

> *Teacher*: Actually, when we first received the grant there were already a lot people asking "Do we want it?" and "What does this mean for me?" And, "If I get involved and do all this work and start dreaming and getting up hopes for something, and then the administration says 'No, you can't do that!' then that's time wasted." So there was a lot of skepticism, even from the very beginning.

> *Teacher*: The more involved you wanted to be, you could be. It really was teacher-driven. It was like, "Here's what needs to be done" and [administrators] would talk to the leaders and they would say, "Take this to your group" and "Here's what we need to vote on." And we were filling out forms and surveys and all of that stuff. Yeah, finally it got to the point where they were like, "Okay, here's your four schools" and then we got to vote on which ones we wanted to be in. I think most teachers got what they wanted. What ended up happening was that teachers who didn't want to be involved in small schools either retired early, or it seemed like there were a lot of babies born for some reason and you know, just other people got jobs elsewhere and so it just kind of…they just weeded themselves out. Everybody that's here this year, I think really wants to be here and wants to be involved in small schools.

Change in schools can look drastically different from one campus to the next.

This project tells a story about how politics of school change matter for teachers.

Specifically, the focus here is on the importance of school politics for reform, and how

workplace democracy in schools can mediate the effects of school restructuring on

teachers' work and work environment. The quotes above come from teachers at two

different schools: the first, from a teacher in a school where change was implemented in a

top-down, authoritarian fashion; the second, from a teacher in a school where she and her

peers were encouraged to participate in restructuring to whatever degree they saw fit. It is

clear that these two teachers report quite different experiences regarding the change

process. The point of this juxtaposition is not that all reforming schools fit into one of

these two discrete categories, but that what school change looks like can vary considerably. Literally, a close look at the best and worst of times helps clarify a central facet of school change that often goes unappreciated: teacher participation in reform. What I found in my work on this project is that this variation has implications for teachers, and that the politics of reform are related to changes in teachers' work and work environment. Because teachers are so important to schools and education, these topics deserve attention.

School reform politics refer to the processes of change and how decisions are made in reforming schools. This study compares democratic processes, where teachers vote and have substantial input into the design and implementation of school restructuring, to authoritarian ones where reform is realized by administrative dictates. Further, I'm interested in the relationship between reform politics and the changes to teachers' work. Reform can change curriculum, instruction, and professional development for teachers, as well as the relationships among teachers, and between teachers, students and administrators. The expectation here is that, by working with administrators in a diplomatic and participatory environment, teachers in democratic schools will be able to more effectively negotiate changes regarding work.

The main hypothesis is that resistance or cooperation on the part of the faculty is a factor in the success or failure of school reform. The focus of this project on teachers' work is critical. Too often, changes to teacher workload and work environment are neglected topics in studies and policy on educational change (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Connell 1985; Freedman 2000; Gitlin 1980; Ingersoll 2003; Little and McLaughlin 1993;

Smyth and Shacklock 1998). This omission is significant. By writing teachers out of educational studies and program evaluations, researchers miss critical data. The studies cited above make efforts to restore some voice to teachers regarding the effects of school change, and this project continues that tradition in a current context.

This project draws on organizational analyses that examine schools as institutions, school reform, and studies about teachers and teaching work. It also synthesizes work and occupations research that focuses on the impact of workplace democracy and participative management. In their 1998 examination of a Chicago-based public school reform, Bryk et.al. (1998) emphasized the importance of democratic decision-making for reform success. This study applies this focus on workplace democracy to a privately funded small-schools reform (2002-2008) in the state of Oregon, the Oregon Small Schools Initiative (OSSI). Based on original survey and interview data collected from participating OSSI schools, the goal is to show how democratic participation by teachers in OSSI mediates changes in teachers' work in restructured schools.

Like other small-schools reforms, OSSI breaks up large, comprehensive high schools into relatively autonomous "academies" that are housed on a common campus, but specialize in different academic areas. The goal of these reforms is to reduce daily student-teacher contacts so that closer, more personal relationships between teachers and students develop (Gladden 1998; Klonsky 1998; Raywid 1997; Shear et al. 2005). The central argument here is that, despite the intentions, such grant assistance fails to address teachers' real needs – namely, adequate funding and equipment – and that privately funded reforms have mixed consequences for teacher workload and work environment.

Further and following Bryk's (1998) findings, the political character of school reform is a key, mediating factor affecting reform outcomes: for schools exhibiting more democratic conversion, small-school grants have a neutral or positive effect on teachers' work; for schools exhibiting more authoritarian conversion, the effects are negative.

American Public Schools and the Importance of School Reform

The overall quality of American public secondary education is arguably abominable: high dropout rates, truancy, disciplinary problems and a lack of rigorous curriculum plague many high schools, in particular those that serve a high proportion of minority students (Angus and Mirel 1999; Boyer 1983; Goodlad 1984; Oakes 1985; Powell, Farrar and Cohen 1985; Sizer 1992; Sizer 1984). In their defense, public schools have a number of difficult issues to balance: they must deal with consistent funding shortages, federal and state achievement mandates, large class sizes, a culture that by and large does not support education and student bodies that represent a diverse sample of abilities and behaviors. In 2004, due to a budget shortfall, Portland Public Schools (Oregon) considered releasing students for the year in late May, approximately two weeks earlier than usual because they didn't have enough money to staff the schools with teachers.

The clock is ticking for schools too. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 mandates achievement standards that push students to perform better. The Act includes accountability standards that mandate testing for students in grades 3 though 12 and annual statewide progress objectives. The purpose of these standards is that, by 2014,

the federal government wants all public school students to reach federally established standards in reading and math proficiency. Schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress toward statewide proficiency goals may be subject to improvement, corrective action, and restructuring measures. The law also promotes school choice by advocating charter school options for students in low-achieving schools.

Research has demonstrated that high expectations regarding student academic achievement are positively associated with better academic performance (Benson 2003; Gill 2001; Hargreaves 1992a; Meier 1995). Unfortunately, NCLB is more than high expectations. While mandating consistent achievement standards for schools that have drastically inequitable student populations, the Act fails to provide adequate resources such as money, books and equipment, staff, or professional development to schools to help meet these goals (Meier 2002; Meier and Wood 2004; Peterson and West 2003). Boosting student achievement requires teacher time, and teacher time is bought with money. Policy that seeks to help low-achieving students effectively should boost funding for educational supports, such as tutoring and summer classes. Further, the Act's attempt at accountability mirrors "merit pay" arrangements for teachers, or policy that links teacher pay to student performance. Such policy exhibits several problems, the most egregious of which being that teachers teach different students: classrooms in wealthier school districts tend to enroll higher achieving students, while poorer districts enroll lower achieving students. Expecting all these students to perform up to the same level is unrealistic, and paying teachers according to student achievement is unfair (Meier 2002; Meier and Wood 2004; Peterson and West 2003).

In an era of increased standards and limited resources, some public high schools have turned to private organizations for help, particularly for funding curriculum development, teacher training and academic assistance programs. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is one such organization. The Gates Foundation has made it a national priority to "personalize" learning by helping fund reform efforts at schools that convert from large, comprehensive high schools to those organized by a "small schools" model (AIR and SRI 2005). Essentially, the small schools movement argues that in large, comprehensive high schools many students fail to personally connect with teachers (Friedkin and Necochea 1988; Lee and Loeb 2000; Lee and Smith 1997; Lee and Smith 2001). The lack of personal connection facilitates social isolation, delinquency, poor academic achievement, and dropout. In contrast, a large high school may be broken up (i.e. converted) into smaller schools or academies that remain housed on a single campus. Ideally, students in one school almost exclusively take classes in their academy and from teachers in their academy; however, sports and some programs (such as electives, some arts, and AP courses) are often still offered as all-access classes, or classes available to all student. By limiting the number of teacher contacts, students become more intimately acquainted with their teachers and teachers become more personally invested in their students (Shear et al. 2005). Supposedly, stronger bonds help students academically and socially: they learn more and experience a greater sense of solidarity with their school.

School Size and the Organization of Schools

The logic employed by the Gates Foundation, as well as some educational researchers, is that school size is a key organizational variable affecting student achievement: in big schools, students fail to form relationships with teachers, and curricula do not support rigorous learning (Lee and Ready 2007). In contrast, students in smaller schools connect better with teachers, and these stronger teacher-student relationships improve student academic performance by enabling teachers to have high expectations for their students, increasing student engagement and reducing discipline problems (Garbarino 1980; Lee and Loeb 2000; Lee and Smith 1995; Lee and Smith 1997; Lee and Smith 2001). Research shows that students learn more and are more engaged in an environment where they are supported, care for each other, share goals, and take responsibility for each others' well being (Lee et al. 2000). Thus, some educational reforms target school size as the key restructuring piece. By making schools smaller, students will be more likely to graduate and be ready for college should they choose to go. Smaller school environments are often described in the literature as "communal" (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993) or "personalized" (Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Shear et al. 2005).

However, school size is not solely about the relationships. Traditionally, large "comprehensive" high schools (or schools that serve a large number of students from grades 9, 10, 11 and 12) offer students a wide variety of classes to take in addition to the core academic classes associated with math, science, and language. This variety has been likened to a "shopping mall" where student can pick and choose classes at will (Powell,

Farrar and Cohen 1985). Smaller schools, on the other hand, are less able to offer a variety of electives, and instead focus more on core academic curricula, such as language, math and science. Thus, students at these schools tend to take more hours of academic classes and less hours of electives (Lee et al. 2000). In fact, this combination – that of close teacher-student relationships and a primarily academic curriculum – is associated with better college readiness, test scores and lower dropout rates (Lee 1993; Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993; Lee et al. 2000) and is considered a major factor in the efficacy of Catholic schools (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore 1982). Further, research has demonstrated that greater choice of classes for students tends to magnify existing educational inequalities (Lee 1993; Ready, Lee and Welner 2004). Generally, lower achieving students will take the easiest route to graduation possible and in the process learn less than their higher achieving counterparts who are encouraged by their parents and teachers to challenge themselves.

Smaller schools, then, benefit students academically and socially. There is also evidence that they benefit teachers. In more personalized learning environments, teachers report greater feelings of satisfaction with their students and school (Lee and Loeb 2000). As such, teachers are more likely to take responsibility for their students' achievement and hold them to high expectations; this sense of collective responsibility and high expectations are associated with greater student success (Lee and Smith 1996; Louis, Marks and Kruse 1996).

Another concern regarding school reform is around academic equity. Frequently, conventional school organization will benefit high-achieving student, but disadvantage

low-achievers. Tracking is one instance of this: while many schools offer challenging and academically rigorous educational opportunities to students in honors-level classes, students in the vocational classes receive sub par instruction (Gamoran 1992; Hallinan 1994; Oakes 1985). Tracking, then, facilitates educational inequity. A major goal of some current educational reforms is to promote educational equity, or bringing the "bottom" students up without inhibiting the potential of high-achieving students. Consistent with research on the effects of school size on curriculum, smaller schools tend to promote educational equity if for no other reason than they eliminate some of the classes that do not promote academic learning, such as electives and some remedial or vocational classes (Lee 1993; Ready, Lee and Welner 2004).

The Small Schools Reform Movement

Recent efforts by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have emphasized reduction of school size as a key variable affecting student achievement and retention (Bridgeland, John J. DiIulio and Morison 2006; Pittman and Haughwout 1987; Shear et al. 2005). Research by the American Institutes for Research and SRI International (2005) and others (Pittman and Haughwout 1987; Shear et al. 2005) argues that small schools facilitate closer relationships between students and teachers, and that these relationships help keep students in school and graduate.

In restructured, "small schools" schools, large comprehensive high schools are split into different educational subunits known as houses, schools-within-schools, or academies (AIR and SRI 2005). Subunits are often theme-based and may focus on the

arts, science and technology, business, or trade-related occupations. Although the converted school still retains some common elements across subunits, such as extra-curricular activities or health services, students spend most of their time within their subunit. This is the schools-within-schools (SWS) model.

Educational research has found that small schools have higher levels of student achievement and a more communal learning environment than their larger counterparts (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993; Lee and Smith 1997; Lee and Smith 2001). "Small high schools" are usually operationalized as those with 400-500 students. However, small schools are often unavailable to low-achieving students that usually attend large, urban public high schools. SWS reforms are promising because they offer these schools the opportunity to downsize and thus, reap the benefits of more communal learning environments (Klonsky 1998; Lee and Smith 1997; Lee and Smith 2001; Patchen 2004; Ready 2004). Early studies suggest that even with disadvantaged students, SWS schools appear effective: compared to large high schools, they exhibit higher student achievement, reduce the achievement gap between high- and low-achieving students, and better prepare all students for college (Cotton 2001; Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Gladden 1998; Greene 2003; Klonsky 1998; Raywid 1997). Some research even suggests that small schools are also safer and more cost effective (Klonsky 1998; Nathan and Febey 2001), largely because closer teacher-student relationships reduce discipline problems over the long run.

Following the literature on school size, small-schools research emphasizes two facets of effective schools: constrained curriculum and closer teacher-student

relationships. First, students achieve better when they have limited curricular offerings

and the majority of their classes are academic (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Feldman,

Lopez and Simon 2006; Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993; Lee and Ready 2007; Lee et al. 2000;

Ready, Lee and Welner 2004). This model of a focused academic curriculum stands in

contrast to that of the comprehensive high school, which traditionally offers a gamut of

elective classes to students (Powell, Farrar and Cohen 1985). Small-schools restructuring

practices emphasize a more focused academic curriculum as an essential part of reform

(Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Lee and Ready 2007): this piece is referred to as

"academic rigor" by some organizations, including Employers for Education Excellence

(E3).

Second, close student-teacher relationships have also been identified as an

essential component for student retention and academic achievement (Bryk, Lee and

Holland 1993; Friedkin and Necochea 1988; Lee and Ready 2007; Lee et al. 2000; Lee

and Smith 1997; Lee and Smith 2001; Pittman and Haughwout 1987; Rumberger and

Palardy 2005; Shear et al. 2005). By making large schools smaller, OSSI seeks to

facilitate stronger teacher-student relationships in order to support students in times of

need. If students have one or more teachers with whom they are close, they are more

likely to receive assistance (including both academic help as well as personal

connection), stay in school and graduate (Bridgeland, John J. DiIulio and Morison 2006;

Pittman and Haughwout 1987; Rumberger and Palardy 2005). In schools with small-

schools, the closer relationships between teachers and students should be accompanied by

a decrease in the dropout rate.

Why exactly are close student-teacher relationships important? When teachers have closer relationships with their students, they tend to better understand their students' skills and personalities. Knowledge about their students' skills helps teachers have high yet realistic expectations for achievement: without this knowledge, teachers may be more inclined to simply allow their students to achieve poorly instead of challenging them (Lee et al. 2000; Shear et al. 2005). Knowledge about their students' personalities helps teachers more effectively deal with discipline issues in a constructive manner: in particular, teachers may be more able to provide the supports struggling students need, and to motivate low-achieving students instead of simply punishing them (Lee and Loeb 2000; Shear et al. 2005; Sizer 1992; Sizer 1984).

By focusing on both academic rigor and student-teacher relationships, the small-schools model is trying to target those students that are prone to achieve poorly or drop out of high school. For school reform to work, it must work especially for the low-achieving students. High school students from poor and minority backgrounds are particularly at risk to drop out of high school (Barton 2005; Gaustad 1991; Heckman and LaFontaine 2007; Marchant and Paulson 2005). Schools that serve large populations of these students must work harder to keep students in school as long as possible in order to maximize their chances for graduating and, thus, post-secondary educational opportunities and higher wage jobs. Further, many restructured small-schools educate student bodies with high proportions of these students (AIR and SRI 2005): for these schools, the challenge is particularly pressing.

Other evaluations of SWS schools find mixed results (Mitchell et al. 2004; Mitchell et al. 2005; Rhodes et al. 2005; Shear et al. 2005). These evaluations considered two different types of schools: those that were small at their inception ("new start" schools) and other large high schools that were converted to SWS ("conversion" schools). Redesigned, conversion SWS schools were slow to change old cultures and retained a high degree of academic tracking (Shear et al. 2005). They exhibited low quality student work, poor math performance, and average English performance (Mitchell et al. 2005). Such schools often had poor student attendance and academic performance (Rhodes et al. 2005). Although conversion high schools enrolled students with greater initial disadvantage than comprehensive high schools and "new start" small schools, these results do not suggest that conversion schools can effectively boost student achievement.

Deborah Meier's (2002, 1995) work on school reform in urban settings reported consistent findings about the effects of school size, although her work examines school change slightly differently. Her focus on teachers' roles as child-rearers and also school government distinguishes her work. In sync with Lee and others, Meier argues that small schools are essential for real improvement in achievement, and that such change requires the work of thoughtful teachers. Teachers must have pedagogical freedoms, and smaller, theme-based schools of choice can help because they can offer teachers additional opportunities to bring their own personal interests to the classroom through creative and original curriculum. Schools should be self-governing and democratic as opposed to

authoritatively governed by school administrators (Meier 1995; Meier 2002) because it facilitates faculty buy-in and increased sensitivity to student problems and needs.

Meier found that being small accomplishes several additional goals not highlighted by other studies. Being smaller enables schools to be more democratic because individuals have more opportunities to participate in smaller groups, such as in a faculty of fifteen as opposed to one of sixty. A smaller environment encourages faculty to be more collectively accountable for student performance, and take greater ownership for their students. It also allows teacher to get to know how each student thinks individually, thus motivating higher expectations and greater responsibility for student achievement. Despite pressures exacerbated by high-stakes testing for students and teacher pay systems based on student achievement, democratic schools benefit students best (Meier 2002). Unfortunately, administrators feel these same pressures and may be inclined to try and increase the amount of centralized control over schools. Top-down, bureaucratic implementation of reform designed by "experts" without the help of teachers, though, has not proven effective.

School Reform – What Works

Research on educational change is primarily focused on one question: What makes for effective school change? Or, what can be done to make school change work? Much of this literature (Huberman 1973; Huberman and Miles 1984; Louis, Marks and Kruse 1996; Louis and Miles 1990; Minke 2000) offers consistent advice. Teachers should work with experts to design the reform to accommodate both local teachers'

needs, as well as recommendations from current research. Reform that is dependent on external funding is more riddled with sustainability problems than are efforts based on consistent, internal funds (such as school general funds). Reforms that address major fundamental issues regarding school organization and are based on other similar reforms are more likely to succeed. And collaboration between school faculty, administrators, students and parents helps reformers address a full gamut of concerns and issues associated with change at a school.

Teacher participation in the reform process is considered a mediating variable in some studies (Bryk et al. 1998; Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Huberman and Miles 1984; Louis, Marks and Kruse 1996; Louis and Miles 1990) as well. Louis and Miles' *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why* (1990) pays particular attention to the difficulties associated with implementing reform practices that significantly alter pedagogy, arguably a key feature of any genuine school reform. Consistent with research on school size and the effectiveness of small schools (Lee et al. 2000; Lee and Smith 1997; Lee and Smith 2001), these authors found the student-teacher relationship to be a critical piece that subsequently affects student achievement. However, Louis and Miles (1990) went beyond the school size studies to include teacher participation as an important mediating variable affecting reform success, and teachers' work as an important outcome.

Effective school change is not a top-down, cookie-cutter process; it necessitates an assessment of needs for each school and flexible implementation of a well-designed reform plan (Baldridge and Deal 1975; Berman and McLaughlin 1976; Deal, Meyer and

Scott 1975; Dreeben 2005; Fullan and Miles 1992). Accurate needs assessment for a local

site is important because schools vary according to a number of important features,

including student body characteristics, student achievement, local labor markets and

availability of local post-secondary education options. Flexible implementation of reform

also necessitates the participation of different "stakeholders," individuals whom the

innovation affects. This means that in addition to school administrators, teachers, parents,

students, and community members may need to be involved with the planning and

implementation of school restructuring: without such broad-based participation, extensive

backlash or resistance from any group could bring change to a halt. This conclusion is

reinforced in both the organizational (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Bryk et al. 1998;

Firestone and Bader 1992; Gamoran, Gunter and Williams 2005) and educational

(Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Louis and Miles 1990; Meier 1995; Meier 2002)

literature on school reform. In a study about a Chicago-based reform effort that radically

decentralized school control, placing school authority in the hands of the above-

mentioned stakeholder groups, democratic organization and decision-making facilitated

effective and progressive changes to the schools (Bryk et al. 1998).

There is another side to this coin, however. Implementation fidelity refers to the

degree to which rubric for change is followed (Berman and McLaughlin 1976; DeStefano

et al. 2003; Dixon 1992; Madsen 1994; Mihalic 2002). The inherent paradox to

implementation fidelity is this: reform cannot proceed in the exact same fashion at every

location, but a lack of fidelity can lead to the absence of crucial reform pieces, thus

disabling its effectiveness. In other words, cookie-cutter style reform cannot work

because each organization and each environment is different, and if reform efforts do not fit with local needs, they are more likely to fail (Sizer 1992; Sizer 1999). However, when too much liberty and deviation from research-based restructuring plans occurs, what would otherwise be effective reforms become an impotent going-through-the-motions for stakeholders (Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Lambert and Lucero 2003). Thus, implementation fidelity is important to consider in any evaluation or study of school reform outcomes.

Organizational autonomy, decentralized authority, staff professionalism, and organizational features like trust and open communication are school and school district features associated with successful educational reform (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Bryk et al. 1998; Deal, Meyer and Scott 1975; Firestone and Bader 1992). Most of these studies base their conclusions upon gains in student achievement or other student performance-related outcomes. This makes sense because effective schools should have students that academically improve, regardless of background. However, students are only one stakeholder group in educational institutions; teachers are a neglected other.

Teachers' Work as a Phenomenon of Importance

Waller's *The Sociology of Teaching* (1932) is an early attempt to sociologically analyze teachers' work using a strong functionalist framework. School, Waller says, is a social organism, and dependent upon ancillary groups (such as clubs and sports) as well as administrators, teachers and students to function effectively because the goals of education range from technical to social and moral. Waller discusses the different types

of relationships in the school, including those between the school and community, among students, between teachers and students, among teachers, and between administrators and teachers. Teachers are a focal point of conflict and are consistently and necessarily at odds with parents. Teachers are institutionalized leaders, and have to be leaders. Formality is a compromise and accommodation that helps institutional leadership survive; in a way it reinforces teachers' right to educate students in a particular way despite contradictory demands of parents. The teacher/student relationship is one of dominance and submission, Waller says, and a system of assessment must always be present (Waller 1932). Clearly, understandings about this relationship have changed since Waller's time.

Waller's early attempt to document characteristics of teaching is supplemented by better studies in the 1970's and 1980's. Lortie's *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study* (1975) was motivated largely by his disappointment with program evaluations and educational research that, while adequately addressing student outcomes and school reform, failed to address teachers' work. Without a clear picture of teachers' work in schools, efforts at understanding student achievement and educational change will be mis- and under-informed. The goal of his book, he says, is to find the nature and content of the ethos of the teaching occupation. He defines the ethos as "the pattern of orientations and sentiments peculiar to teachers and which distinguishes them from other people in society" (viii). Teachers' combinations of orientations and sentiments make them unique social actors, and this combination is derived from (1) the structure of the occupation and the organization of schooling, as well as (2) the meanings teachers attach

to work. To capture what teachers actually do and how they feel about their work, one must talk with and study them. As a sociologist, Lortie strives to penetrate conventional definitions that enmesh the object of study, or to explore common teaching terms and ideas through open-ended interviews (to let teachers describe work on their own terms) and observation. He supplements these data with historical and document review and survey data.

Lortie begins his analysis with an historical accounting of teaching work. He draws attention to the connections between teachers' work, and the phenomena that influence it, such as school size and school administration; as schools grew, teacher autonomy decreased and administration (both school principals and school boards) grew. Multi-room schools developed, and schooling became mandatory and physical punishment was banned. While earnings have consistently been relatively low, job security in the field has traditionally been good, and by the late 19th century, women had come to predominate the field (Hoffman 1981). The gender implications of teaching work are noteworthy: teaching is often seen as a good job for women, but a low-status job for men (Acker 1989).

The gendered distribution of teachers is not something intentional, Lortie says. As in many other fields, recruitment procedures largely operate without deliberate formal control (Lortie 1975; Park and Burgess 1924). Instead, the procedures are more lassiez-faire attractors and facilitators. Attractors compare benefits and costs for entrants: these are features of the job such as the amount of interpersonal interaction with young people, providing important services, continuation with school organizations, an attractive work

schedule, and material benefits (including decent pay and good security). Teaching involves significant amounts of interaction with youth as well as time off compared to other jobs. Teacher recruitment is not highly selective, and teachers make up a fairly heterogeneous group (Lortie 1975).

Given the limited earnings potential for the profession, Lortie argues that sociology must look towards the psychological rewards associated with teaching to better understand teachers' work. Despite the benefits of high expectations for student achievements (Lee and Smith 1996; Louis, Marks and Kruse 1996), easy and regular achievement motivates high and assured rewards, whereas difficult and unpredictable achievement motivates scarce and insecure rewards (Lortie 1975). This emphasis on psychological aspects of the classroom is reiterated in more current research on effective schools that emphasizes school climate and learning environment (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Lee et al. 2000), and influences the selection of outcomes for this study, including work environment and job satisfaction.

Lortie describes teaching as a profession plagued by "endemic uncertainty". This uncertainty is described as a set of challenges teachers face: the goals associated with schooling (academic skill acquisition and child development) are complex, teachers must adequately teach to a variety of students from different backgrounds and with different skills, and a teacher's ability to contribute a long-lasting impact to students is tempered by the plethora of influences on students' lives (Lortie 1975). In this sense, a school cannot be run "like a business" because the situations are significantly different: while businesses can reject materials that do not meet a quality standard and can fire employees

who fail to perform to a company's standard, schools cannot "return" or "fire" students. Overall, this "market" metaphor cannot be appropriately applied to schools due to drastic differences in the organization of schools and businesses (Connell 1985; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). This theme surfaced in my interviews with teachers and principals from OSSI schools too, demonstrating how schools are unique places organizationally.

Despite the challenges, Lortie found that teachers report a gamut of responsibilities associated with their profession. These range from academic learning to teaching good morals, connecting with children on a personal level, and facilitating a sense of inclusivity for children of varying ability levels. These non-academic skills mirror those from Durkheim in his *Moral Education* (1961), where he describes the wide array of skills student must learn in school. Consistent with Lortie's recognition of them, developmental and moral qualities of education are to be seen as equally important to technical ones: educating students to be good citizens is just as important as teaching them to be technically competent (Durkheim 1961). To this end, teachers' impacts on students can be long lasting and instructional, or also proximate and relational. Respect and being liked by students tends to help teachers establish a climate of discipline and control in the classroom, and reaching "difficult students," seeing kids succeeding, meeting cognitive and emotional goals and seeing objective results, publicly displaying teacher accomplishments, getting students to be interested and motivated, and engaging in special projects all stimulated pride about teaching work (Lortie 1975).

One more aspect of Lortie's work deserves attention here as it directly relates to school reform and teachers' work. Lortie found that teachers shared similar sentiments

regarding the importance of what happens in the classroom as compared to school-level politics; teachers devote more energy to the classroom than anywhere else. Teachers prefer classroom tasks versus organizational tasks. *Lack of teacher autonomy can constrain their ability to reach individual students and also manage classroom behavior.* To this end, Lortie comments on teachers' collective dislike for interruptions and limitations regarding their ability to teach their particular class. Teachers, he concludes, are concerned with helping their students learn and develop, and having the resources to teach effectively. Anything that interferes with this – including ineffective school reform processes – can be considered barriers to teaching.

Synchronous with Lortie's focus, R. W. Connell's *Teachers' Work* (1985) emphasizes teacher labor as a point of departure for an investigation into a wider range of issues, including those related to gender and class. In this capacity, *Teachers' Work* offers more than a description of their work, but a portrayal of some implications associated with traditional sociological topics, including earnings inequality and the division of labor in society. Connell also traces the lines along which curriculum reform manifests school structure, or how "what" gets taught can affect "how" content is taught and how teachers relate to school administrators. Connell's findings have implications for OSSI schools: the curricular changes associated with reform affect more than simply content, but also the relationships between teachers, students and principals.

According to Connell, teachers are workers, teaching is work, and school is a workplace – educational program evaluations to easily forget this in their preoccupation with student outcomes. The work of teachers is diverse, including instruction, supervising

and counseling. Controlled rapport, social distance, prior organization, and toughness are important to good teaching. Division of labor is done by subject, grade (age), tracks, and schedules. The labor is gendered: school administrators at all levels tend to be male; women are the majority of elementary and middle-school teachers, and men constitute the majority of high school teachers (Connell 1985).

Discipline involves gender, class and age, as well as working through school policies. Antagonism (between students, teachers and administrators) is part of the power structure of mass schooling, and contradictory demands are placed upon teachers from students, parents, and administrators. Discipline strategies are largely local, as school-wide consistency is virtually impossible to achieve for a variety of students with varying behavioral issues. Teaching and discipline especially requires a large amount of emotional work by teachers, and identification and involvement with children is a prerequisite for facilitating learning (Connell 1985; Lee et al. 2000; Lee and Smith 1996; Lee and Smith 1997; Shear et al. 2005).

Ubiquitously, there is a formal structure of supervision and policy making for any school that is usually governed or mediated by an administrative board. Consistent with Lortie's (1975) findings, school hierarchies reinforce conservatism regarding curriculum and pedagogy, and reform is usually implemented in a top-down manner, largely in order to preserve control over school actors (Connell 1985; Smyth and Shacklock 1998).

Adopting a sociological perspective on teachers' work and power in schools elaborates how the politics of change would be consequential for teachers in reforming schools. Further, these studies provide a basis for what types of work and work

environment outcomes a study on the topic should focus. Their descriptions of teachers' work helped inform instruments used for data collection. However, while these studies helped clarify aspects of teaching work, understanding the politics of reform required a different perspective: one that focused on organizational control in schools.

Organizational Control and Teachers' Work

The goal of school reform is always to improve student performance. Since the purpose of schools is the acquisition of skills and personal development of students (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993; Durkheim 1961; Ingersoll 2003; Parsons 1959; Weber 1964), students constitute one primary stakeholder group. However, schools also employ many people as administrators, staff, counselors, coaches, and teachers. As such, it is critical that the effects of reform on teachers be considered as an integral part of any program evaluation or sociological study of schools (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Freedman 2000; Gitlin and Margonis 1995; Lee, Dedrick and Smith 1991; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). Unfortunately, and in spite of the research emphasizing the importance of teacher outcomes for reform, many program evaluations of recent educational innovations do not account for how school change affects teachers: none of the recent evaluations conducted by the American Institutes for Research and SRI International on SWS restructured schools focus on teachers' work as an outcome of interest (Mitchell et al. 2005; Rhodes et al. 2005; Shear et al. 2005). In their recent study of SWS schools, Lee and Ready (2007) devote less than two pages to a discussion of outcomes for teachers, and portray the results in a way that conveys the idea that changes in these schools were

not very consequential for teachers. Further, the "potential drawbacks" of changes to teaching in SWS schools are attributed to lack of effort on the part of teachers: the time and energy challenges associated with additional professional collaboration and team teaching may not be palatable to teachers "reluctant to expend the effort needed to bring some of these innovations to fruition" (p. 63).

To understand *why* it is that teachers would be so conspicuously omitted from discussion about the effects of school change, we should first turn to the question of power and control in schools. Richard Ingersoll's *Who Controls Teachers' Work* (2003) is about the control of teachers' work in US schools. Following the tradition of Waller (1932), Lortie (1975) and Connell (1985), it looks at teaching as a job, teachers as workers, and schools as workplaces. Teaching is about technical, social and moral work. Two views are dominant in discussions about control over schools and teachers' work: the disorganization perspective and the disempowerment perspective. Advocates of the disorganization perspective argue that schools are too loose, and that administrative control over teachers should be increased. In contrast, disempowerment advocates argue that schools are too centralized and that teachers need more autonomy. By centering on this debate, the book focuses on three questions. Are schools centralized or decentralized? Secondly, do schools have the means to control teacher work and hold teachers accountable? And finally, does school de/centralization matter for school efficacy and functioning? Ingersoll argues that each hypothesis has merit, but for different circumstances: some schools are disorganized and inefficient; for them

accountability is important; likewise, teacher autonomy and voice is important and many schools are too centralized.

Control over teachers' work pertains to much more than just textbook and curriculum selection: it is also about the moral educational preferences and career allocation aspects of schools, as well as changes in school organizational structure. Many of these ways control is executed are daily and invisible to outsiders: these techniques of control are interwoven into the organizational culture of schools so as to be part of the taken-for-granted way of doing things. These controls produce high teacher accountability and low school accountability (Ingersoll 2003). The distribution of control over decision-making profoundly affects how well the school functions, especially regarding student discipline procedures and conflicts between administrators and teachers, including those about reform. Power distribution in schools is a critical piece of reform politics, and as such should be carefully considered when implementing school change (Ingersoll 2003).

The organizational lens Ingersoll applies to his analysis of control in schools is not novel; other scholars have commented on how schools are organizationally interesting places. One relevant consideration along this line entails the "openness" of schools: recent scholars argue that educational organizations are "open" (as opposed to "closed") systems, meaning that social and political environments influence schools (Bidwell and Kasura 1987; Deal, Meyer and Scott 1975; Scott 1995; Scott 2005). As such, schools cannot organize instruction and socialization according to administrative whim, but must consider societal norms and needs: funding for science programs may be

subject to national defense interests; parents want their children to learn to respect other people's rights in the classroom just as they do at home. Although not all the work of schools is "rational" per se (Connell 1985), schools are rational organizations (Bidwell 1965; Weber 1964). In this capacity, they exhibit both a division of labor and a rational/scientific approach to organizational change.

In understanding control over teachers' work, Ingersoll turns to a paradigm that fits across many occupations. This willingness to use a workplace/worker metaphor in some ways contradicts the critique of the "schools should be run like businesses" language (Connell 1985; Smyth and Shacklock 1998): students are not raw materials and student achievement is not a "product" in the commodity sense of the word. While the market metaphor is inappropriate for best understanding student facets of education, it appears more useful for understanding teachers' work. Many prominent scholars in the field utilize the "teachers as workers" model for understanding teaching work and how it relates to organizational control and school change (Connell 1985; Hargreaves 1992b; Hiremath and Kulkarni 2002; Ingersoll 2003; Ingersoll 2005; Lortie 1975; Rosenholtz 1989). Some scholars extend such inquiries to the concept of work environment too. For teachers, work environment loosely refers to the idea of collegiality, or the sense of collective commitment to a set of goals and respect for each other's work (Jacobs 2001; Lee, Dedrick and Smith 1991; Lee et al. 2000; Louis, Marks and Kruse 1996; Newton, Dent and Knight 1998; Tillman 2007). Synonymous with other workplaces (Greenberg 1986; Hodson 2002; Nightingale 1982; Schuller 1985; Zwerdling 1978), the culture of and control at the workplace are important for schools environments too.

These studies show how issues regarding control over work and the workplace are important and can be important in understanding school reform. Research in this field pessimistically suggests that it is a lack of control that has characterized the predicament of teachers.

Teachers: The Missing Voice in School Reform

Scholarship on schools as workplaces contributes necessary background for understanding the relationship between teachers and school reform. Effective school change includes teacher input (Baldridge and Deal 1975; Berman and McLaughlin 1976; Deal, Meyer and Scott 1975; Dreeben 2005; Fullan and Miles 1992), and considers consequences of reform for teacher work are a critical consideration for reforming schools (Bacharach, Conley and Shedd 1990; Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Dreeben 2005; Macan-Ghaill 1991; Ozga 1988; Rogers 2001; Rosenholtz 1986; Smyth and Shacklock 1998; Vaughn, Klingener and Hughes 2000). For change to work, teachers should be involved in the planning and implementation of the reform, and their labor should be a topic of concern for school reformers. Some studies about teachers and school change focus on either the lack of teacher participation or on teacher resistance to reform (Rogers 2001). A lack of teacher participation in reform has been shown to be associated with detrimental changes to teachers' working conditions (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Macan-Ghaill 1991; Rogers 2001; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). Top-down, centralized control over teachers' work usually reinforces reform strategies that are not in touch with the needs of teachers. Such efforts often exclude teachers from the beginning, or after initial

resistance to a reform (Rogers 2001; Smyth and Shacklock 1998; Vaughn, Klingener and Hughes 2000).

Cohn and Kottkamp's *Teachers: The Missing Voice in Education* (1993) addresses this concern directly. This book examines how forces of social change in America have collided with the conservative traditions of schools and the occupation of teaching, and how teachers absorb this collision. These researchers compared Lortie's 1964 data (the data used in his seminal *Schoolteacher*) with original data collected 20 years later. By doing this, Cohn and Kottkamp identified how current reforms are linked to and blocked by structures of the past: they considered changes in divorce rates and the rise of dual-earner families, pluralistic student cultures, increasingly centralized power, and the spread of Taylorism. In addition, the authors argued that the social liberalism endemic to the 1960s and 1970s contributed to a conservative cultural backlash during the 1980s. This backlash produced a renewed emphasis on basic competence and basic skills and "teacher accountability" in the 1980s. That decade witnessed a notable increase in requirements regarding teacher credentials. Lortie (1986) defines this oppositional social culture as a "structural strain" on teachers and teacher satisfaction (p. 127). Lortie's concept of "structural strain" is one that describes an increase in tension between qualifications and self-image of teachers in large school districts, their position in the formal system of governance, and their ability to make decisions regarding classrooms and students (Lortie 1986).

One resolution adopted by educational districts is the shift towards "teacher accountability". This effort to redefine educational outcomes according to teacher

accountability has made teaching more difficult, less rewarding, and has led to increased vulnerability. Accountability is defined as a combination of graduation requirements, curriculum and instruction, teacher evaluation, and other district policies related to students (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Ingersoll 2003; Peterson and West 2003). Why, though, does increased "accountability" make teaching more difficult and less rewarding? First, such measures increase paperwork in an effort to bureaucratically monitor procedures: such detailing requires time that teachers would rather spend working with students or working with curriculum. Second, accountability-based reform tends to increase administrative control over curriculum and instruction. This tightened control means less autonomy for teachers, reducing their ability to genuinely connect with students. Standardization and uniformity of instruction are dysfunctional results of state mandates as well. Such pressure also displaces the goals and means of teachers to ones of control and burden, lack of flexibility and charisma, excluding the interpersonal for the sake of uniform instruction. While such mandates and accountability mechanisms attempt to improve instruction and student learning, they are ultimately subversive in the sense that they inhibit teachers' ability to instruct. In addition and at the policy level, they reduce teachers' influence on reform ideas and process, effectively diminishing the impact of their views on school reform (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993): these conclusions resonate with findings from other teacher-focused studies about school reform (Ingersoll 2003; Meier and Wood 2004; Peterson and West 2003).

In *Re-making Teaching: Ideology, Policy, and Practice* (1998), Smyth and Shacklock likewise call for greater teacher participation in the reform process, although

they arrive at this conclusion via a different route. Their argument focuses on the deregulation of education, application of "free market" ideology onto education, and the consequences such changes have for teachers. Many reforms are poorly conceptualized and have "torn out the heart" of teaching work through rationalization and control, similar to the accountability standards discussed by Cohn and Kottkamp (1993) and others. By excluding teachers in reform planning, policy architects omit the valued knowledge pertaining to effective education, devalue teachers' work, and reveal the need for discourse for teachers about teaching. This book examines how teachers interpret policy changes and how policy discourses can be manifested as official discourses (the actual policy and legal texts), discourses of enactment (how teachers translate the texts into classroom action), and aspiring discourses (what teachers would like to see).

According to Smyth and Shacklock, educational reform is nestled inside a political landscape that is dominated by a neo-liberal paradigm, one that emphasizes managing schools as businesses (Pincus 1996; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). This perspective has resulted in the centralization of control and decrease in teacher autonomy, decrease in public funds, and erosion of personalized learning environments (which is often a goal of school reform). There is a paradoxical push for teachers to "collaborate more" with each other in an environment where they are more powerless than ever; the impetus to brainstorm new ideas is predicated upon the idea that teachers have the power to implement changes. In some ways, this critique is implicit in reform recommendations offered by educational scholars: generally, reform that empowers students, parents and teachers through participation promotes adaptations that are more appropriate to

particular school cultures (Cuban 1988; Fullan and Miles 1992; Huberman and Miles 1984; Louis and Miles 1990). Teacher input – as the title of their book suggests – is a critical component of effective reform. However understanding and incorporating teachers' views into change efforts cannot be accomplished in an authoritative, hostile environment (Smyth and Shacklock 1998).

Collectively, the scholarship about teachers' work and educational reform consistently emphasizes several points. First, teachers' work is important and should be studied and considered in the planning and implementation of school change. Secondly, market-based ideology and reform emphasizing teacher "accountability" are ineffective in improving teaching and what students learn. According to this literature, many school reforms are not conducted according to these principles. Maybe that is why teachers often resist them.

Teacher Resistance to Change

Most research on teacher resistance and educational reform proposes that administrators either ignore resistance and push teachers through it (Havelock 1973; Huberman and Miles 1984), or increase collaboration between teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders (Fullan and Miles 1992; Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991; Hargreaves 1992a; Rosenholtz 1989; Sarason 1971; Sarason 1990). A disjuncture between administrators and teachers is considered the basis of teacher resistance (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991; Gitlin and Margonis 1995). In order to bypass resistance, administrators pay lip-service to collaboration and fail to address teacher concerns (Cohn

and Kottkamp 1993; Gitlin and Margonis 1995; Rogers 2001). Although this strategy may result in a short-term resolution, it sets the stage for failed reform. Instead, an alternate view suggests that teacher resistance could be seen as promoting insight and improvement for educational innovations (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Gitlin and Margonis 1995; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). Incorporating insight from teacher resistance could be considered a bottom-up strategy for reform: taking what workers (in this case, the teachers) know about the shop-floor practices of an organization, and using that information to design and implement effective reform strategies (Fullan and Miles 1992; Honig 2004; Louis and Miles 1990)

Gitlin and Margonis (1995) discuss two "waves" or orientations within the school change research. Wave one says that successful reforms utilize outside assistance and other factors to overcome initial teacher resistance (Havelock 1973; Huberman and Miles 1984). Wave two looks at the ways the culture of teaching enables or limits reform (Hargreaves 1992a; Hargreaves 1993; Hargreaves 1994; Rosenholtz 1989; Sarason 1971; Sarason 1990). Reform-savvy administrators may think that curriculum changes can happen without affecting the overall school culture, but it cannot: addressing teacher concerns and school culture is essential to reform (Sarason 1971). By neglecting school and teacher culture, reform fails to engage teachers and promote teacher engagement (or "buy-in"), which is essential for effective school change. By emphasizing the importance of teacher engagement, these authors argue that some school reformers may have overlooked the good sense embedded in acts of teacher resistance (Gitlin and Margonis 1995).

Why are some teachers not engaged with reforms? Gitlin and Margonis (1995) discuss three reasons commonly found in the school change literature. First, a lack of attention is paid to the meaning of the reform for teachers: the core problem of reform is the disjuncture between administrators' and teachers' understandings of how change affects the school (Fullan and Stiegelbauer 1991; Huberman 1973; Sarason 1990). Secondly, reforms often fail to consider how the participants understand their roles, relations with others, and meaning of change. Generally, the reform will fail if school culture is overlooked and there is not mutual understanding between teachers and administrators (Huberman 1973; Sarason 1971). Finally, the culture of teaching must be considered. While some teaching cultures impedes change, others can facilitate it (Hargreaves 1993). School culture is not monolithic, and in effective reforms, administrators attend to the multiple and departmental-specific cultures (McLaughlin 1993) through dialogue with teachers.

The opposite of resistance is buy-in. Buy-in is defined as verbal statements supporting change and overt nonverbal behaviors, such as specific target responses, necessary for changes to take place (Boyce and Roman 2002; Goltz and Hietapelto 2002). Another way of defining buy-in is that it refers to feelings and behaviors that support a change effort. It has been recommended that 80% of staff "buy in" before a decision is made by the school to implement (DeStefano et al. 2001; Slavin 2004). Resistance to change can result from the disruption of the culture of the school or group relationships, poor communication, poor timing, and reward systems that do not reinforce adoption of the innovation (Judson 1991; Koonce 1991).

Some research suggests that buy-in from teachers is best encouraged by a needs assessment, followed by a choice of various innovations that might fill that need (Elliott and Mihalic 2004). In addition to what teachers need, an estimate of commitment and available resources are important for gauging how teachers will respond to the challenge of reform. Commitment may be reflected in policy statements and in the creation of an organizational structure that ensures effective leadership and resources dedicated to the innovation (Cherniss 2006; Mihalic 2002; Mihalic et al. 2004).

Recent sociological work on educational change, however, pushes the concept of buy-in slightly farther. For them, teacher participation in the reform process (Bryk et al. 1998) and a climate of trust (Bryk and Schneider 2002) between teachers and school administrators (including principals and school boards) are key to effective change. In short, change must be implemented democratically to foster genuine commitment on the part of teachers, and for it to be designed in a way so as to incorporate the knowledge teachers have about the way schools work (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). In short, teachers have to be part of the change process, and not just a group that is affected by school restructuring. To better understand this concept of democratic participation, it is best to turn towards the corpus of research on work and occupations; compared to the field of educational program evaluation, this model of democratic or participatory management has been more extensively developed there.

Workplace Democracy and Teachers' Work

Educational reform, then, is not blueprint, but a journey (Fullan and Miles 1992) that requires decisions to be based upon both program-wide goals, and also contextual details of specific schools. Decentralized authority and, conversely, the power to make important decisions locally and democratically are fundamental to effective school reform (Bryk et al. 1998; Darling-Hammond 1996; Deal, Meyer and Scott 1975). Finally, effective reform must be grounded in actual teachers' work (i.e. be based on research about actual teaching conditions) and take into account the effects it will have on teachers (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Dreeben 2005; Firestone and Bader 1992; Provenzo and McCloskey 1996; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). But promoting effective communication between teachers and administrators for the purposes of school restructuring is not necessarily easy. Following the scholarship on teachers' work (Connell 1985; Ingersoll 2003), it is a relationship between workers and managers, and issues about the effects of reform on teachers' work may be contentious.

Studies of decision-making in corporations suggest that when workers are directly and democratically involved with change at work, they have greater job satisfaction than workers who are excluded from such decisions (Greenberg 1986; Hodson 1996; Hodson 2002; Nightingale 1982; Tannenbaum 1968; Tannenbaum 1974; Tannenbaum et al. 1974). This more positive work experience is associated with autonomy from supervision, more interaction between workers, fewer conflicting demands from management, and greater commitment to the organization on the part of employees: these

qualities are largely viewed as advantageous for teachers as well (Connell 1985; Deal, Meyer and Scott 1975; Ingersoll 2003; Ingersoll 2005).

Although worker participation in firm governance is generally associated with more positive experiences, the extent of this effect should not be overstated. Hodson (1996) finds that while task- and management-related satisfaction are higher in organizations characterized by greater degrees of participative management, coworker relations are not. Under some arrangements featuring heightened employee involvement, workload may actually increase (Hodson 1996; Hodson 2002). This literature on workplace democracy does not suggest that participation guarantees success. As Tannenbaum (1974:102-3) argues, "Participation can work. This is not to assert... that participation will work under any and all circumstances or that it is inevitably a more successful system than are non-participative alternatives."

Greenberg (1986) tested hypotheses about the relationships between employee participation at the workplace and greater participation in social/political communities. He found that participation in workplace politics did help workers become empowered and win contract clauses promoting a good work environment, it did was not associated with increased political participation in other social institutions, or feelings of political efficacy or political community. In short, while it helped their work situation, the influence of democratic decision-making did not extend beyond the workplace (Greenberg 1986). Nightingale (1982) reported similar findings. In democratic workplaces at the shop-floor level, there is more autonomy and freedom from supervision, more required interaction between workers, and fewer conflicting demands

from management. In democratic firms, or firms characterized by more extensive employee participation in the decision-making process, there's less alienation, more commitment to the organization, and more satisfaction with organizational conditions (Nightingale 1982).

Generally speaking then, worker control over workplace issues is related to positive work experiences. Similarly, teacher control over workplace issues and staff professionalism are related to lower teacher turnover, and better social relations between teachers, students and administrators (Firestone and Bader 1992; Ingersoll 2003; Pincus 1974). Teacher and community participation in educational reform efforts is associated with effective instructional strategies and school social relations (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Bryk et al. 1998). In ways pertaining to school governance and the politics of reform, it appears as though schools are like other workplaces (Connell 1985; Rosenholtz 1989).

The Politics of Change and School Reform

While the above studies consider worker participation in firms, studies about teacher participation in educational reforms usually focus on one of two similar outcomes: lack of teacher participation or teacher resistance to reform. Some studies examine how a lack of teacher input contributes to educational policy that is detrimental to teachers and their ability to teach (Bacharach, Conley and Shedd 1990; Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Macan-Ghaill 1991; Ozga 1988; Rogers 2001; Rosenholtz 1986; Smyth and Shacklock 1998; Vaughn, Klingener and Hughes 2000). There is a formal structure

of supervision and policy-making in a school, and that such hierarchies are inclined to reinforce top-down reform strategies that are not in touch with the needs of teachers: such hierarchies often exclude teachers either from the beginning, or after initial resistance to a reform (Akmal and Miller 2003; Brunner 1992; Gitlin and Margonis 1995; Goltz and Hietapelto 2002; Lipsky 1980; Weatherley and Lipsky 1977).

The specific role of teacher cooperation and its impact on classroom work is not assessed in the analysis of the success or failure of SWS schools (Mitchell et al. 2005; Rhodes et al. 2005; Shear et al. 2005): although one report (Rhodes et al. 2005) evaluating student outcomes in SWS schools does briefly mention effects on teachers, the importance of teacher participation in the change process is scarcely addressed. Teachers in many schools reported experiencing arduous workloads related to designing new curricula and serving on committees (AIR and SRI 2005). Other educational research on teacher resistance cites workload and authority issues as common concerns of teachers involved with school organizational changes (Gitlin and Margonis 1995; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). The relationship between teacher participation and reform success is one that deserves sociological attention, but has received little.

The exception to this lacuna comes primarily from Anthony Bryk. His 1998 book, *Chartering Chicago School Reform: Democratic Localism as a Lever for Change*, spotlights the roles active teacher participation and democratic decision-making play in school reform. In 1989, Chicago established Local School Councils (LSC) as an effort to decentralize school governance for elementary schools with the purpose of facilitating effective school reform – this was basically a reform in the organization of school

governance. This increased the authority of parents, community residents, and school faculty, giving them more control over important issues such as resources. The main question of the book is about whether or not the LSC's will govern democratically? And if so, how will democratic governance affect schools? This reform targeted poorly performing schools that served low-achieving, poor students from the Chicago area. The goal of the reform was to alter student outcomes largely through changes in school governance.

What the school district discovered (not entirely unexpectedly) is that governance restructuring led the introduction of a more complex web of external influence for schools administrators to navigate: in short, being more democratic meant that administrators had to work more closely with and actually listen to other stakeholders (such as parents and teachers) (Bryk et al. 1998). Ultimately, the reform shifted school governance from a centralized school district office to local democratic school groups (the Local School Councils) while implementing more rigorous accountability measures for teachers. The plan follows Ingersoll's (2003) argument in the sense that increased accountability can be effective, but only if teachers have more control over their work and workplace. The reform (Public Act 85-1418) established LSC's that were in charge of many school issues, such as the hiring and firing of school principals, negotiation and approval of the school budget, and establishing a three-year School Improvement Plan that should improve student achievement. LSC's consisted of eleven seats: six for parents, two for community members, two for teachers, and the principal. The Act also

established district-wide achievement goals and allocated additional funds to schools that served a high proportion of minority students.

Bryk's study emphasizes "democratic localism", or local democratic politics as a "lever" for making school reform effective and a broad array of stakeholders accountable for student success. It hones in on research questions focusing on the political process, or how schools are governed, and how governance can affect teaching and student learning. Finally, it looks at how LSC's and teachers use their autonomy to organize. He and his colleagues found that via decentralization, local schools become more consequential sites of power: increased political activity translated into more opportunities and resources, responsibility, and decision-making authority.

While the process Bryk describes is rather exceptional, it begs the question of whether or not democratic decision-making can be effective in other contexts. Literature suggests that employee participation in workplace decisions facilitates buy-in, but this does not imply that such participation will always work – in fact, broad-based democratic processes risk grinding to a halt in the face of disagreement among different interest groups. As such, there are some concerns regarding generalizability of Bryk's (1998) findings: namely, issues around understanding the politics of school change, and also when democracy can be effective or not.

Classifying school politics was central to understanding the relationship between change and school improvement. The authors discuss four types of school governance: adversarial politics, strong democratic politics, consolidated principal power, and "other". This "other" category generally referred to schools that paid lip service to reform and

went through the motions without changing the school; often these school employed "maintenance politics" that facilitated little actual change to the school, or maintained the primary features of previous school organization. Adversarial politics are defined by chronic distrust and complaining among the principal, teachers and community; these groups constantly battle over aspects of the reform. The adversarial situation is characterized by weak leadership and a factionalized school community. Strong democratic politics refer to situations where principals, parents, and teachers work toward developing a common vision through communication. Principals may let teachers work through discrepancies with support, but little to no interference. Parents are actively recruited to offer comments and criticisms as well. Finally, consolidated power refers to situations where the principal remains mostly in control over the reform, soliciting little input from other stakeholders; such situations are marked by a lack of broad stakeholder participation, as well as centralized decision-making by the principal or school board (Bryk et al. 1998). Schools that served low-income students and students of color were less likely to exhibit democratic change politics, as were larger schools. Bryk and his colleagues (1998) found that conflict is always part of the democratic process. However, the conflict must address the central problems regarding the reform and be facilitated in a way so as to sustain useful conversations.

Was variation in change politics related to school improvement for these Chicago schools? Democratic schools exhibited the most change, and schools with consolidated principal power changed more than adversarial schools. In short, although democratic change proved time-intensive in the sense that it required a good deal of discussion

amongst stakeholders, it facilitated more substantial changes to the existing school structure. Further, schools that accomplished more systematic restructuring demonstrated more substantial curricular and pedagogical innovation. Systematic restructuring was indicated by engagement of parents and the community to LSC's, professional development for teachers, strategic educational planning and a shift towards greater teacher and student responsibility for student learning. These findings collectively suggest that, via restructuring practices, democratic change politics assist in the development and implementation of more rigorous instruction in the classroom, a critical feature of successful reform (Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Lee and Ready 2007; Lee et al. 2000; Meier 1995).

Democratic change politics promote better outcomes in restructured schools. However, the feasibility of a "democratic" change process is not inevitable: Bryk documented three other types political environments (adversarial, consolidated power, and maintenance) characteristic of reforming schools. In *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement* (2002), Bryk and Schneider examine the role trust plays in promoting successful school reform. These authors find that the quality of social relationships among school staff and adults plays a powerful role in determining the success of school reform, and how the school community can make good use of new authority structures and resources that accompany school restructuring. The focus here is on respect, trust and mutual caring in schools, and how these promote effective communication between teachers and administrators during the change process (Bryk and Schneider 2002).

Although the focus is not the same, this emphasis on trust is echoed in Deborah

Meier's (2002) work on accountability-based reform efforts. Pointing out the pitfalls

associated with educating low-achieving students on limited budgets, public education

faces difficult choices regarding how to best serve students. Synchronous with Bryk and

Schneider (2002), she argues that trust is a key component of effective school change.

Trust must be won democratically: it is something that must develop naturally and

gradually; if it is not present, it cannot be forced. Trust amongst teachers can't be

accomplished through retreats, but instead through democratic, autonomous classroom

organization and collegial sharing. The same holds true for school leaders: relatively

egalitarian distribution of power, voluntary parliament-style decision-making, and

collective responsibility by all teachers for all students can promote trust, but these take

time. Skepticism, transparency, accessibility, and sharing all help build trust in an organic

way (Meier 2002).

Understanding School Change

The main arguments guiding this dissertation research are informed by bringing

together a broad sample of research on school reform, teachers' work, and workplace

democracy. School size is a key organizational variable affecting student achievement

and is often a critical part of modern reform efforts. Students in smaller schools connect

better with teachers, and these stronger teacher-student relationships improve student

academic performance by enabling teachers to have high expectations for their students,

increasing student engagement and reducing discipline problems (Garbarino 1980; Lee

and Loeb 2000; Lee and Smith 1995; Lee and Smith 1997; Lee and Smith 2001). Further and in contrast to traditional comprehensive high schools (Powell, Farrar and Cohen 1985), smaller schools offer more rigorous educational opportunities for students; in taking primarily academic classes, students are challenged more and learn more (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993; Lee et al. 2000; Lee and Smith 2001).

Based on the aforementioned research, the schools-within-schools (SWS) movement targets school size as a key piece of the restructuring effort. By constraining curriculum and reducing the number of student-teacher contacts (or the number of different students teachers see everyday), SWS schools attempt to create more personalized learning environments (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993; Lee and Ready 2007; Lee et al. 2000; Ready, Lee and Welner 2004). Chapter two describes SWS reforms in more detail, and an Oregon-based SWS reform movement, the Oregon Small Schools Initiative, that serves as the phenomenon of study for this project.

No reform is fool proof, and SWS reforms have exhibited mixed results; these will be discussed more in chapter two. Interestingly, the evaluations of these programs do not adequately consider teachers' work, despite the fact that teachers are a critical part of the education system, and their participation in the reform process can significantly help or hurt prospects for restructuring. While teaching work has been examined by a number of sociological scholars (Connell 1985; Gitlin 1980; Hargreaves 1992b; Hargreaves 1993; Ingersoll 2003; Little and McLaughlin 1993; Rosenholtz 1989), it is largely absent in the planning and implementation of educational reform (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Ingersoll

2003; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). Some literature that focuses on teacher resistance and buy-in regarding school change emphasizes the importance of having teachers "bought in" or committed to the change effort in order for the reform to work (Boyce and Roman 2002; DeStefano et al. 2001; Goltz and Hietapelto 2002; Slavin 2004), however recent research in effective school reform suggests that buy-in itself may not be quite enough: democratic participation in the reform process takes this level of commitment one step further with time-intensive negotiations among teachers and between teacher and administrators (Bryk et al. 1998).

Studies about workplace democracy and participatory firm management reiterate conclusions supportive of democratic control of organizations. In such firms, workers report greater job satisfaction and work environments characterized by autonomy, increased collegiality between workers, fewer conflicting demands from management, and greater commitment to the organization on the part of employees (Greenberg 1986; Hodson 1996; Hodson 2002; Nightingale 1982; Tannenbaum 1968; Tannenbaum 1974; Tannenbaum et al. 1974). The relationship between teachers and administrators during the reform process is critical to reform outcomes, just as is the relationship between managers and workers in private firms. The focus here is on the importance of school politics for reform, and how workplace democracy in schools can mediate the effects of school restructuring on teachers' work and work environment. The main hypothesis is that resistance or cooperation on the part of the faculty is a factor in the success or failure of school reform: specifically, that teachers in schools characterized by a democratic

reform process will experience more positive changes to their work and work

environment than do teachers in schools characterized by authoritarian leadership.

CHAPTER II

THE REFORM

The Oregon Small Schools Initiative

The schools studied as part of this project are all participants in the Oregon Small

Schools Initiative (OSSI). OSSI is an Oregon-based reform effort funded by the Bill &

Melinda Gates Foundation and managed by Employers for Education Excellence (E3), a

non-profit organization founded by the Oregon Business Council that seeks to bring

together employers and schools to improve student achievement. During 2003 and 2004,

Oregon public high schools could apply to E3 for an OSSI grant – usually about one

million dollars per school – that could fund teacher professional development and faculty

visits to other SWS schools. Participating schools must follow a rubric, specified by E3

and the Gates Foundation, that addresses components such as academic rigor, academic

equity, and small school autonomy. Participating schools work with a "change coach" –

or conversion advisor of sorts – from E3 to ensure adherence to the prescribed rubric,

progress regarding implementation of the reform at the school, and continuation of the

grant.

The use of grant funds is limited; they fund teacher professional development,

visits to other SWS schools, and a person or team of persons at the school that are in

charge of managing the grant at the school level (these people are called School Change

Coordinators). While such professional development activities may improve teaching,

they are additional work for teachers and do not include additional resources or

compensation. Grant funds could not be used to hire additional staff (i.e. reduce class size) or to buy classroom materials. Although funds could be used to restructure schools to make them smaller (in conception only: funds could be used to make structural modifications to the building), they could not be used to decrease class size.

Although there are more than fifteen schools that have participated in OSSI, only eleven of the schools were eligible for study as part of this project because these eleven were conversion schools as opposed to new start schools. Conversion schools are schools that were formerly large, comprehensive high schools where students were able to take any courses they chose, and were organizationally differentiated only be grade level. Some OSSI schools were started from scratch; these "new start" schools are not assessed in this paper, as their cultures and challenges are significantly different from their conversion counterparts (AIR and SRI 2005); these new start schools did not endure the political processes associated with traditional school change as described by educational researchers (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Bryk et al. 1998; Louis and Miles 1990; Meier 1995) because they started as OSSI schools and, thus, did not have to restructure any prior school organization.

The work of conversion is complex. Stakeholders – including teachers, administrators, school board members, students and parents – at conversion schools must decide how to physically separate different academies within an existing building, what academies to establish, how to sort staff according to academies, how to manage shared resources such as the cafeteria and library, and how to schedule classes for each school and extra-curricular activities (Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006). Particularly when

resources are scarce (as they often are in public schools), dividing space, equipment and other resources is complex, particularly if a variety of stakeholders are involved in the planning process. Negotiating differences and incorporating the opinions of teachers, parents, students, and those of the grant managers fosters difficult discussions that must be guided by school administrators. While the work of conversion is complex though, the research motivating reform efforts is consistently clear: students who do poorly in school or dropout receive low-quality educations.

Tracking: Different Educations, Same School

Research about school reform, including that guided by the small-school concept, often focuses on schools that serve poor, minority, low-achieving students (Louis and Miles 1990; Meier 1995; Meier 2002; Sizer 1992; Sizer 1999). The emphasis on these schools and their students is motivated by the sub-par education in American public schools that many students, especially poor and minority, receive (Gamoran 1992; Hallinan 1994; Lucas 2001; Oakes 1985). Researchers and policy makers alike argue tracking practices that contribute to low quality educational opportunities are unjust and contribute to the reproduction of poverty and limited mobility. But how is it that some students receive low-quality educations, while some receive high?

A central mechanism producing unequal educational outcomes is tracking, or the practice of grouping students according to measured or perceived scholastic ability for the purposes of instruction. These "homogeneous" (respective to performance or "ability") groupings make up instructional groups or classes. Usually, tracks range from

low-ability (vocational and remedial tracks) to high-ability (college preparatory and honors tracks). The findings presented by Oakes (1985) in Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality are reiterated in subsequent studies about the practice (Gamoran 1992; Lucas 2001; Mehan 1996; Oakes and Guiton 1995). There are four assumptions that underlie the rationale for tracking implementation and, despite the inequitable consequences tracking produces, in some ways make good sense. Tracking advocates argue that students learn best in homogeneous groups, or in groups with other students of similar ability. They assert that lower-achieving students feel better about themselves in remedial classes, and may feel shameful or discouraged in more challenging classes where they are outsmarted by most of their peers. Homogeneous groups are easiest for teachers to instruct too. In fact, differentiating curriculum to students of various abilities in one class can be quite difficult. And finally, the sorting process for tracking is generally fair, efficient, and accurate.

The primary line of reasoning supporting tracking, then, is that kids learn better and are easier to teach when they're grouped with other kids of a similar ability level. This practice has spawned extensive debate regarding the reproduction of class and educational inequality. These debates deal with the discriminatory practice of track assignment or placement, instructional differences between tracks, and the political and social ramifications of tracking. Most researchers in the field call for the abolition of tracking practices in favor of heterogeneous groupings to further educational equity (or equal educational opportunity) for students of different ability levels, instead of primarily

facilitating the growth of students from wealthier, more privileged backgrounds

(Coleman 1968; Lucas 2001; Oakes 1985; Stockard and Mayberry 1992).

A major goal of OSSI and most small schools reform movements is reduction in

or abolition of tracking in schools. The logic behind this change is that poor and minority

children are more apt to be placed in low tracks, and this practice reproduces inequality.

Public school, the argument continues, should be a place where all children are provided

an opportunity to go to college, and remedial track educations do not offer this to their

students. Such a drastic alteration in school practice is based on a considerable body of

research that demonstrates how tracking is disadvantageous to those students who need

educational help the most.

Track Placement

Hallinan (1994) analyzes the differences in track placement and educational

achievement across different schools, focusing on how track placement occurs and the

implications of track placement on educational opportunity. She suggests that track

placement has effects in two main ways. First the quality and quantity of instruction are

usually superior in higher tracks: while students in higher tracks are receiving good

educations and instruction, those in lower tracks are receiving poor ones. Second,

students in lower tracks are prone to devalue themselves and their ability based on their

placement. This finding echoes those of the research on labeling theory, or the idea that

how actors come to label themselves in situations can have a significant effect on how

they behave (Becker 1963). Hallinan reports that test scores and previous track placement

were the most important criteria for track placement, that socio-economic status was negatively associated with placement, and that there was little track mobility present in most programs. In summary, poor kids were likely to be placed in low tracks early on in their educational careers, and there is little opportunity for them to move up to a more academically rigorous track.

Oakes and Guiton (1995) suggest that interplay of structural, cultural, and individual factors influence track assignment, and encourage educators to see such placement decisions as reflecting the intersection of barriers, capital, and choice. They present several main findings regarding the dynamics of tracking placement decisions in traditional high schools. Schools tend to view student ability and motivations as fixed and immutable, and not something that teachers and curriculum can affect. Most curricula seek to accommodate, and not alter (or challenge) perceived student ability, thus promoting conservative (i.e. low) expectations for student improvement. Schools accommodate achievement with advantage, so that opportunities are bestowed primarily on the highest achievers; this is prominent in Oakes's (1985) work that reveals how high track students receive exceptional educational opportunities and the best teachers. And when shortfalls occur, the welfare of advantaged students takes precedence over others. Race and class correlate with teachers' perceived ability and motivation of their students, so it follows that race and class affect track assignments. In this sense, tracking is discrimination against the students who need the most academic help from schools, and usually receive the least help at home. The trend here is to privilege the advantaged students while neglecting disadvantaged students by denying them academically rigorous

opportunities. In interviews with teachers, favoritism towards Asian students was also expressed, while negative views of Latino students were generally reported. Parents of white and Asian students also tend to advocate more on their children's behalf, boosting the likelihood these students are placed in higher level classes (Oakes and Guiton 1995).

These findings show how advantaged students more easily secure high track placement because of perceived ability, parent advocacy and teacher bias, thus facilitating future educational privileges and opportunities either through overt discriminatory assessment and assignment procedures (such as track placement based on appearance, language, etc.) or covert techniques of parent pressures or influence (Oakes 1985). Tracking systems that were more inclusive and that offered more mobility produced more equality in educational achievement, suggesting that the more exclusive tracking is, the more it reinforces inequality; thus, how tracking occurs is important to student outcomes (Gamoran 1992). We now turn to why this may be case, or differences between the tracks.

Curriculum Differences Between Tracks

Oakes (1985) also presents a thorough analysis about instructional, curricular, and classroom differences between tracks. Regarding English classes, for instance, she found that students in high track classes read classic works of literature, addressed "bigger" topics through literary analysis, and that the discussions were more connected to real life; conversely, low track classes read adult novels, discussed more trivial information in a mechanistic fashion, and that discussions were fairly irrelevant to students' lives.

Literature and the use of linguistic elements characterized the higher track classes, while basic literacy and computational skills were stressed in low track classes. Expectations in high track classes included independence, creativity, autonomous use of academic tools, and empowerment, while conformity, good behavior and "getting by" were the proffered aspirations for low track students. Thus, high track kids were stimulated to think critically and learn beyond basic content, versus the less rigorous learning styles in the low track settings (Oakes 1985).

Oakes (1985) also found that track assignment and the quality of classroom interactions motivated differences in "values" and self-worth for students between tracks. Low track students thought worse of themselves, and viewed themselves as inadequate and of lower potential (than high track students); surprisingly though, they rated the importance of their subjects and the quality of the school as equal to that of higher track classes. Thus, even though they were given worse educations than kids in higher tracks, they didn't see the inequity, and instead, attributed their low performance entirely to their own "deficiencies" as opposed to school-level intentions and treatment. These findings echo notions of legitimation and social reproduction, whereby students internalize unequal, degraded treatment in order to prepare them for further exploitative treatment in adulthood (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Willis 1981).

Effects of Tracking

These differences in tracks are important largely because of their implications for students themselves. Although inequitable "public" education may be wrong in and of

itself, the reason it is of grave concern to sociology is because variable academic preparation allocates different professional and occupational possibilities to kids, such that higher track kids have more opportunities than do low track students (Oakes 1994). Although raising the level of educational quality for all tracks is desirable, opponents of the practice argue that it is not enough to alleviate the reality that being in a higher track offers students more possibilities than being in a low track; particularly in light of the distribution to track by race and socio-economic status, tracking is discrimination. Heterogeneous groupings (detracked classes where kids of all "ability" levels are together) are the only way to ensure that all students have true equal opportunity and life chances, thereby reducing the stratification function of tracking (Gamoran 1992; Oakes 1994).

Mehan (1996) comes to similar conclusions: it does not help boost overall achievement, nor is it done fairly. Studying AVID, a program that placed low-achieving students into high-track classes, he found that through interaction with support people such as mentors and tutors (generally older students, such as college kids), students learned the "insider" aspects of study skills, college preparation, conflict resolution, and self-advocacy. Close relationships with teachers also characterized the instructional climate, and the help of teacher advocates for transition to successful post-secondary opportunities assisted students in forming and meeting high expectations for their professional development. With sufficient academic and social support, many of these students (who might otherwise be doomed to dropout) graduated and went on to college in significantly higher numbers than their social peers (Mehan 1996).

Lucas (2001) honed in more closely on the political ramifications of tracking by focusing on how transition (from school to the world of work) decisions are made. He claims that tracking mediates how background influences stratification via social and cultural capital, and how variable ability, opportunities and motivations all influence occupational outcomes; often and as predicted by social reproduction scholars, a place similar to their class of their parents (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993; Willis 1981). A "tournament track" system, with very low upward mobility but more downward track mobility, characterized the informal tracking procedures used to enforce "effectively maintained inequality". In this process, wealthier students and parents secured educational and occupational advantages through formal, institutionalized methods whereby cultural capital has significant influence over what kind of transition information and opportunities someone has. Thus, tracking is a critical piece of occupational placement (Blau, Duncan and Tyree 1967; Duncan, Featherman and Duncan 1972; Lucas 2001).

Finally, Fine (1991) examined how track placement predicts dropout from school. She found that for low track students, silence and conformity marked completers' attitudes and behavior, and that such silence was necessary for academic success, so that critical sensibilities (like those taught in high tracks and better schools) were antithetical to school success. Contrary to what some might deem common sense, she found that low track dropouts were consistently more healthy, less depressed, and entertained more critical sensibilities: basically that among low track students, the healthier, smarter kids were dropping out. Disempowerment, minority status, family needs, large teacher to

student ratios, high teacher turnover, and poor educational quality of low track education all contribute to abominable dropout rates (50% - 60%), and subsequent poor occupational futures. Finally, she reported that "compulsory" discharge was rampant in poor, urban high schools, so in a sense there was a *de facto* expectation for dropping out. Students reported being "pushed out" or encouraged to drop out, and discharge rates reflected such institutional practices (Fine 1991).

Grant Managers: The E3 Prescription for School Change

Concerns about the inequities of tracking and student anomie – or the sense of being lost in a big school – are reflected in the E3 prescription for school reform. The three fundamental guidelines that direct restructuring at OSSI schools are largely aimed at reducing inequities in achievement. These guidelines are academic equity, academic rigor, and school autonomy.

As part of each OSSI grant, E3 provide a "coach", a grant-funded expert who helps school personnel restructure the school schedule, culture, and building. Much of a coach's work is centered around schools making progress along each of the three guidelines. Academic equity is primarily concerned with helping low-achieving students do better in school; having high expectations for all students around academic achievement and reducing/eliminating traditional academic tracks are practices central to this goal. Academic rigor refers to changes that make the curriculum more academic and challenging. Efforts to promote academic rigor facilitate teacher professional development: this may come in the form of on-campus workshops, multi-day visits to

other schools for advanced curricular training, or in-school meetings with other teachers. The goal of these activities is improve teaching and curricula through external collaboration with educational specialists, and internal collaboration with other teachers. Finally, the goal of school autonomy is to create small schools where students only have contact with other teachers and students in their school (of less than 400 students total). In fully autonomous schools, students take classes only in their small school, teachers teach only in their small school, and schools are in some way physically separated.

Much of the assistance as well as controversy surrounding the politics of reform is based around these lynchpins of the reform. Conflicts between educational experts and communities plague OSSI schools. To understand these conflicts better, a closer look at each of these principles is needed. The following subsections will examine official texts describing these three core principles (Employers for Education Excellence 2005) and research that relates to best practices for high school excellence.

Academic Equity

In order to scrutinize the foundation of academic equity, academic rigor and autonomy, an examination of their exact words can help to clarify how and why teachers' work changed in OSSI schools. The descriptions for each of these three principles are taken verbatim from the OSSI website (www.e3smallschools.org). In many ways, academic equity, or a commitment to reducing achievement gaps, is foundational to rigor and autonomy. Students of poor and minority backgrounds have often received low-quality educations, which in turn facilitate the reproduction of class structure and poverty

(Blau, Duncan and Tyree 1967; Duncan, Featherman and Duncan 1972; Willis 1981).

This concern – of providing all students with quality education – has translated into the

goal of having all students graduate and college-ready. Thus, OSSI seeks to bring the

"bottom" up without sacrificing the top.

This is how E3 defines equity:

In equitable schools, students and teachers are appreciated as individuals; they are not defined by cliques or stereotypes. The environment is safe and inclusive; cultural, ethnic, linguistic, sexual orientation and special needs backgrounds are valued and celebrated. An open commitment to equity drives all aspects of the school—from teaching and learning to leadership development and community engagement. An equitable school creates an environment where everyone feels respected, secure and challenged to do their best.
When students are tracked as low achievers, they perform poorly in large part due to the lack of challenging learning experiences and support. Equity is built into the fabric of effective small schools. Here, learning is personalized, leadership is distributed and all students are held to the same high expectations. Artificial barriers to learning opportunities—such as requiring a certain score on a high-stakes test for admittance to Advanced Placement classes—are removed. Not only are all opportunities open to all students; all students are expected to pursue them as part of becoming college-ready. In large schools, teachers, students, parents and community members are often disengaged from one another, making it difficult to establish basic ties of trust and communication. But in effective small schools everyone knows each other well, and relationships and acceptance are the foundation for the work that students, school staff, parents and the community do together.
Schools with equitable outcomes provide challenging and relevant curriculum to ensure that students from diverse cultural, racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, sexual orientation and special needs backgrounds achieve at high levels. A single vision for high achievement for all students is apparent in the structure and culture of the school and through the daily teacher practice in every classroom. To establish equitable outcomes teachers use what they know about students and their lives outside of school to design rigorous curriculum that meets individual learning needs and is connected to real life experiences. The result is that students see themselves—their interests and perspectives—reflected in their coursework. They feel empowered by and invested in what they are learning because they are gaining academic knowledge and skills that prepare them for college, work and citizenship.
In successful small schools, equitable outcomes are a function of a personalized environment that provides regular opportunities for students and teachers to

structure powerful teaching and learning. This is in contrast to large schools, where students—particularly students of color or from low-income families—often report feeling disengaged from teachers, administrators and peers.

In E3's terms then, equity is based around the idea of removing tracking systems and admission requirements for advanced classes. By providing challenging curriculum and high expectations to all students, the organization hopes that schools can reduce low student achievement increase college readiness. Tracking facilitates achievement gaps between students. Through the process of schooling, students from wealthier, more highly educated families access more affluent and stimulating careers, while students from poor (and minority), less educated families are steered into adult poverty and dead end, low-paying jobs. This process is known as social reproduction.

Many educational researchers have discussed social reproduction and the role that schooling plays in intergenerational class transmission (Anyon 1980; Anyon 1997; Aronowitz and Giroux 1993; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Giroux 1987; Sewell, Hauser and Featherman 1976; Willis 1981). In 1976, Bowles and Gintis published *Schooling in Capitalist America,* a book that focused on the reproductive aspects of the educational system; their 2002 revisit to the topic continued to emphasize these aspects of schools. Building on the earlier work of status attainment model research that examined the role of background factors in occupational attainment (Blau, Duncan and Tyree 1967; Duncan, Featherman and Duncan 1972), Bowles and Gintis focused on describing how educational systems, student ability, and socioeconomic factors contribute to occupational placement and income levels as adults. Like other advocates of this theory, they argue that cognitive ability is only part of the causal chain in

occupational attainment. More so than ability, parental economic status shapes children's outcomes by allowing for various educational opportunities: wealthier parents provide better schooling opportunities for their children. As with so many other features of class hierarchies, school reform that promotes equal educational opportunity is brought about by conflict, and change does not happen easily.

The correspondence principle is the crux of the reproductive mechanism in schools, and works like this: schools structure interactions so as to socialize students for adult work roles, and these roles are class specific. By providing sub-par educational opportunities to some groups, schools effectively allocate occupational possibilities in ways that do not upset existing class structures.

These conclusions have been validated in different historical periods and contexts. Willis (1977) presents an analysis of social reproduction in British schools. Specifically, he focuses on the mechanisms by which poor kids end up in low-paying jobs. He finds that, while there does not exist any obvious physical coercion, and in spite of the fact that poor children know the rewards are inferior (for they come from poor families and understand the struggles associated with poverty), the undesirable social definition, and the unfulfilling work, the cultural patterns for working class high school students is different from patterns of other higher-achieving students. While working class students often see their culture as something to be proud of, in the long term these cultural patterns constrain educational options and thus promote class reproduction, and schools play a large role in this self-identification of working class boys with working class ideology and futures (Willis 1981).

Finally, Jean Anyon (1980, 1997) comes to similar conclusions in her examinations of curriculum and class. In her observations, socialization messages and educational experiences are segregated by class, with poorer children rewarded for performing menial tasks and affluent children encouraged to engage their creative potentials, thus rewarding different types of behaviors for different children in correspondence with what kind of jobs children from different classes are likely to have. Thus, Anyon, Bowles and Gintis, and Willis consistently demonstrate the importance of school organizational factors (curriculum and tracking) for predicting school success and occupational attainment.

The concern with social reproduction largely underlies a preoccupation with equity. Children from different backgrounds receive different educations, and these educations facilitate differential occupational attainment. The allocation of these outcomes is not random: being from a wealthy, well-educated family makes one more likely to end up in a good paying, rewarding job as an adult. This process suggests that, following Coleman (1968), students do not receive equal educational opportunities, yet public education's primary responsibility is to provide each student an adequate education for success as an adult (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993; Coleman 1968). Restructuring these achievement disparities by providing high-quality educations to all students underlies OSSI, as well as educational reform broadly (Sizer 1992; Sizer 1984). The means by which educational equity is theoretically achievable (or so the thinking goes) is via instructional rigor.

Academic Rigor

Academic rigor refers to making all curriculum challenging. This does not necessitate the elimination of tracks per se (as does the principle of equity); however, advocates of both rigor and tracking consistently encounter a problem: when students are tracked, those not in the highest track(s) usually receive lower quality educations. Echoing the decision from the 1954 Brown vs. The Board of Education decision, separate is inherently unequal, and schools have consistently found it difficult to make education rigorous (or challenging) for everyone when there is an honors group. In combination with the elimination of tracking, OSSI seeks to offer all students "rigorous" educations where high expectations for student achievement are the norm.

This is how E3 defines rigor:

A rigorous academic program challenges all students to explore, research and solve complex problems as they develop deep understanding of core academic concepts and gain ways of thinking and doing that prepare them for college, work and citizenship.

When instruction is academically rigorous, students actively explore, research and solve complex problems to develop a deep understanding of core academic concepts that reflect college readiness standards. Increasing rigor does not mean more and longer homework assignments, rather, it means time and opportunity for students to develop and apply habits of mind as they navigate sophisticated and reflective learning experiences. Students with strong habits of mind weigh evidence, consider varying viewpoints, see connections, identify patterns, evaluate outcomes, speculate on possibilities and assess value. They find creative paths to resolve problems when they don't immediately know the answer.

Through an academically rigorous program students not only gain knowledge and skills to achieve at high levels, they also gain ways of thinking and doing that prepare them for college, work and citizenship.

In small schools teachers, students, families and administrators function as a learning community and academic rigor is reflected in how everyone thinks about, plans and is involved with instruction. Key characteristics of small schools' structure and culture—such as collaboration, personalized environment, shared mission, vision and values, and on-going professional development—are informed by and support the rigorous academic mission of the school.

Strategies to achieve rigorous academic instruction include:

- Set high expectations for all students: Academically rigorous schools treat all students as if they are college bound. The school eliminates low-level, remedial-type sections of core classes to send the message that students cannot just get by doing unchallenging work...
- Depth over breadth: Schools can demand rigorous intellectual work from students only if they give up the goal of superficially covering as much content as possible. Not only are course catalogs scaled back, but topic lists within courses also are pruned to achieve focus and depth. Effective schools enable students to develop a deep understanding of complex issues by selecting broad topics that act as a framework for many related ideas...
- Cross-curricular integration: Integrating curriculum across content areas develops skills and knowledge while expanding students' abilities to understand conceptual relationships, and think creatively and critically...
- Curriculum mapping: Curriculum maps document the topics and skills that have been planned, taught and learned, helping teachers determine interventions and next steps. Curriculum maps help groups of teachers compare what has been covered in other grades, revealing repetition and gaps in the curriculum across disciplines, and highlighting strengths and weaknesses in aligning curriculum with district and state standards...
- Stated outcomes, built-in supports: Clear expectations define what students should know and be able to do. The bar for achievement is set according to the standards of the community—the knowledge and skills that colleges expect of high school graduates and that employers expect in a globally competitive workforce. While all students are expected to achieve at high levels, school staff, parents and community members acknowledge that some students will need more help than others to reach their goals.

For E3 then, the concept of rigor implies that education should help prepare students for college, work and citizenship (i.e. not simply passing basic skills tests) by eliminating remedial classes and instead providing high-level academics to all. High school students should develop critical thinking skills, or the ability to weigh evidence, consider multiple viewpoints, and problem solve. And teachers and school staff should coordinate in order to offer interdisciplinary curriculum that emphasizes depth over breadth (Sizer 1992; Sizer 1984) and appropriate academic supports for students who struggle to achieve at higher levels. In this way, rigor implies equity, or the idea that no

student should receive sub-par instruction. All students should be challenged via difficult curriculum and high expectations, and supports should be provided for students who struggle. Further, teachers should collaborate within and across departments in order to "map" or plan curriculum that will engage and challenge students. OSSI funds primarily support teacher professional development and collaboration.

This model – of rigor and teacher collaboration – stands in contrast to the traditional American high school. Historically, high schools offer multiple tracks with a broad array of electives, and teachers collaborate primarily with only teachers in their own departments (Angus and Mirel 1999; Powell, Farrar and Cohen 1985; Sizer 1992; Sizer 1984). However, this model has failed students: too many non-academic courses has engendered poor student achievement, large schools with many electives facilitated anomic feelings for students, and an emphasis on exclusively departmental collegiality has lead to teacher failure to connect with individual students (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993; Powell, Farrar and Cohen 1985; Sizer 1992; Sizer 1984). For OSSI, rigor is based on the idea that schools should be smaller and should offer fewer electives (Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Lambert and Lucero 2003; Lee et al. 2000; Oxley 2002; Raywid 1997). In these more personalized and academic learning environments, teachers can better connect with students via challenging academic curriculum to facilitate critical thinking; this is precisely what schools should offer their students (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993; Sizer 1992; Sizer 1984). The concept of rigor, then, supplements and completes the principle of equity.

Autonomy

The last component of OSSI is autonomy. Autonomy refers to the degree to which small schools housed on a single campus are independent of each other. This independence includes (but is not limited to) scheduling, budgets, curricular offerings and culture. The implementation of autonomy is controversial in most school communities: school faculty, staff, parents, students, and administrators often disagree among themselves and with E3 about how separate the schools should be.

This is how E3 discusses autonomy:

The foundation of a small school's success is its ability to make autonomous decisions on issues that affect its structure, culture, academic program and governance. Successful small schools have control over their budget, curriculum, scheduling, staffing, space and leadership. Gaining these autonomies is often a gradual process, requiring a broad base of support among school and district staff, parents and the community. Once they are established, these autonomies are part of the school's formal written policies and practices.

According to researcher Mary Anne Raywid, 'the greatest inhibitor to a small school's ability to realize its potential is lack of autonomy.'

Establishing autonomy provides small schools the best chance to build a unified learning community and use its resources to provide personalized, high quality teaching and learning to students. And, just as small businesses can adapt to changes in the marketplace more easily than large, bureaucratic companies, small schools with autonomy have the flexibility to alter their instructional program to meet the changing needs of individual students.

Autonomy includes, but is not limited to the following facets:
- Budget. Small schools have total discretion to spend money in the manner that provides the best program and services to students and their families.
- Curriculum. Small schools have the freedom to design course content and select instructional materials that best meet students' learning needs and state standards.
- Scheduling. Small schools have the freedom to set flexible class times, school days and/or school years for both students and faculty.
- Staffing. Small schools have the freedom to hire or reassign staff that is committed to implementing the vision and mission to best serve students.
- Leadership and Governance. Small schools have the freedom to create their own governance structure responsible for decisions over budgets,

staff selection, programs, professional development, curriculum and policies.

- Space. Small schools should have the freedom to configure physical spaces that have a unique community identity and that allow students, teachers, and families to interact and build relationships.

Autonomy can inhibit a small school's ability to excel because the point of small schools is to create learning environments that minimize teacher-student contacts so that stronger relationships can form, and where curricula are constrained and almost exclusively academically focused. Consider a situation where a student (student A) "crosses over" to another school (school B) in order to take a class not offered in their own school (school A). The school B teacher has no history with student A, nor do any of the other teachers in school B, so there is no personal connection with the student nor support structures in place for the student. The teacher now has one additional student contact too. Scheduling the cross over class may be difficult. Finally, permitting crossover replicates the traditional, comprehensive school experience: students take electives with a teacher they will only have once in their lives. In this sense, the notion of "separate" is intrinsically tied to the concept of small – autonomy, in this sense, is a tool for equity, rigor, and closer teacher-student relationships.

Evaluations of Conversion Schools and Challenges

The SWS conversion schools studied in this dissertation are funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. They are similar to other small schools in many ways: the principles advocated by Gates and E3 are largely based on research demonstrating the effectiveness of small schools (Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993; Lee et al. 2000; Lee and Smith

1997; Lee and Smith 2001; Meier 1995; Stockard and Mayberry 1992). However, basing a reform on good research does not guarantee desirable results. Earlier this decade, the Gates Foundation commissioned American Institutes for Research and SRI International to conduct evaluations of Gates-sponsored small schools. These organizations jointly published a series of reports in 2005 documenting outcomes for both conversion and new start schools.

The first report in this series, *Creating Cultures for Learning: Supportive Relationships in New and Redesigned High Schools* (2005), examined the impact of small school organization on teacher-student relationships. These relationships are the foundation for high expectations and academic rigor, and are possible only in schools where teachers have a limited (less than 90) student contacts. The report found that SWS schools featured learning environments characterized by close interpersonal relationships, mutual respect, and more academic focus on the part of teachers and students. These changes were quickly realized, however conversion (or redesigned) high schools struggled due to the challenge of changing existing school cultures and beliefs (Shear et al. 2005). Data from this project reiterate a similar finding: that parents, students and staff often are resistant to changing too much about their school, and that the process of developing new school cultures that support autonomy and equity is ripe with bumps.

The second report in the series, *Rigor, Relevance, and Results in New and Conventional High Schools* (2005), discussed the change in quality of instruction and student work. This report suggests that substantial changes to curriculum, instruction and student work had occurred as a result of SWS organization, and that assignments were

more likely to be difficult and relevant to students' lives and the "real world". Despite these improvements, mathematics failed to substantially increase in rigor, and student work did not improve in many subjects. These failures could be due to the fact that improvements in student work take more time than do changes in relationships, and that student achievement is largely a product of many years of educational experience that has, for many students, promoted poor performance and a lack of rigor (Mitchell et al. 2005). In this capacity and compared to culture, student achievement is more difficult to change.

The final report in the series, *Getting to Results: Early Student Outcomes in New and Redesigned High Schools* report (2005), discussed student achievement in four urban school districts. Like *Rigor, Relevance, and Results in New and Conventional High Schools*, this report presents mixed conclusions regarding the efficacy of SWS conversion to boost short-term student achievement. On the one hand, attendance rates increased for SWS schools, as did test scores and the quality of student work in English and Language Arts. However, this effect was more considerable in new SWS schools compared to conversion schools. Further, math performance did not improve at any SWS schools; this is expected considering the difficulties associated with boosting rigor in mathematics instruction (Rhodes et al. 2005).

Oregon conversion schools enroll more low-achieving students from poor and minority backgrounds than do other public high schools. These students often have a history of poor academic performance, as well as familial issues (such as family conflict, single-parent households, poor nutrition) that are barriers to scholastic success; these

schools also enroll higher proportions of special education students and students in need of language assistance. As such, it is expected that conversion schools should see more difficulty in boosting achievement. Further and as mentioned, changing existing school cultures is difficult, and the sluggish pace of change impedes a school's ability to implement curricular changes systematically. All SWS schools, though, exhibited marked improvement in interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, and student achievement across a number of areas (AIR and SRI 2005). These reports offer several suggestions for school improvement and SWS success. First, teachers need adequate professional development materials and opportunities, and grantees often lack the ability to meet this need. Further, schools should focus on improving math rigor, as students struggled the most with this subject. Next, schools should develop plans for sustaining the high level of teacher professional development that is characteristic of SWS reform. Partnerships with outside agencies can help meet this need, especially once the grant period has expired. And finally, evaluations should attend to "value-added" outcomes – such as changes in teacher-student relationships – in addition to traditional measures of test scores. Further, across-the-board improvement in student academics is not realistic in the short term, and coordination with middle schools can help provide the support necessary for more significant achievement gains.

School improvement is challenging. Conversion schools that serve students with histories of low academic achievement require resources to provide appropriate supports, especially if these students are held to high expectations. Compared to students from wealthier backgrounds who often have supportive parents in the home, these students

face serious challenges to school success (Barton 2005; Bridgeland, John J. DiIulio and Morison 2006; Englund, Egeland and Collins 2008). Further, the cultural challenges of conversion high schools are many. A major goal of small-schools restructuring is to not simply have mini versions of the old high school, but to reorganize school spirit, activities and teaching in a way that highlights each school's theme. Such themes vary: natural sciences, social systems, freshmen academy, and business and technology are only a few of the many possibilities. Establishing these new schools is difficult though, as many teachers, parents and students may resent the change process and the breakup of the former comprehensive school (Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Shear et al. 2005).

The limited literature base on conversion's affects on teachers suggests that change is difficult. It requires substantial amounts of time and energy to drastically restructure schools, can increase the number of classes teachers must prepare each day (i.e. "preps"), spreads teaching resources (both human and material) thinly, and requires a good deal of troubleshooting to adopt a small schools model that retains fundamental features of the E3 rubric, while simultaneously being sensitive to the needs of individual school communities (Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Lee and Ready 2007; Mitchell et al. 2005; Rhodes et al. 2005). The culture of redesigned schools points to the problematic nature of collegiality in small schools: although being "small" can facilitate closeness between teachers and students and among teachers, the breakup of academic departments can isolate teachers and decrease discipline-specific levels of collegiality (Shear et al. 2005).

Consideration of how reform affects teachers' work is scarce in these reports. Collectively, these reports do offer two cautions related to teachers' work that were also reported by teachers interviewed as part of this project. First, funding small schools is difficult (in part due to the resources required for teacher professional development), and when school districts face budget cuts, class sizes go up. Substantial increases in class sizes can ultimately compromise many of the gains relating to teacher-student relationships and academic rigor: when teachers have more students there is less opportunity for them to know each student as an individual; and as class sizes go up, teachers have more work and more grading, making energy for developing new, rigorous curricula scarce. Secondly, AIR and SRI report some risk associated with teacher burnout. Small schools require more energy from teachers than do comprehensive ones – some teachers expected a significant reduction in workload once small schools were implemented, but instead found that this form of school organization chronically requires more work.

One final note should be made regarding effective school reform. As discussed in chapter one, there is a fundamental paradox associated with implementation fidelity: reform must be, in some capacity, tailored to each school, however schools must abide by the prescription closely enough for the program to be effective. For the most part, the three principles discussed in this chapter are non-negotiables with E3: they are necessary for any conversion to work. How closely they are followed and exactly how they are implemented, though, varies by school.

Private Dollars in Public Schools

Accountability to a privately funded organization is not always palatable to the teachers and administrators of public schools. This is in part due to the slew of accountability practices and policies already in place for these public sector workers: simultaneously balancing tenuous budgets in conjunction with benchmarks associated with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is almost unrealistically arduous (Meier and Wood 2004; Peterson and West 2003). Deeper than simply a workload issue though, the influx of private money and subsequent accountability into public sector organizations is contentious on a number of sociological fronts, particularly for schools (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993; Arum 1996; Bernal 2005; Freedman 2000; Giroux 1987). One must consider, in this light, how private money is affecting what is being taught in schools, and whether or not the schools must compromise democratic values in order to be adequately funded.

A relevant contradiction of the relationship between public and private sector educational organizations is that schools with disadvantaged and low-achieving students may lack the grant-writing skills and resources of more affluent high schools, thus limiting their access to private funds and professional and parental support (Freedman 2000). Navigating the reporting demands of a grant-providing bureaucracy may be difficult, and money available to schools through private grants comes with strings attached: the money must be spent in particular ways that often may not address the needs of those working in schools, but instead the interests of the grant providers. This catering to private organizations is controversial in the sense that it is arguably the case

that it is not the Gates Foundation's privilege to be structuring schooling for children, but instead that "public" education should be a public good provided by the state. This conflict of interests may undermine public education's goals for social equality, public freedoms, and critical scrutiny (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993; Hata 1993), student access to quality education (Bernal 2005; Brown and Contreras 1991; Cookson 1998; Hata 1993), and teachers' job security and compensation (Hiremath and Kulkarni 2002; Rogers 2001; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). On the other hand and despite the strings attached, OSSI schools receive approximately one million dollars apiece solely (more or less) for teacher professional development, or, to help teachers teach better. The benefits associated with a pedagogical jumpstart of this magnitude may indeed outweigh costs associated with private accountability.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA AND METHODS

Research Design

This project investigates the relationship between teachers' participation in a

school reform effort and changes in teaching work. Although school background

characteristics (Anyon 1997; Fine 1991; Fine 1994; Louis and Miles 1990) and

implementation fidelity can be important for school change (Berman and McLaughlin

1976; DeStefano et al. 2003; Dixon 1992; Madsen 1994; Mihalic 2002), the focus here is

on the importance of school politics, and how workplace democracy in schools can

mediate the effects of school restructuring for teachers. Consideration of school politics

points to the following research questions.

1. What does "democratic participation in the reform process" look like? In what ways do teachers participate in school reform? How does participation in authoritarian schools contrast with involvement in democratic schools?

2. How is democratic participation in the reform process by teachers associated with changes in teachers' work?

3. How is democratic participation in the reform process by teachers associated with changes in teachers' work environment?

This study uses a multiple case (Creswell 1998; Yin 2000; Yin 2003) or

comparative case study (Bernard 1994; Ragin 1987) design whereby multiple cases of a

phenomena are compared to test propositions, such as whether or not democratic reform

politics contribute to more successful school reform for teachers. Multiple case designs

are common in studies of educational innovations where individual schools adopt a

common change program in spite of the fact that each school may implement the reform slightly differently (Bogdan and Biklin 1982; Creswell 1998; Creswell 2002; Goetz and LeCompte 1984; Herriott and Firestone 1983). Studying multiple cases within the population makes the conclusions of the study more robust because the interplay of independent variables and outcomes can be compared across cases instead of generalizing from just one case to a population (Herriott and Firestone 1983; Yin 2000). Both Ragin's (1987) *Comparative Method* and Bernard's (1994) *Research Methods in Anthropology* highlight the strengths of this type of approach which stems from the need to compare cases that may differ according to a small set of independent variables and outcomes (usually bivariate results, such as whether or not a vote occurred), and analyze what combinations of causes contribute to observed outcomes. This method can bring clarity to what causes (independent variables) may be necessary and/or sufficient to bring about an outcome. This comparative logic is at the heart of this study.

Sampling: The Schools

For a school to be eligible for OSSI funds, it must be an Oregon public high school of 700 students or more, and have a student population of which at least 25% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch, or at least 20% qualify for free or reduced price lunch and 15% of the students are racial or ethnic minorities. Eligible schools may apply for funds to E3, the organization that manages the Gates-sponsored OSSI grants. Generally, OSSI participating schools serve a high proportion of poor and minority students, and exhibit high dropout rates and poor test performance. Table one

(see Appendix A for all tables and figures) compares Oregon public high schools that are not eligible for OSSI funding with those that are, and to those that actually received OSSI funding based on school and student body characteristics. It shows how OSSI schools enroll more minority, poor and low-achieving students than most other Oregon schools. Figure one shows how OSSI schools differ from non-OSSI schools according to trends in student dropout rate. Like table one, it shows that OSSI schools enroll students that struggle academically compared to other Oregon high school students.

Presently, there are eleven Oregon high schools participating in OSSI. Table two shows how student populations and academic achievement varies across these schools. None of them met the achievement benchmarks set by the Oregon Department of Education during the 2005-06 school year.

I visited five OSSI schools. Teachers at two of these schools voted, and at least one was located in each of the three major areas where Oregon conversion schools are found: the Portland metro area, the mid/south Willamette valley, and southern Oregon. Due to the sensitive nature of the data – particularly that regarding participation, feelings about the reform and school administrators, and how teachers' disclosures could potentially affect their job security – details may have been changed or omitted when appropriate.

For each schools visited, a random sample of five teachers was drawn. Each selected teacher was contacted via email regarding participation in the study. If a teacher declined or did not answer after three email attempts, I contacted the teacher next on the randomly generated list (generated with STATA 9): approximately 40% of the teachers

contacted agreed to participate in the study. These teachers completed surveys and were interviewed about changes in their work and work environment, and their participation in the conversion process. A random sampling procedure was selected for choosing teacher participants because I expected that teachers would vary according to how conversion had affected them, and the degree to which they participated in the reform; a random sampling technique was the best way to capture this variance (Babbie 1995; Singleton and Straits 1999). In addition to teachers, I also interviewed key informants (Bernard 1994; Johnson 1990) including the school principal and the School Change Coordinator (the person in charge of managing OSSI grant funds at the school). These people provided additional viewpoints and information on the history of change at the school and the conversion process.

School visits always occurred within the first or second years of conversion at a school. Educational research suggests that change takes longer than two years to settle in at any school, and that researchers should utilize at least a four-year window in order to assess how change is affecting students (Berman and McLaughlin 1976; DeStefano et al. 2003; Madsen 1994; Mihalic et al. 2004). While the short time frame of this study might have limited my understanding of how politics affect student performance and also teachers in the long run, visiting schools in the heat of change helped me collect the best data possible for my research questions because the process of conversion was still underway and fresh in the minds of both teachers and administrators. In this capacity, the time frame associated with data collection for this study did not so much hinder as help the validity of my findings. To better understand long-term effects of the reform though,

follow-up studies assessing teachers' work and student performance several years out at these schools would be required. Ideally, and as some teachers and principals echoed, it would be best to visit each school during or after a year when the graduating senior class had been in small schools for all four years.

This project was cleared through the University of Oregon's Office for the Protection of Human Subjects (OPHS). The OPHS protocol required initial permission to be granted from school superintendents prior to contacting any other school personnel; these superintendents were contacted by phone about my interest in visiting one of their schools. One district declined participation. Two school districts required me to submit a proposal in order to contact principals: both districts approved the study.

I did not visit the remaining six OSSI schools for several reasons, none of which were in my control. In some instances, the Oregon Education Association was concerned about the additional effort the study required of teachers, namely, that associated with using an hour of their in-school prep time to complete an interview. Some principals declined a visit, usually on the grounds of "being too busy". Finally, superintendents from some districts prohibited the project. Thus, resistance from school districts, principals and – despite the labor focus of the project – unions were all barriers to obtaining a larger sample.

There are three limitations associated with my sample of schools. First, my sample prevented an investigation into how school background and implementation fidelity may affect work outcomes for teachers because I visited neither disadvantaged

nor autonomous campuses. There is good reason to believe these two factors might be important.

Literature on school reform suggests that teachers from schools that serve low-achieving, poor, and/or minority students may be less prone to participate democratically in school reform, and more likely to see their workload increase in response to the pressures associated with school restructuring (Anyon 1997; Fine 1991; Fine 1994; Kozol 1991; Louis and Miles 1990). Looking at OSSI schools, four stand out as disadvantaged. In these schools, over 50% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. These schools have the highest percentages of minority students and students who access English as a Second Language (ESL) services, and have the lowest scores on 10th grade achievement tests for math and language skills.

I did not visit any schools that exhibited a high degree of implementation fidelity either. In these autonomous schools, students were barred from "crossing over" to take classes in an academy that was not their own. Autonomous schools often exhibit other characteristics too, including independent budgets, schedules and activities, and in the way they report student data to the Oregon Department of Education. While there is reason to believe that implementation fidelity boosts student outcomes (Berman and McLaughlin 1976; DeStefano et al. 2003; Madsen 1994; Mihalic et al. 2004), a lack of research on the subject yields inconclusive results on how it affects teachers.

The omission of disadvantaged and autonomous schools from my sample prohibits an examination of how these factors could affect reform success in teachers' terms. If I had been allowed to visit all eleven OSSI schools and, thus, included these in

my design, a more rigorous test of change politics on teachers' work would have been possible. Figure one displays the complexities of these relationships, and how variables might relate to each other. A larger sample of reforming schools would address this limitation. As such, this omission threatens the generalizability (external validity) of this study because I am uncertain about how reform outcomes differ for schools that serve higher proportions of disadvantaged students, and for those that exhibit high levels of autonomy (Berk 1983; Singleton and Straits 1999).

The second major limitation of my sample has to do with selection bias in participating schools. Staff members from schools where change was chaotic and the workload unmanageable were probably less likely to participate in the study than were people from schools that had a handle on conversion. Although I contacted principals from each school (aside from those prohibited at the district level), it was not unusual that I received permission from only one to conduct my research. In fact, I visited only one school at three of the five campuses. Teachers from these schools reported that they believed conditions were better at their school than in others. In this sense, I believe I visited "the best of" at each campus. At both democratic schools I visited, I spoke with teachers from only one school because other principals declined participation. Based on what teachers told me about changes to work in other schools, I believe that my results might have looked different if I had interviewed teachers from all schools at these campuses. Generally, I would expect less positive results for these teachers. This bias threatens the internal validity of the study because the results attributed to politics could be the result of a non-random sample (Berk 1983; Singleton and Straits 1999). In visiting

the democratic schools that also had the most success, I could be exaggerating the efficacy of democratic participation for changes in teachers work.

With that said, I also believe that this selection bias operated at authoritarian schools as well, and that exaggeration of democracy's effects is tempered by the systematic presence of this bias across campuses. At one authoritarian campus, I visited only one small school. Further, my experience suggests that I also saw some of "the best" at authoritarian campuses. It is reasonable to believe that the teachers and administrators I interviewed at authoritarian schools also had conversion more or less under control to the point where, despite the oftentimes adversarial and conflictual nature of conversion, they welcomed my presence and openly talked about their experiences. To put it another way, I believe this selection bias operated systematically across campuses of both political types, and that participation in the study was possible only for teachers and principals in schools that had a handle on conversion. In fact, "being overwhelmed with conversion work" was a common reason principals at other schools provided for why they did not want me to visit.

Finally, while random sampling of teachers did produce a pool of interviewees that varied considerably according to their levels of participation in and feelings about conversion, I was unable to interview any teachers who left the school because they did not want to teach in a small school. These teachers might have provided additional information about inclusion and exclusion in the participation process. However, there are two reasons to believe that talking with these teachers would not have contributed much to this study. In each school, I talked with teachers who were both pro- and anti-

small school; random sampling was effective at capturing diversity around participation and work: both large standard deviations and overall results indicate this. If had not seen this variation in teacher feelings about small schools, there would be more reason to believe that teachers who left would offer significantly different sides of the story. The diversity of feelings from teachers at each school suggested that such omission is probably inconsequential to this study's validity.

Secondly, the accounts describing conversion offered by a variety of school personnel matched. Teachers, teacher leaders, principals and School Change Coordinators all shared quite similar stories about how conversion proceeded at their schools. While teachers were somewhat more likely to highlight features of conversion associated with resistance and authoritarianism, principals and School Change Coordinators were, in all cases, open about these topics and offered such information freely. While one might suspect that administrators and those in leadership positions would downplay the levels of conflict or authoritarianism present, I found this to not usually be the case. Because these stories – those of teachers and administrators – were so similar, I have good reason to believe that stories from teachers who left the school would be similar to what I heard from those still employed there.

Instruments

Randomly selected teachers completed surveys and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. School change coordinators and principals also completed face-to-face interviews.

Surveys (appendix A) were completed by teachers immediately before their interview. While filling it out, teachers had opportunities to ask questions about the survey, and I often talked with them about survey items during the interview. Surveys measured changes in teachers' work, work environment and job satisfaction. Task-related measures include classroom and administrative duties of teachers, such as the amount of instructional time devoted to lecture, number of classes teachers must prepare per day (the number of "preps" per day), time devoted to discussion, in-school preparation time (for grading or preparing lessons), and time devoted to discussing performance feedback. Decreased time devoted to lecture, increased time devoted to discussion of class topics and feedback, and increased time spent on interactive student group projects and discussing feedback on student work are all considered to be associated with more effective teaching practices (Benson 2003; Bransford et al. 1999; Danielson 1996; Danielson and McGreal 2000; Gill 2001; Glasgow and Hicks 2003; Hargreaves 1992a; Murname and Levy 1996; Tyson and Council for Basic Education. 1994). However, such changes may have mixed effects on work: an increase in the number of preps or decrease in amount of in-school preparation time would suggest that teachers' workloads are increasing. Further, how changes in classroom teaching (lecture, discussion, project and feedback time) affect work are contingent and interdependent – if lecture time decreases by ten minutes, and discussion time increases by ten minutes, it is conceivable that no overall change has occurred; meanwhile if in-school preptime has decreased by 20 minutes additionally, then workload has increased overall for teachers.

Work environment includes a scale for teacher collegiality (measured by quantity and type of contact among teachers and between teachers and principals), quality of student-teacher relationships (measured by quantity and type of student contact and length of time required to learn students' names), freedom to select textbooks for classes, and teacher performance assessment by administrators. These measures correspond to section two of the survey. Increased collegiality, closer student-teacher relationships, and useful feedback to teachers about their teaching are all considered to be positive effects on teachers' work environment.

Section three of the survey measures changes in job satisfaction. School conversion takes a good deal of effort on the part of teachers – this is irrefutable. What is of interest for this project is whether or not that effort is worth the consequences, and if teachers are considerably happier (or less happy) with their jobs following conversion. Measures of job satisfaction include questions about pay, benefits, job security, and intrinsic satisfaction with one's work. For this section, teachers are asked to rate satisfaction with their job currently, and to report if a change in satisfaction has occurred since the reform.

Interviews provide a wealth of rich detailed data, the capacity to make sincere human connections, and the opportunity to understand participants' experience in their own language and setting (Babbie 1995; Bernard 1994; Creswell 1994; Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Marshall and Rossman 1999; Singleton and Straits 1999). In combination with strong theoretical models, interviews can be used in a variety of settings to explore, describe, and explain variance in complex phenomena

(Bogdan and Biklin 1982; Creswell 1998; Goetz and LeCompte 1984; Lincoln 2001; Yin 2003). Further, depending on the interview location, the context of the interview setting may render data less rich than if subjects were captured in naturally occurring social activities. Teachers were usually interviewed in their own classrooms during an in-school prep period; I believe that being in their own space may have helped teachers feel comfortable talking with me about difficult facets of the reform (Bernard 1994; Lindlof and Taylor 2002; Marshall and Rossman 1999). I interviewed administrators in their own offices or a school conference room. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and covered questions about the history and process of conversion, working with E3, changes in work and work environment, and challenges associated with small schools reform.

Interviews clarified what teacher participation looked like, changes to work and work environment, and the historical and contextual background of reform efforts. Interviews are also useful to clarify survey items that are not answered or have low variance. As with other work about educational reform and teacher participation (Anyon 1997; Bryk and Schneider 2002; Bryk et al. 1998; Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Fine 1994; Goltz and Hietapelto 2002), interviews are here used as a methodological staple for understanding how reform-related negotiations were conducted.

A telephone interview with the OSSI director, Karen Phillips, also supplemented my understanding of the relationship between E3 and the OSSI schools, and how funds and services were distributed to schools.

Data and Measures

Surveys measure changes in work, work environment and job satisfaction, and interviews assess school politics and teacher participation. I also use aggregate, school-level data from the Oregon Department of Education to describe the population and understand how schools differ.

Dependent Variables: Work and Work Environment

I expect that pre-reform work characteristics will affect post-reform work for all teachers. To account for this endogeneity, surveys measure changes in work by asking teachers about work at two different times: just before conversion, and post-reform, at the time of my visit. Subtracting pre-conversion values from current figures yields a figure that represents how work and work environment changed during initial conversion period.

Some work variables ask respondents the number of minutes spent on an activity per class or day, such as time spent lecturing, student projects, and extracurricular tasks. Other work variables ask respondents about the number of classes they prepare per academic term or the control they have over textbook selection. Social variables ask teachers about how frequently they talk with other teachers (both during and outside of work), principals and students, the time required to learn all students' names, how frequently their teaching is assessed, and how helpful such assessment is to their teaching. Surveys asked teachers to recall work conditions prior to conversion, and to

describe them presently. Because conversion occurred within two years at every school in

my sample, recall bias was assumed to be minimal, and teachers' recollections accurate.

Teachers' work refers to the tasks and responsibilities associated with the

occupation of teaching. This includes a variety of activities and factors, such as:

- How many students the teacher works with each day
- The number of class groups the teacher has to teach
- The number of different classes the teacher must prepare for each day (i.e. "preps")
- Classroom activities, including lecturing, facilitating discussions and helping students complete in-class projects
- Preparation associated with classroom activities, including planning and grading
- Extracurricular tasks such as those associated with helping sports teams or clubs
- Time spent working and communicating with individual students or parents
- Time spent on other activities, such as lunch or hall supervision

Many indicators of teaching work are observable, and can be quantified in terms of

minutes per day or minutes per week spent on an activity.

Indicators for work environment extend the concept of collegiality to include

various aspects of relationships between teachers, students and principals, such as:

- The frequency of interaction among teachers about school-related and personal issues
- The frequency of interaction between teachers and school administrators about school-related and personal issues
- The frequency of interaction between teachers and students about students' personal issues
- Autonomy regarding instructional materials

The concept of work environment is measured in this project with Likert-type

survey questions that ask for specific information about the above indicators, such as:

About how often would you meet with another faculty member(s) outside of work?
- ❏ More than five times a month
- ❏ Three to five times a month
- ❏ Once or twice a month
- ❏ Never

Finally, surveys also queried teachers on eleven measures of job satisfaction and how it has changed since conversion to a small schools campus. These items intend to capture a general sense of whether or not the improvements (if the restructuring yielded any) are worth the work of reform, and to gauge how satisfaction with work, compensation, and work environment have changed during the restructuring period.

Independent Variable: School Politics

Distinguishing between democratic and authoritarian school politics was critical for this study. Bryk et.al. (1998) conducted a set of hypothesis tests similar to these with Chicago schools, examining the relationship between change politics and the degree of school restructuring during a reform effort. Presence of facilitative principal leadership (or principals that encouraged teacher participation but also made decisions assertively), collective faculty activity, active Local School Councils, and lack of sustained school conflict all suggested a democratic political character in Chicago schools. This model of school politics was adapted for OSSI schools, yielding the following indicators: presence of facilitative principal leadership, collective faculty activity, lack of sustained school (i.e. teacher-administrator) conflict, and faculty-based voting on major reform decisions were all associated with democratic conversion politics. Table three displays political

characteristics for each school type. Two of the schools visited exhibited a democratic change process, while the other three, an authoritarian one.

Following Bryk (1998), this study distinguishes between authoritarian and adversarial schools for some analytic purposes. Although both could be considered "authoritarian" in the sense that restructuring is accomplished in primarily a top-down fashion and without a binding faculty vote, not all authoritarian conversions have high levels of sustained conflict between teachers and administrators. Further, while some authoritarian schools mirrored the facilitative leadership and active faculty participation of democratic schools, these qualities were often ephemeral, and restructuring began to take on a definitively top-down quality as the conversion proceeded. Distinguishing between authoritarian and adversarial schools is largely based on the presence or absence of sustained school conflict, or a history of bitterness between administrators and teachers. Such bitterness often took the form of difficult contract negotiations or feelings of betrayal, such as when administrators would solicit input from teachers about conversion strategies but then completely ignore it. Thus, sustained school conflict reflects school history as well as current school climates: both adversarial schools exhibited a recent history of pre-reform conflict as well as conversion-related bitterness. At every school, teachers and administrators unanimously agreed, in interviews, as to whether or not a particular school's history could be defined by "sustained conflict". Due to the small sample size, this distinction is oftentimes ignored; at other times, it is a focus of analysis.

Facilitative leadership refers to how principals use time to promote collaboration between teachers and other stakeholders, a principal's orientation to necessary conflict associated with reform negotiation, and whether or not the principal endorses faculty involvement in school planning and organization. Change necessitates conflict between stakeholders – during these times principals may either make decisions unilaterally and enforce them, or may help groups come to agreement through discussion and voting; the latter strategy is indicative of facilitative leadership. Another important indicator of facilitative leadership is principals' solicitation for and incorporation of teacher input into conversion. Both democratic schools in this sample exhibited facilitative leadership. This took the form of small-schools meetings where teachers brainstormed and submitted ideas to administrators, who in turn used those ideas for aspects of small school design. In short, these teachers felt heard and appreciated by their principals.

Active faculty goes hand in hand with facilitative leadership: without a democratic, participatory medium, "active faculty participation" cannot occur. In this case, an active faculty is one where teachers voluntarily participate in reform-related committees, and have means of direct participation in school decision-making (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Rogers 2001; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). Participation in committees varies though. In authoritarian schools, teachers may serve on committees, but such participation is mandated by administrators. In democratic schools, teachers have more power regarding conversion decisions, and teacher input is included more in the actual redesign of the school.

Data from this study and others suggest that the presence of sustained school conflict can make or break a reform effort. School conflict is characterized by respondents' claims that negotiations are dominated by conflict, feelings that other parties involved in negotiations are uncooperative, and a lack of trust between teachers and administrators (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Meier 2002). A lack of sustained teacher-administrator conflict is considered a necessary feature of democratic schools. When I asked, neither principals nor teachers at democratic schools reported any kind of recent bitter teacher-administrator history.

Finally, presence or absence of voting by faculty regarding pursuance of OSSI funds is paramount to political typology. For this study, faculty at democratic schools voted on whether or not to pursue OSSI funds. Facilitative leadership, active faculty participation, lack of sustained school conflict and a binding faculty vote regarding a school's decision to pursue OSSI funds are considered features of democratic schools. Only at democratic schools did teachers vote on the reform. These features resemble those from Bryk's (1998) study on the politics of school reform.

Authoritarian conversion politics are defined by firm and inflexible school control by administrators (usually a principal, but could also be a superintendent or a school board), and weak efforts to promote teacher participation in the restructuring process. Authoritarian politics are also defined by a lack of a teacher vote regarding the decision to pursue OSSI grant funds and a lack of widespread, voluntary teacher participation in the change process. These schools may or may not be characterized by sustained, high levels of teacher-administrator conflict and a history of distrust between parties: these

schools are considered "adversarial" in the sense that negotiations are characterized by a high degree of discord. Adversarial schools are a type of authoritarian school: reform is implemented in a top-down fashion at these sites. However, the reverse is not necessarily the case as some authoritarian schools – those without a history of teacher-administrator distrust and bitterness, or also those where politics fluctuated during the course of the grant, often from quasi-democratic to more top-down approaches – are not considered adversarial.

Bryk acknowledged other political possibilities, the most common of which they deemed "maintenance politics", where stakeholders work together but fail to stimulate substantial change, thus, more or less maintaining the previous organizational arrangements of the school. In a sense, this could be considered "reform void of any real change". This and other potential arrangements are not considered in this study because they were not observed at any site.

Aggregate Data

Finally, this study also uses aggregate school-level data from the Oregon Department of Education to understand the variance among OSSI schools by aspects of school organization, student body, and student performance. This set contains data for the following variables:

- School enrollment
- Grade range
- Percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch
- Percentage of students who are of minority (non-white) racial or ethnic identity
- Percentage of students who qualify for English as a Second Language (ESL) services

- Dropout rate
- Spending per student
- Class size
- Student-teacher ratio
- Percentage of 10th grade students passing their reading, writing and math proficiency tests

These data clarified how OSSI schools differed from other Oregon high schools and were used to make descriptive tables.

After consulting with Karen Phillips, the director of E3, via a phone interview, she also provided documents that clarified conversion progress at each school. These documents explained how much funding was allocated per site, and to what degree schools had implemented OSSI features (in particular, autonomy) across years.

Hypotheses

The literature on school reform suggests some likely outcomes regarding the relationship between teacher participation in the reform process and changes to teachers' work.

Hypothesis 1: Democratic participation minimizes increases to teachers' work.

Hypothesis 2: Democratic participation contributes to an improved work environment.

Hypothesis 3: Democratic participation will be associated with improvements in job satisfaction.

Studies about the politics of school change (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Bryk et al. 1998) and teacher participation (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Smyth and Shacklock 1998) suggest

that democratic teacher participation yields positive outcomes for teachers regarding both work and work environment.

School reform is difficult. It takes substantial amounts of energy on the part of teachers and principals to design and implement change at their school. In addition to this effort though, small schools reforms in particular tend to increase the number of preps teachers must manage. The focus on change politics highlights how teachers in democratic schools may be able to better work with administrators to minimize increases in workload. Via meetings and dialogue, these teachers will be able to negotiate with principals to minimize increases to preps and other responsibilities, and maximize increases to in-school preptime.

Work environment will have a similar relationship to politics. While small schools reforms demonstrate effectiveness at improving teacher-student relationships, the teacher-administrator relationships and teacher collegiality are only nominally studied. I expect that conversion will improve collegiality at all schools, but most especially at democratic schools. Trust between teachers and administrators is important for reform to work, and building a restructured school on a bedrock of reciprocity and dialogue will promote improved social relations more aggressively than at authoritarian schools where issues of distrust and conflict will jeopardize the prospects for reform success.

Following other studies about the effects of workplace democracy (Greenberg 1986; Hodson 2002; Nightingale 1982; Schuller 1985; Zwerdling 1978), I expect that teachers in democratic schools will report better job satisfaction compared to their peers from authoritarian organizations. By having more control over conversion and

experiencing positive changes to work and work environment, these teachers will be happier with their jobs despite the difficulties associated with reform.

Data Analysis

Interviews provide the bulk of the data for this study and reveal what teacher participation in school reform looks like, and how work changed as a result of conversion. Surveys provide measures of change in work for each survey item in the following manner:

$$Work_{current} - Work_{prior} = Change_{work}$$

Although simple, this method produces reliable values for changes in various work tasks, aspects of work environment, and job satisfaction. Quantitative estimates of changes in outcomes are used to examine differences between democratic and authoritarian schools and understand how school type is related to changes for teachers.

Interviews were transcribed and coded using an original coding guide I designed especially for conversion schools: this guide is attached as appendix D. Codes were developed in conjunction with the research questions and what interviewees actually said. Developing appropriate codes was iterative in the sense that twice, after coding two or three interviews, I went back and altered the coding guide to more accurately fit the stories interviewees were providing me, at the same time maintaining the usefulness of the codes for answering my research questions. Although my codes were deductive in the sense that I was looking for answers to specific questions in the transcripts, I allowed for them to be responsive and adaptable to things that were brought up in interviews that I

did not initially foresee (Anfara, Brown and Mangione 2002; Creswell 2002; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Marshall and Rossman 1999; Patton 1990).

Once coded, I produced reports that included every portion of every interview that was coded with a particular code (this corresponds to producing node reports in N6). For instance, code "3.5" was about changes to teachers' work. In order to examine changes to teachers' work specifically, I produced a document that contained every portion of every interview that was coded with a 3.5. A careful review of these reports helped me produce summary findings about how teachers work changed both across all sites, and also at a particular site or type of site (such as how work changed at democratic schools). These findings were compiled in a separate document, summarized, and cited by interview and line (such as "Bob Smith interview, line 487"). These summarized findings provided the skeleton of my results, while specific quotes are used to reinforce the validity of my conclusions. In all, the strategy I used is based on a broad review of sourcebooks on qualitative data analysis that consistently emphasize flexible, question-driven coding for educational research (Constas 1992; Creswell 1998; Creswell 2002; Marshall and Rossman 1999; Patton 1990).

The combination of survey and interview data permit a comparative case study test similar to those offered by Bernard (1994) and Ragin (1987). Although my sample seriously limits the complexities the model can accommodate, a rudimentary comparison can be conducted. A basic truth table (table four) displays the expected relationships between politics and outcomes. Teachers in authoritarian schools will experience an increase in workload, mixed effects to work environment and collegiality, and a decrease

in job satisfaction. In contrast, teachers from democratic schools will experience mixed (or no) changes to workload, and improvement in work environment and job satisfaction.

I begin chapter four with a discussion of what participation looks like, what it entails, and how schools differed according to the politics of change. Next, I examine how conversion politics influenced changes in teachers' work and work environment. While the focus is on the relationship between participation, politics and work, interview data do point to the intersection of political challenges, student characteristics, and the feasibility of E3's prescription for school change.

CHAPTER IV

HOW PARTICIPATION IN REFORM AFFECTS TEACHERS' WORK

This chapter explores what participation looks like in OSSI schools and how conversion to small schools affects teachers' work, work environment and job satisfaction. Data suggest that democratic change politics minimize increases in workload, and improve work environment. Interviews reveal a number of additional findings not considered in hypotheses too. For instance, in my work I discovered an important paradox underlying the concept of "being small". The usage of grant funds in OSSI schools is strictly limited – they primarily fund teacher professional development, including workshops on curriculum and pedagogy, and trips to other schools-within-schools campuses. While such professional development activities may improve teaching, they constitute additional work for teachers void of additional resources or compensation. Grant funds may not be used to hire additional staff or to buy classroom materials, which are often the things teachers primarily need. Thus, although funds can be used to restructure schools to make them smaller, funds cannot be used to decrease class size. Several teachers reiterated this irony – that of small schools with big classes – and how, for teachers, survival takes precedence over reform:

> *Teacher*: It's like, although it was known that this grant can't pay for teachers, there was a lot of resentment: "You said small schools, but we're not gonna be any smaller! We're still gonna have the same number of kids in our class!" So some people felt mislead, although from the beginning that was stated: the very first presentation to the staff emphasized that.
> *Interviewer*: That this grant can't pay for more staff…

> *Teacher*: Right. So that's difficult. And there have even been a few people who said, "[Small schools] might be a good idea, but not right now because I'm having a hard time surviving."

This teacher was a small-schools advocate and had served in leadership positions vis-à-vis the grant. At the same time, she was attuned to the unmet needs of her colleagues.

What is Participation?

I first want to discuss what teacher participation in school reform looks like. At each of the five schools, teachers spent time and energy on conversion tasks in some form. All teachers talked about conversion in school meetings; fewer did committee work entirely voluntarily. While all teachers attended meetings, I hesitate to call this "participation" in school reform: many teachers resented being a part of these mandatory meetings. At other times, teachers were ordered to brainstorm ideas in small groups, only to have their input entirely cast to the wayside by principals and superintendents – principals at authoritarian schools admitted this. At the other end of the spectrum, some teachers reported that their input was fundamental to the development of their school's mission and identity. In short, participation in democratic schools looked quite different from authoritarian ones.

In Authoritarian Schools

By definition, authoritarian school politics are defined by top-down reform decided mostly by school administrators such as principals, school boards, and superintendents. In such cases, teacher input was ignored. In and of itself, ignoring

teacher input may not have generated the acrid feelings many teachers at these schools held; such bitterness was largely a product of being asked, by the administration, to come up with ideas in mandated collaboration meetings where teachers met with each other to brainstorm about what small schools might look like for their school then be ignored. When such input was ignored, many teachers felt betrayed and insulted. The following excerpts from interviews reveal how authoritarian implementation and betrayal contributed to high levels of teacher resistance to the reform at authoritarian schools.

> *Teacher*: So I would say that most teachers would have the feeling – most of the ones I talked to, and I'm a building rep for the association so I talked to a lot of teachers – but most teachers I think would say that the district had an idea of where they wanted to go in advance and they asked the cursory question, "Where do you guys want to go?" and if the answer that came back wasn't exactly what they wanted to hear, then they would say, "Okay, but what about this?" And so over a period of time, they tried to pull the teachers to their point of view I think. And, unfortunately, I think a lot of teachers thought it was a very veiled attempt at control and so they…I would venture to guess that any teacher that you come up to in this school, if they have negative feelings about the small schools conversion, one of the things that they would say is that this was not teacher-driven: this was district-driven. The district decided, "This is the way that it has to be." And in fact, they would probably be more specific and they would say, "The superintendent decided that this is the way it is supposed to be."

> *Teacher*: And we had teachers create fifteen page documents for what their school was gonna be – we actually came up with several small schools. We worked on it and had this huge document and submitted it, then nothing. Nothing happened! I don't know if anyone even read it.
> *Interviewer*: How do you think that affected teachers?
> *Teacher*: There's a lot of hurt because of that: we worked our butts off and nothing was done with it.

> Teacher: And then it's funny because at the district office what they tell everyone is that the high school is just difficult to work with. And it's like, "Ok, you come up here and work with us for a while and then, if that's what you want to think…" And I'm not saying that we're perfect, but they've asked us three different times to think outside of the box and come up with these great ideas, then we give it to them and they change it and give it back to us and say, "Ok, now this is what

you're going to do." It comes to a point where you get very jaded…And it's hard to stay positive sometimes.

To add insult to injury, participation in conversion-related meetings or committees was usually mandatory. Being forced to participate in such meetings only hurt the prospect of buy-in.

> *Teacher*: A lot of our staff meetings were devoted to small schools. And we actually had people signed up on different committees so that they would attend meetings, which was a little more successful. Although our principal said that you had to sign up for something and so then there were people that resented that.

Being ignored was not unpredictable in some cases – teachers expected to have changes forced upon them with neither their input nor consent. At authoritarian schools with a history of bitterness and sustained conflict between teachers and administrators – or, "adversarial" schools – many teachers lacked trust in the process from the beginning. This contributed to a lack of buy-in and affected the implementation of the grant in deleterious ways, most notably by fostering teacher resistance early in the process.

> *Teacher (and School Change Coordinator)*: Actually, when we first received the grant there were already a lot people asking "Do we want it?" and "What does this mean for me?" And, "If I get involved and do all this work and start dreaming and getting up hopes for something, and then the administration says 'No, you can't do that!' then that's time wasted." So there was a lot of skepticism, even from the very beginning.

Consistent with the literature (Bryk and Schneider 2002; DeStefano et al. 2003; Slavin 2004), I found that trust and buy-in are critical for effective reform implementation. Without a strong initial footing, OSSI restructuring floundered, resulting in some schools even being kicked off of the grant.

Teachers at authoritarian schools did not get to vote on the two most important facets of the grant process: whether or not to apply for the grant, and whether or not to

accept grant funds should they be awarded. Voting is foundational to democratic

decision-making; however, research on workplaces suggests that democracy is more

complicated than simply voting: it often entails consensus-building processes and a high

degree of control in workers' hands (Greenberg 1986; Nightingale 1982; Schuller 1985;

Zwerdling 1978). For school reform, this primarily translates into teacher-generated input

that is adequately addressed and implemented (in some form) by administrators.

Nevertheless, the failure by administrators to welcome a vote regarding the grant started

multiple reforms off on a path to authoritarianism and subsequent teacher resentment.

Both teachers and principals admitted to an absence of voting at these schools.

> *Interviewer*: Was there a vote regarding applying for the grant or accepting the grant?
> *Principal*: So no and no. It was definitely a dictate. I don't know how the idea got started other than all of a sudden at an administrative meeting we were told that the intention was to apply for this grant. At that point no one really knew what the grant was, so fine, go apply for it. Some teachers, three or four in particular, were asked to be involved with the application and helped get it going, they made a presentation to the staff. As simplistic as that sounds, that really was one of the big hurdles out there that kept coming up year after year: you know, "Have we ever been able to vote on this?"

> *Teacher*: They made it seem like we were going to have a choice in the matter. Like when I was here last year, I saw the tail end of it but you know, it was always like, "Okay, we're going to have a vote" or something like that. But [it was framed like] you're either for small schools or you're against students and improvement, and that always felt like that was the choice: like small schools is the way to student improvement and so if you're against small schools, you're against student improvement and helping students…Yeah, so it really didn't feel like a choice.

Looking back, teachers and principals at authoritarian schools realize that a lack of

democracy probably hurt the prospects for more effective conversion:

> *Teacher*: So what was the grant about? Half of the people I talk to still don't know what the grant was for. The students are constantly asking questions about why it

hasn't gone better. And it's like, nobody has really provided accurate information about that kind of stuff. There were just a lot of missteps in the process...I personally am highly supportive of small schools, but I'm also aware that small schools cannot be successful if it is not run by the teachers. One of your questions alluded to this, but you know, teacher workload increases in a small school in my opinion, so teachers are seriously affected.

Principal: Now I do think it could have gone differently if you backed up three years, allowed staff to explore all the options, and then the staff says, "We've seen all that, and we think we should break up into small schools." Then I think you at least have a chance of pulling it off.

At the same time and consistent with literature on school reform politics (Bryk et al. 1998; Fuhrman and O'Day 1996; Fullan and Miles 1992; Honig 2004; Madsen 1994), effective leadership is necessary for school reform to work. However – and as one principal points out – at times, administrative power can become tyrannical, leading to unproductive consequences.

Principal: I think sometimes people use the old "This is what our students need" to make an administrative dictate. I had got into a conversation with a staff member a couple of days ago about how there's always some finger-pointing in an educational setting that "this is top-down management" as if there's no place for that in schools. Again – and we are a great example – if you don't approach something properly and just do it as a top-down dictate it can backfire, as in this instance, and it can cause a lot of problems and you can waste a lot of time trying something that will never be successful as you want it to be. As I was telling you on the flipside though, in education there's still a lot of things that require somebody to be responsible and make a decision. So I don't think you can strictly run a school on "100% the teachers are running the show" without any kind of upper management. Because when it gets hot, people want someone to be responsible for it.

In Democratic Schools

Democratic change politics are defined by facilitative principal leadership, active faculty participation and meaningful teacher decision making, lack of bitter and sustained teacher-administrator conflict, and a binding faculty vote. Principals at democratic

schools were seen as supportive, available, and good listeners. On the one hand, these

principals facilitated communication between stakeholder groups (teachers, parents,

school boards, and students); on the other, they also made decisions when decisions

needed to be made.

> *Teacher*: It has to do with leadership and who is at the top. We've got a "can do"
> principal. Although this is only my tenth year of teaching, I've seen a lot of
> principals so far. He just gets the job done. I think a lot of it has to do with the fact
> that he's just willing to put the time in. The rest of them are scattered like rats
> when the bell rings kind of thing. So you've got leadership at the top that…not
> only does he put the time in but I'll give the man credit: he's got vision. He knows
> where he wants to go and he's a go-getter and he knows everybody. So if you can
> combine all of that stuff together, you've got somebody that can make it happen.

> *Teacher*: He's a real hard worker and he is willing to stop what he's doing and he
> can…yeah, he's just kind of a straight shooter and you know what you're going to
> get. You know it's an answer that…he's going to be very honest with what he
> says.

> *Teacher*: Well it was like, "Okay, let's set down all our teachers and try to work
> something out" and for people that our brains can't make a schedule, I sit there
> and think, "This is a waste of my time! I can't help you!" So Plan B was "Who is
> going to schedule and who wants to schedule?" Those people sat down and made
> schedules and since we had already discussed a lot of it, we were like, "That's
> fine. Just tell me what the schedule is and we'll be happy with it." I think overall,
> our school is good and people are really happy with our schedule.

Further, teachers asserted that these principals did their best to incorporate teacher views

about school change into the actual conversion process. Teachers and administrators alike

called this "teacher-driven" reform, meaning that teachers had considerable input into

how the reform was to proceed.

> *Teacher*: And like I said, the more involved you wanted to be, you could do that.
> It really was teacher-driven. It was like, "Here's what needs to be done" and they
> would talk to the leaders and they would say, "Take this to your group" and they
> would say, "Here's what we need to vote on." And we were filling out forms and
> surveys and all of that stuff. Yeah, finally it got to the point where they were like,
> "Okay, here's your four schools" and then we got to vote on which ones we got to

be in and of course I chose this one but it was like a first, second, third sort of choice. I think most teachers got what they wanted. What ended up happening was that teachers who didn't want to be involved in small schools, either retired early, or it seemed like there were a lot of babies born for some reason and you know, just other people got jobs elsewhere and so it just kind of…they just weeded themselves out. Everybody that's here this year, I think really wants to be here and wants to be involved in small schools.

Teacher: [OSSI] was presented to us as "let's do this" but I felt like it was immensely democratic. I'm not a very good big idea person. I'm much stronger in my classroom so to speak. I don't tend to come up with a lot of good ideas for the larger organizational part of things, but we spent a ton of time just sitting around and talking about how we can arrange things and how to handle individual, new sets of problems that we had. I felt completely like we had power and it was a lot of discussion early on about some subjects and how they don't fit very well. Like with math, it's very difficult to do this to because you take your schools and there are twelve math teachers and there are three in each school but you're still trying to provide this huge range of math and so that can be very difficult. So there was a discussion about it.

Looking back, principals confirm that, although democratic decision-making –

including voting and also considerable consensus-building – is time intensive, it was

critical to the success of the reform and the effectiveness with which the school deals

with problems, particularly those regarding implementation of small schools. By

facilitating a decision-making arena where teachers were heard – especially in terms of

criticism and resistance – teachers bought in to the conversion model more from the start.

Interviewer: In terms of the politics and process though, what do you think worked about it for you and what do you think didn't work so well? Were the meetings worth it?
Principal: I mean the thing is that I don't think any meeting is worth it, but I don't see how we could have done it in any less time. I mean, there's just a certain amount of energy that needs to be outputted; I don't see how we could have done it any faster or more efficiently… Now though, you have everyone bought in and accountable, so [this democratic model] is by far more efficient from a management perspective – this is by far superior.

Principal: They were all [involved] – teachers, administrators, parents, and some students. And so what we did was interested groups formed themselves and they

kind of clustered. Well, the whole process was pretty amazing because people presented – I think we even started with 20 ideas and then narrowed it down closer to seven, and then people joined groups and said "I'll help you with this proposal for the school." And then, again, married one more time, and then teachers chose what school they wanted to be in. And so nobody was forced into a small school. We also actually even voted to make sure that we wanted to proceed forward…we figured we should get a two-thirds majority for it to pass and we got 70% that wanted to move forward…And it's a unique way of doing it because a lot of times this kind of things gets top-down. But at [our school], teachers are very leadership oriented: there's a lot of teacher-leaders. If we had imposed something like this on them I don't think we would have gotten very far. So it was really driven by administration and teachers, but if they didn't want to participate, we weren't gonna force the issue. It's a lot of work.

Binding teacher votes – or votes that could have blocked pursuance of OSSI funds – were conducted at all democratic schools, meaning that, in an all-staff meeting, teachers voted about whether or not to pursue the OSSI grant. In one school, teachers even voted a second time on whether or not to accept the OSSI grant. In both cases, at least 70% of teachers voted in favor of applying for E3 funds. For some teachers though, being heard throughout the conversion process was sometimes more important than the actual vote itself.

> *Teacher*: I think there was a concern here because there weren't any really official votes other than the one that was like, "Should we do it?" But at least, particularly in our case, [our principal] listens…So we don't vote because we don't need to.

Across All Schools

Even in the best cases, where teacher approval for small schools was around 75%, a sizeable portion of the faculty were against it: in one school where 70% of teachers voted in favor of pursuing grant funds, almost 30% of teachers voted "no" or abstained from voting. Interviews with principals and teachers revealed that while some critics of

OSSI stayed at the school and resisted in various ways, other strong opponents of the

reform retired early, transferred to another school, or simply changed jobs.

> *Principal*: So you're asking about the politics?
> *Interviewer*: Of the teachers that weren't so hot with the idea, did they leave?
> *Principal*: We hired almost a quarter of our teaching staff new this year. A lot of
> retirements; a couple transfers, some left.

> *School Change Coordinator*: And we've had a ton of turnover in staff: we hired
> almost twenty percent of our staff new this year.
> *Interviewer*: Did people leave because of small schools?
> *School Change Coordinator*: We had a few retirements; we had a few leave
> because of small schools; we had some that just made other choices – [this town]
> isn't the life for them, or someone got married and they're moving. But we did
> have a couple that left because of small schools.

Some principals and teachers did point out that having transfer options was

important for fair labor relations for public school teachers. Particularly due to the fact

that the OSSI grant is private money and the schools are public, teachers should have

reasonable transfer options available if they do not want to be a part of small schools.

> *Teacher*: Yeah, [our district] will help you get another spot but what about the
> not-so-big districts that are going with the small schools and there are one or two
> teachers that don't want to do it?

The pre-existing teacher-administrator relationship at each school was important

for change. In adversarial schools, bitterness contributed to reform that proceeded

sluggishly and floundered; in democratic schools, trust between teachers and

administrators helped grease the restructuring process. Consistent with Bryk's (2002,

1998) work on the importance of trust and the teacher-administrator relationship for

effective reform, I found that presence of sustained teacher-administrator conflict was a

critical variable mediating conversion success. Such conflict could take the form of

difficult collective bargaining sessions, feelings of betrayal (such as when administrators

asked for teacher input then ignored it), and principals with poor interpersonal skills.

> *Principal*: I guess everybody has their own opinion about how things should be
> done, and it's just a difference in opinion, and I don't blame them. There was one
> year when we had very little money as a district. So what the superintendent did –
> and this involved some negotiations – was basically get rid of most of the in-
> school prep time. That was huge, and the teachers still haven't gotten over that
> one.

> *Teacher*: And so we, for about the past 20 years, have had a very dysfunctional
> school and a very dysfunctional faculty in which the administration was inept to
> say the least. And so teachers, for many years, have been allowed to not do things
> correctly because of a variety of reasons. And so they kind of formed a little
> isolated community like, "I'll take care of myself and I'll do my thing" because as
> a school, we weren't functioning well and it was due to poor leadership. And then
> when [the former superintendent] retired, [our new superintendent] was hired, and
> he was hired essentially to come in and clean things up. But he does not have the
> personal skills, the people skills to make it happen. He was the wrong person at
> the wrong time. And so he came in and he tried to make changes and did things in
> a very impersonal way, essentially dictated and could not build bridges, could not
> build connections with the faculty and could not bring everyone together.
> *Interviewer*: Yeah, social skills are important for a leader.
> *Teacher*: Yeah, they are. And unfortunately, they are often overlooked for the
> person who can interview well and really knows their stuff and they come across
> as impressive, you hire them. But can they really lead people? It's education, not
> a business. It's a service-oriented business and if you don't have interpersonal
> skills, you're not going to be successful. So [our superintendent] was not
> respected and liked and trusted and then he got this huge grant, which feathered
> his cap and so the staff was told, "You will do this" because they weren't going to
> turn down the dollars, and so the staff went through a long, arduous process of,
> "How are we going to do this?" And again, because he didn't have the ability to
> build the connections and the trust, this new event kind of fractured the staff even
> more.

In short, these teachers and principals offer a warning to schools considering school

reorganization: without a good teacher-administrator relationship already in place, don't

try it.

I have clarified the relationship between top-down, authoritarian conversions and teacher resistance. In these schools, resistance is ignored either explicitly by enforcing conversion-related policies, or implicitly by asking for teacher feedback then ignoring it. In contrast, at democratic schools and in spite of the teacher-driven nature of the conversion there, teacher resistance was not entirely ignored though.

> *Teacher*: There was a veneer of democracy. It starts to get into personalities at the district office and personalities in terms of the administrators at the time. There was a veneer of democracy. Our staff – and I abstained – but our staff voted either majority or overwhelming majority, to do it. There was always an undercurrent; I'm not sure how many people would be able to describe this undercurrent, but it was definitely there and that was that politically, this made people's resumes look pretty decent in the district: if you could write on your resume that you secured millions of dollars or whatever from the Gates Foundation. I felt like it was going to happen regardless of my no vote. I don't think there were enough "no" votes to kill it quite honestly…[Saying no] is tough because you have to raise your hand and publicly express your dissent and I think somebody just said, "Let's just ballot this" which makes more sense because who wants to sit there and go, "I don't like this idea." I was one of those people.
> *Interviewer*: When your job isn't on the line…
> *Teacher*: Right (both laugh). It's like, "Am I on probation yet?" I was one of those people who I think was viewed, and maybe rightly so, sort of snipping at the edges and not really willing to stand up and say, "This is a crappy idea. Why do this?" And I got talked to. So was there teacher buy-in? Yes. Were there dissenters? Yes. It would be interesting to see the reasons why people were dissenting. There was some very fervent dissent from people who, quite honestly, saw it as very threatening because it's like, "Holy shit. There is going to be a lot more work and people are going to be in my classroom looking at what I'm doing! And honestly, I haven't been doing anything in my classroom for the last thirty years. It's worked so far and I've got two years to retirement so who are these people that think they know more than I do?" Everybody just had a different reason. So if you could break down the reasons behind the "no" vote, it would be very interesting why. Other people even on the "yes" side – why would you say "yes" to this? I think a lot of them…I don't know. I wasn't a "yes" guy but a lot of them were like, "It just sounds good."

E3's conversion benchmarks, such as autonomy, pressured principals to adopt more top-down, authoritarian strategies. Basically, when schools are faced with deadlines

enforced by grant providers, democratic and consensus-based decision-making is

sometimes not a feasible option.

> *Teacher (and former School Change Coordinator)*: So one issue is autonomy, and
> then we had an idea of what we wanted for autonomy, but E3 had an idea of what
> they wanted for us, and so trying to figure that out…there was a lot of talk about
> the frustration, like, "We have what we want and they have what they want, but
> since they're giving us money, we have to do what they want." So there was a lot
> of that. And that's when the academy leaders started meeting and kind of making
> decisions for us and then coming and telling us how we were gonna do it. And at
> that time, that second year, there was just a very strong involvement on the part of
> students – which is a big part of the grant, making sure that there's a lot of student
> voice – and gradually that has dissipated to the point where now we've eliminated
> students from the process.
> *Interviewer*: Are the parents still a big part of it? Because I know they've been
> vocal with some concerns about autonomy?
> *Teacher*: I feel as though they've faded out too, because they were very vocal and
> involved in the first couple of years. But now there's no more parent organization
> anymore, so I don't see them as much. When we got in our committees we started
> out having parents and students involved, but now it's all staff.

Changes in Work

Survey data show that changes in work differed by school type. Table five

presents mean changes across a variety of work tasks and work characteristics, including

average class length, the number of different classes a teacher must prepare for each

school day (preps), the proportion of class time spent on lecture and also classroom

discussion, amount of in-school teacher preparation time (not counting lunch), the

amount of time students spend on projects, and the amount of time teachers spend

providing students academic feedback, disciplining students, helping with extracurricular

activities, and "other" tasks (which could include anything not specifically asked about

on the survey). Mean changes are calculated for each item by subtracting the pre-

conversion value from the post-conversion value, then taking the mean of these changes by school type (authoritarian versus democratic). Positive mean values suggest an increase in a variable, and negative values a decrease. While twenty-five teachers were interviewed, not all teachers were able to complete survey items about work. Two of the teachers were counselors and did not work in a traditional classroom, and one teacher was a first year teacher at the school (and thus only provided current values, so no difference could be calculated).

In authoritarian schools, teachers were teaching an average of 0.7 more preps per day. This is not surprising because small schools reforms often result in an increase to preps for teachers. This increase is due to how the teaching staff is split up. In comprehensive high schools, a staff of eight teachers might teach a total of six different sections of math. This arrangement permits one teacher to teach primarily just one or, at the most, two levels of math per term. If that staff is divided four ways though, then each small school has two teachers, and these two teachers are now responsible for four or five levels of math, meaning that each teacher must teach at least two different sections per term. Thus, teachers must prepare more classes for each school day. The amount of academic feedback to students increased, as did time spent on discipline and extracurricular activities per week. Most changes were not significant due to the small sample size and substantial within-group variation (standard deviations). The only statistically significant result was the decrease in the amount of student time spent on projects. This decrease is important because "rigorous" curricula that promote active student involvement, often in the form of "project-based learning", is fundamental to

E3's model of small schools reform: this decrease suggests that project-based learning was not implemented at these sites. These results suggest that, in an authoritarian climate of change, teachers were unable to weather the challenges of reform effectively, thus leaving curriculum largely unchanged while taking on additional preps and work without additional resources such as in-school preptime.

Changes to work in democratic schools are notably different. There, teachers received more in-school preptime, while spending less time per week disciplining students and helping with extracurricular activities. Classes also became shorter – often, these schools reformatted block classes (80 or 90-minute periods) to 60 or 70-minute periods (a five period day) in hopes that the five-period schedule would better accommodate students' attention spans and prep loads. No other substantial changes to work were noticeable in democratic schools when considered aggregately. Although the change in class length was the only significant effect, these results do suggest that teachers at democratic schools negotiate reform more effectively, or in ways that minimize any increase in preps and workload.

In Authoritarian Schools

Interviews help explain how these changes occurred. Teachers in authoritarian schools were stretched beyond their means both in the classroom and structurally. Conversion entailed significant commitments of energy, even for teachers who were not integrally involved. Teachers at these schools had to prep more classes as a result of having their teaching staff split into, on the average, four schools.

Teacher: Workload has increased: there's no doubt about that as far as the number of preps that I have. I would usually have 2 to 3 preps in a year. Now, for example, I have five different preps for this year because I'm "Mr. Science", so I do every single science at every single level.

Interviewer: Even in what would appear to be a pretty science-based school, you're it?

Teacher: Yep.

Interviewer: That's somewhat surprising.

Teacher: Very much so. And to me, that's a little on the scary side. First of all and from an administrative standpoint, that's a nightmare because if you're gonna have somebody like me – biology-based classes, physical science-based classes, Chemistry-based classes, physics-based classes – the minimum you could get away with to meet federal standards for No Child Left Behind is three different certifications in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Now there are damn few people in the state of Oregon that are certified in all three of those. So from an administrative standpoint it's a nightmare to get someone certified to teach all three. As a teacher, it's a pain in the rear end to say, "You will be THE expert in Chemistry, Biology and Physics. You will be able to teach every class at every level and be everything to every kid." It's very unrealistic.

This increase in preps negatively affected instructional quality.

Teacher: In a system such as ours, where we're converting from a comprehensive high school and people weren't willing to give up some of that comprehensive nature. Now I'm teaching every period of the day, and I'm teaching a different class…I would say that my teaching is worse and not because I'm a worse teacher but because now I have much more preparation so there is just no possible way for me to plan to the level that I used to plan to, because when I was teaching three periods of the same thing or two periods of the same thing and then one other thing or two other things…I had two preps a day and so when you have 80 minutes to plan, 40 minutes a period is pretty significant to be able to plan a good solid lesson with neat activities and so on. But then when it becomes four preps… So that's probably the worst part of it.

Interviewer: Your survey indicates that your satisfaction with your pay has declined a little bit?

Teacher: It has decreased.

Interviewer: Is that a part of it?

Teacher: I think that all of the benefits that small schools can provide are great. But I don't know if we're reaping all of the rewards and the reason would be teacher workload.

In the classroom, teachers report that neither the way they teach nor their

curriculum changed. While E3 prioritizes more rigorous classroom instruction as part of

OSSI conversion, teachers lack the support and resources genuine curricular change

requires.

> *Interviewer*: Are there any ways that your teaching has changed?
> *Teacher*: I think we're all highly encouraged to be "project based" and so we've had a couple of speakers…
> *Interviewer*: What does "highly encouraged" mean?
> *Teacher*: It means – well, when the Gates people were here, they actually came around and did these little…they popped into your room for like two minutes and they rated, they did this little checklist of what kind of learning was occurring, what was happening, was it discussion, and then they made these graphs and they presented them and were like, "You people aren't doing enough project-based learning." But then our ed guy, he was like, "What did they see us doing? Because our entire curriculum is project-based!"…Well I just think, has my job changed at all? And no – like what I teach, it hasn't changed because of the small school. Maybe it should have. A couple of times I've tried to. But how does a Language Arts teacher adapt to a small school? Is it the idea that they change all of the literature so that it has to do with your academy? I can't imagine…And the classes that I teach for the seniors are all college prep stuff: Writing 121 and English 104 and so that's not going to change dramatically.

Much of the added effort goes into keeping track of students better via grade-level

teacher meetings, closer and more frequent communication with parents, and developing

closer student-teacher relationships. In short, being more involved in students' lives takes

energy. Contrary to some of the other changes in workload they experienced as part of

conversion, teachers generally welcomed the added responsibilities associated with

knowing students better because they felt as though the closer relationships helped

students stay in school and perform well academically.

> *Teacher*: The team meetings are during [a class] period and we're expected to get together multiple days per week but that doesn't really happen. At the beginning of the year, we were really trying to make that go every day to meet with your team but just the weight of everything that's on your shoulders, that's just another thing and that's like…if we really feel like we need to talk, we'll get together but usually we don't.
> *Interviewer*: Is there a lot of informal collaboration like with email?
> *Teacher*: Yeah, there's a lot of that.

Interviewer: About what?

Teacher: Like the other two people on my team, we email every day and then we're doing this extra period thing which is another added time, and that's for students who are failing or are missing assignments, we ask them to come in and we keep them after class and they work on it there and we send people back and forth and I email like, "Did he get there?" and that kind of thing. So yeah, we're in pretty close communication.

Interviewer: Like daily housekeeping and keeping tabs on everybody?

Teacher: It's more contact with parents too. I still feel like we're not reaching a lot of the kids but we're reaching more of them I think. And then like that extra period thing: that really is effective. Because I have students that have four or five assignments that are outstanding, that they haven't turned in that are you know, mostly complete but they just won't finish them and turn them in. And when you keep them in for just an extra 10 or 15 minutes, they finish it and they turn it in and so it really...it's sad that you have to hold their hand like that. You wish you wouldn't have to but if that keeps them in the system for a little longer until maybe they mature and figure that out on their own – some will never figure that out but there are a few that you know, that freshman year is a big transition year and if you keep them until Sophomore year and they pass the classes because you're holding their hand, maybe they'll figure it out.

A second teacher at a different school reiterates the "hand-holding" concern expressed above, tempering his comments with the observation that teaching more preps significantly adds stress to his work.

Teacher: I do think the amount of paperwork that I do has increased.

Interviewer: Why would that be?

Teacher: In some ways, it's a good thing. As teachers are becoming more familiar with their students, we're getting tighter about dealing with students as individuals and you know, when I first started teaching, it was a commonly accepted practice that students came in and they did things in class and then they left and if there were problems, you know, parents would come into conferences and so on and so forth. But now there is more push for some of the students who are on the fringe or on the edge or having a hard time staying on board – I think we're becoming more aware of them because we have them in class more and more frequently so there are some students that the minute they are in my class, I know that the student is going to do this and this and this and so I need to do this and this and this to support him or her. So on a positive note, students I think are receiving more support. On a negative note, it means that I'm doing more things for individual students and so this increases the time commitment, which is both positive and negative. It's positive at some point with students and parents with the exception of a few students who I am a little concerned that our emphasis on

supporting and scaffolding students creates somebody who is not ready for exiting high school, so I do have a little bit of a concern there and I hope that's not happening on a major scale but I think there are a few cases where we over-enable students and they never learn to take control of their own life.

Interviewer: Right.

Teacher: Yeah, I would really like to re-emphasize that the increase in the number of preps that I teach and the increase in the number of other things going on has decreased the overall quality of classroom activities and lessons.

In Democratic Schools

Although teachers in democratic schools experienced a different set of changes, conversion was difficult in some capacities as well. Teachers at one school worked with principals to create academic schedules that minimized increases in preps.

> *Teacher*: Even my overall teaching style hasn't changed a lot but what we have, the other two thirds of things that really changed, is that one of our lead teachers just came up with a brilliant schedule.

Further, principals at these schools tried to tailor classes to individual teachers' personal interests and strengths, thus minimizing the perception of additional work. Such effort is characteristic of a work environment characterized by mutual respect between teachers and administrators. In a democratic school relatively free of bitter conflict, principals were more willing to help their teachers in whatever way they could to help make changes easier.

> *Principal*: Yeah – if you talked to my staff, I don't know if you have a good representation from the campus generally. My staff is very happy…So they do have less preps in terms of different subjects, but there are many other teachers here in different schools that are kind of sniffing around. I don't know if my teachers talked with you about how many students they have, but the English teachers last year would have in between 160 to 185 kids – now they have about 95. That's a tremendous difference -- they only teach 4 periods a day. But they are all delivering more curriculum, such as an elective. A lot of them will not sense how that is a lot of work, because a lot of it is tailored into something that is a

passion for them…(provides two examples)…So technically there aren't more preps, but they're doing a lot of curriculum work. There's a lot of people outside of our school that would like to come into our school, but they don't want to do that kind of curriculum work – they want to come in and teach four periods the same way they've always taught four periods, you know what I mean?

By working together, teachers were able to clearly express their concerns and needs, and administrators genuinely incorporated their ideas into academic scheduling.

Again though, conversion is hard at these schools too:

> *Interviewer*: What are you most concerned about?
> *Principal*: Burnout. [My teachers] work really hard. I mean, I thought I had an idea of what we were getting into and I really didn't, because it's been a lot more work than I ever anticipated. So if I struggle, I know that they're struggling too. But the things that they struggle with: probably not enough planning time, and we still have large class sizes, so they have a chunk of kids that – in our school we have more students than in other schools. We really have to rethink how we teach because we have more boys than girls: not that boys are necessarily harder to teach but it's just a different dynamic that you've got to be prepared for and understand and not get discouraged. And I think that is where I worry the most about my teachers because you can't make judgments about programs after a few weeks or a few months, and it's really tempting to do that because what you end up finding is that you give it at least a whole year and things that you thought were insurmountable have just worked themselves out. So like I was just going over a lesson with a teacher today and he talked about how this is the first time, at the end of our last quarter, that he was accomplishing what he actually wanted to accomplish with the freshmen kids. He was actually turning around and getting assignments turned in and learning and he didn't really feel that the first half of the year…People forget that and they just want it to work immediately. So I do worry about teachers giving up too soon. Although I don't really see that; I have an outstanding staff.

Teachers reported that their ability to sustain workload increases was largely because of support from their principals. This sense of support was characterized by trust that the principal will listen to what the teacher says, and do what he or she can to help relieve burdens associated with the predicament or barrier. Consistent with the findings of Gitlin and Margonis (1995), principals at democratic schools tended to view teachers'

complaints or criticisms as constructive suggestions or statements of need, rather than

simply resistance and unwillingness to change.

> *Teacher*: [My principal] does a great job listening and filtering out. One of the things in the early meetings, I said, "If I had my choice..." and it's really saying if you had your choice of what to do or what to teach, what would it be?...[My principal] came in and talked and said, "What about this and that?" and then he came in and said, "How about we go to putting [these two subjects] together?" And then a little bit later...it fit just like pieces of a puzzle because of the schedule. So we're doing what I suggested more or less. And he made it a reality by picking up other ideas.

Principals could also be counted on to finance projects associated with innovative, "more

rigorous" curriculum (such as projects) when needed:

> *Teacher*: Yeah, and you know, some of these projects are very expensive and I realized the day that I needed [supplies] and it was something like one hundred and some dollars. And I went in and said, "[Principal], can I have some money?" And there were other times when I was like, "[Principal], I need this other thing" and the money was always there. He was always like, "No problem. No problem. Get a PO and do what you got to do." And I think that's just our school. If that's what we're going to do, it's going to cost money. I don't know where the money came from. I have no idea but it was there when I needed it. Support was there.

While teachers at democratic schools made more substantial curricular changes

than those at authoritarian schools, such changes were not without challenge. The two

most common curricular changes were project-based learning (where students begin with

a project to complete and learn certain knowledge and skills along the way to completing

the project), and combination (multi-subject) and team-taught (multi-teacher) classes.

> *Teacher*: I think I'm getting better at [project-based learning] and they're getting used to it slowly but it's a different way of teaching and it's just not what they're used to and so it's throwing them and me, as well as other teachers. Even from what I learned last year, I'm having to change and teachers who have been here a long time, they say, "I feel like a first year because I feel like I have to change the structure of how we teach." And so it's like everyone is a first-year teacher, which is what I'm hearing from other people – and I did all of the Biology last year and

so I really should be able to rely on that but I've had to change basically most of what I've done to try and fit into this new model of teaching.

> *Teacher*: And so the freshmen, I have all year long in a combined class…And so it's a new class we've created and it's been interesting. It's kind of a tricky class to work through…I never quite got into the idea of combining [these two subjects] for a whole year of class and so it's kind of tricky. So part of it we've ended up splitting on an AB schedule again, so then I'll teach [one subject] one day and she'll be teaching [the other subject] with the opposite group of kids, so that's been the freshman class and so that's been a completely new curriculum, starting from scratch with that one…One of the goals for the school was to have team teaching, so that would involve two subjects, two different content teachers teaching together with 55 or 60 kids in one room.
> *Interviewer*: In one room?
> *Teacher*: Well that's how we started off. And with freshmen, it was difficult to manage 55-60 kids and so for a variety of reasons, we split up for about half a year. We'll probably end up doing half the year AB schedule and half the year we were all together in one room, or at least working on one project and we would just split up into different rooms to get everyone on a computer or something like that.

While not without challenge, teachers reported that some curricular changes did provide students exciting educational opportunities, ripe with learning potential:

> *Teacher*: I have [my students] go out into the community and find someone who moved here from another country, interview them and then present that person's story. And this multicultural studies, I haven't taught for too long and it's been a really powerful project for kids, just because they can sort of get their feet wet and with talking to people: they hear stories, and they're uncomfortable going out and talking to people.

Across All Schools

Teachers in democratic schools were more effective at changing instruction and weathering the storm of reform in ways that tempered workload increases. While their situations differed in some ways from their peers in authoritarian schools, teachers in all schools – democratic and authoritarian – shared some concerns and challenges associated

with workload in conversion schools. First and most importantly, resources (primarily

funding and, subsequently, staffing and FTE) were usually inadequate for the changes

requested. Continuing his thoughts about team teaching and combination classes from the

example above:

> *Teacher*: [These ideas] came about because we are linked or affiliated with this tech-savvy school from Washington, and one of the things they encouraged us to do was team teaching. I went and visited both of those schools and was pretty bought into this idea. I was never bought into teaching [a different subject] with [my subject] – I thought English would go a lot better. But anyway we saw it work and it's a good concept I think. I mean, it's this idea that everything is related and in the real world there aren't these clear boundaries like there are in a high school. But most of those schools had class sizes less than 50 and so it would be like 25 per teacher.

Funding autonomous small schools is challenging for most campuses beyond the

point of feasibility due to staffing constraints: it hard to fund multiple levels of each

subject at high levels for faculty accustomed to the budget of a large comprehensive high

school. Science teachers, in particular, bemoaned the difficulties associated with

borrowing materials from other teachers in separate schools, then being chastised for not

being autonomous:

> *Teacher*: The biggest problem that we had was just a lot of technical headaches. You had departments that were gone. What happened to all of the equipment that was in those departments? How does that equipment get split up? Where do all of the extra textbooks come from? We were told we were doing this to be very innovative so go ahead and be innovative, invent classes and do all of those wonderful things and we went ahead and did that and then it was like, "Oh we don't have any money to be innovative. We can't implement the things that you need, want or desire to do. We don't have money for textbooks. You have four science departments that you're setting up but we don't have money for four science departments because they cost $30,000 a piece and we don't have any money for those types of things."…And you know, as we go through this and we find our way through it, it gets better and better but we're still fighting those, some of those issues, particularly the financial issues. As an example, when we were a department for science, our budget was, in total for repairs, replacement of

equipment, purchasing of new equipment and supplies, our total budget was...So we lost better than half of the money that we originally had. And here this science group is expected to teach all four levels of science with chemistry, with physics, which are all college prep and take lots of specialized equipment and I get the same amount of money as somebody in a different system who is teaching two years of science at the very basic level.
Interviewer: How have some of those difficult decisions been getting worked out?
Teacher: They just don't get worked out. You have your budget, this is what you have and whatever you have, you have and supposedly you want to be able to treat these people like they are a school that is five miles away and therefore you are autonomous. I mean, that was hammered into us. It's ridiculous. It is not feasible and so with the other teachers, other science teachers, we beg and borrow and steal and make it work for kids but it's far from ideal in that respect.

While both types of schools struggled with financing autonomy, the difference in political climate is noteworthy. In democratic schools, teachers were more likely to openly communicate with principals about their needs, and principals were more receptive and pro-active at addressing teachers' needs. In authoritarian schools, teachers' input was treated as "resistance" or "lack of buy-in", and was often only given lip service by administrators who, after asking for teachers' recommendations, ignored them.

Finally, large class sizes were consistently an issue for teachers at all schools. Although teachers were informed that grant funds could not be used to hire additional staff, many teachers expressed resentment about the school's inability to provide what they needed most: smaller class sizes.

Teacher (and School Change Coordinator): It's like, although we said that this grant can't pay for teachers, there was a lot of resentment: "You said small schools, but we're not gonna be any smaller! We're still gonna have the same number of kids in our class!" So some people felt mislead, although from the beginning that was stated: the very first presentation to the staff emphasized that.
Interviewer: That this grant can't pay for more staff...
Teacher: Right. So that's difficult. And there have even been a few people who said, "[Small schools] might be a good idea, but not right now because I'm having a hard time surviving."

Teacher Leader[1]: It was almost ridiculous to talk about a small school four years ago, and to have a science class with 48; even this year we've been functioning with class sizes of 40 to 45 in several of our science classes. And that's a big part of it – part of that is driven by Oregon laws. Part of it could have been changed if the grant was written in a way that it could provide for extra FTE with the grant money for teaching purposes – not strictly for management purposes.

Changes in instruction – those linked to academic rigor, according to E3 – were either nonexistent, or in better cases such as in some democratic schools, inconsistent. Making teachers accountable for significantly improving curriculum across the board proved an insurmountable task for administrators. Consequently, school-wide curricular improvement did not occur.

Interviewer: Could you tell me a little about how you feel instruction has changed to address equity issues?
School Change Coordinator: To be honest, I don't know. I think it's so individually teacher-based – from my view it's like I have tunnel vision. I hear our administration talking about it; I hear our leadership talking about it; but how it gets filtered down, I don't know.
Interviewer: Do the administrators or teacher leaders propose ideas to teachers? How does it work?
School Change Coordinator: A lot of [our efforts] are around failing students in general. It's like, "We have this many F's, what are we going to do? Our academy will have this special tutoring session." Or, "We're going to address these F's by this timeline." So at the leadership level it may be "We need to have all of our posters in Spanish."...And those are the conversations the leadership is having. And I know that people go to conferences and learn about equity issues, and sadly, I think [implementation] is on a teacher-by-teacher basis. Teachers go and eat it up and think, "Oh my gosh, yes, this is an issue in my class and I need to change a lot!" and then some teachers think, "It's not realistic." The last conference was about teaching literacy through social justice, and I know one of the teachers that I was there with was like "I'm gonna take this and we're gonna do it in my classroom!" and it was really helpful and practical – here's my lesson, let's try it!" But then other teachers...there's just no accountability. It's not like "You will do this and have to do this and there will be a performance-based assessment as a teacher"; that's not in place.

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[1] A teacher leader is a teacher who plays a strong leadership role regarding her or his small school. Often, these teachers teach one less class per day than other teachers but deal with semi-administrative responsibilities associated with small schools implementation.

Finally, the change to small schools brought about serious concerns regarding job security for electives teachers at all campuses. Because small schools reform necessarily involves some reorganization of and reduction in electives programs, and autonomy was a priority for the reform (thus teachers could only teach in one school), electives teachers expressed concern that cuts in their programs would result in job loss.

> *Teacher leader*: The biggest hurdle was electives. What happens to the electives? Because elective programs are sustained with a lot of students, and they're not going to be sustained with 400 and I can't honestly say that that hurdle has been – we keep running around it and we keep trying to avoid it because it's not a pleasant discussion. The small schools that we saw for the most part got rid of their elective programs and so it was math and science. And if you want kids to be good in these things, that's what you have to focus on. And we've always been a school, for better or for worse, with strong elective programs, which for our population of students who are very kinesthetic for the most part have been very successful. We traditionally have had a very successful metals program and kids run their own shop.

> *Teacher*: …And that [threat] affects elective teachers, and even physics! We don't have enough interest to offer physics in each small school but there is enough definitely in all [schools combined] to offer at least one or two classes, so that's a core class. But still elective people who are into the cooking and that stuff, they're really in fear for their jobs because do they have to get other endorsements so that they can stay in the small school? Or do they get other small schools? Or do they have to teach different stuff or what is going to happen to them? And so there is a lot of anxiety about that.

In contrast to these views and with such concerns in mind, other teachers took a different view on the issue, emphasizing how change is a necessary part of the school and its curricular offerings.

> *Teacher leader*: I would say that electives get morphed because the class that these guys are doing, we didn't have before and so this year…And so I think that you have to think about the benefits and how you can take your skills and bring them into the new program, rather than sit back and complain about what I was doing, I don't want to do anymore. Well okay, but life changes.

Changes in Work Environment

The survey data show improvements to work environment at both democratic and authoritarian schools. Table six presents mean changes across a variety of work environment indicators, including teacher control over textbook selection, amount of time spent with other teachers outside of the school work day, frequency of discussion about school issues with other teachers and principals, frequency of discussion about personal issues with other teachers and principals, time required to learn all students' names, frequency of personal discussions with students, and frequency and helpfulness of formal administrative assessments of teachers' teaching. While twenty-five teachers were interviewed, not all teachers were able to complete survey items about work environment: one teacher was a first year teacher at the school, and thus no difference could be calculated.

In general, conversion to small schools encouraged teachers to talk both with principals and each other more often.

> *Teacher*: Plus, I definitely talk to the principal more. Instead of having a principal and 80 teachers and 1600 students that you pass in the hall, I can go to [my principal] and be like, "[Principal], I'm having a bad day." And so I know him and he knows me. This is the same thing with the assistant principal. I also know that other teachers in other schools also will go to the principal's office and plop down in the chair and just go, "Let's talk!" It just wasn't like that before.

Despite some major similarities across schools, effects on collegiality and work environment did differ by school type in important ways.

In Authoritarian Schools

Overall, collegiality and communication in authoritarian schools improved. Two statistically significant effects were detected: teachers in authoritarian schools learned their students' names more quickly (the positive value indicates this), and these teachers talked more with their principals. These effects are important. First, closer student-teacher relationships are critical to successful small schools, and the change in time needed to learn students' names echoes interview data that suggest these relationships are better as a result of conversion. Secondly, these teachers are talking more with their principals. Increased interaction between teachers and principals may help to mend poor relations or a history of bitterness. Interviews suggest that teachers feel more supported by principals in small schools largely due to the reduced staff each principal manages. Finally, teachers are talking more with each other in authoritarian small schools. This suggests that small schools increases teacher collegiality, despite concerns associated with departmental breakup.

Probing deeper, interviews produce ambivalent conclusions in regards to work environment. As suggested, increased interaction between teachers and principals made some teachers feel more supported, particularly in authoritarian schools where the teacher/administrator relationship had been historically plagued by a lack of trust and support.

> *Teacher*: I think that, for my own self, I have a better relationship with my principal than I would have had before because I see her more often, I talk with her more, sometimes she'll come down to check with me on a business issue, but then I'll end up asking her how she's doing because maybe she looks tired or something. She spends a lot of hours here. And I think that has helped me feel more comfortable with her as a person and not just as my administrator, but just

as another human being and that she's not just some big bad person that's gonna come down and give me a red mark on my evaluation.

> *Teacher*: [Our principal] is very protective of us.
> *Interviewer*: Is that affecting the lack of trust that has historically been here?
> *Teacher*: Absolutely. What happened last year with the small schools is that our administration said, "Do whatever you want to do; the possibilities are endless for you." So they didn't give us any guidelines or structure for what we were going develop. So [our principal] came and said, "How are we going do our academy?" and he gave us parameters. And then within that, we were able to build some things and make decisions with his leadership. So he was like, "Ok, we can do that; let's do that. We can't do that, so think of something else." So we were able to come up with some ideas that were ok, but they were within well-specified parameters.

In addition to the day-to-day support such contact facilitates, one might optimistically hope that increased interaction might lead to improved social relations between these groups in the future.

On the other hand and in some cases, teacher collegiality suffered due to the conflict associated with a conversion that was largely unpopular, and logistical problems associated with conversion.

> *Teacher*: So within the academy, all of us are ok about it because we choose to do our academy: it was pretty much up to us. So as a group, we're fine with it. The rest of the school tends to blame a lot of things on us.
> *Interviewer*: How so?
> *Teacher*: Like the scheduling – they're pretty sure that the only reason that they have more students and less prep time is because of our schedule. Which is not necessarily true. A lot things like that put tension between our school and the others.

For authoritarian schools, aggressive administrative pressure to adopt OSSI built upon histories of conflict between teachers and administrators, thus reinforcing a negative view of school principals. Here, two teachers from two different schools comment on pressures related to autonomy and teacher resistance:

Teacher: And so tension-wise, unless you are in our academy, most of the other staff have a very negative view of our principal. I think most of that connects back to that year where we tried to be autonomous and gung-ho.

Interviewer: Who was the principal prior to the grant? I imagine this person was a supporter of this.
Teacher: He definitely was a supporter. On the other hand, he started out being very top-down, authoritarian type of administrator. So it's a little bit surprising that he would be so in favor of this initiative, which is very much a grassroots kind of design. And I saw a lot of change and growth in him during the years that he was here. Unfortunately he's a very disliked administrator and that really hurt our process because anything that he would stand for, there were those that would say "If he's in favor it, then I'm not." And because of some past issues people had a hard time letting him grow and change and letting him understand that "Oh! I have to relinquish some power here and give some to other groups" and that was hard for people.

These excerpts emphasize the importance of the teacher-administrator relationship and how, without a foundation of mutual trust between these groups, reform faces serious barriers to faculty buy-in and success.

In Democratic Schools

Table six shows that democratic schools exhibited statistically significant positive results for teacher collegiality: most teachers at these schools talked more with each about both school-related and personal issues.

Teacher: Because of our school, we were put into grade level groups and so I share 100 freshmen with the Social Studies, Math and English teachers…We all get along and eat lunch together – at least the three of us do and sometimes two of us. I have become friends with the Social Studies teacher and we hang out with the English teacher and so I think just almost on a random day-to-day kind of thing, I'm talking to many more teachers than I was before. In the past, the teacher across the hall, she and I were kind of buds and so I would go and talk to her a bunch, or just the Science teachers right here. I still sort of do, but now it's less because we're all on different schedules and stuff like that. But in addition to these Science teachers, I talk to other teachers more, especially in my grade level group. We're planning projects together.

Teacher: Our old school staff would meet Wednesday mornings and I virtually never talk to other teachers because there was really no point in it. We would get together as a math department now and then but it was never a time to share good ideas…Now we get together to share ideas and try to help each other with good ideas. But it's neat because we'll sit with all of us senior teachers and talk about the same set of kids or we'll just get together with math teachers.
Interviewer: So it flip-flops a little bit?
Teacher: Yeah. So that's been great and I don't know if that's because I feel like now we've got a purpose to the meetings that we weren't getting at before and the conversation level really gets to what school is all about, which is helping kids. There is a name that we bounce back and forth about and how he's doing in each of our classes and that really helps me as a teacher, to see some kid in the back and find out that he's doing that in every class, so he's just a slug and then I can be a little more forceful with him.

Some teachers, on the other hand reported no change or even atrophy in collegiality:

Teacher: I feel less connected [with other teachers], to be honest with you. Because when we were a big school, there were about 8 or 9 others, male and female, that I would chum around with and be working with next door, and then I would stick my head in and call them in with prep periods, and a lot of times we would just stand in the hallway and talk for 15 or 20-25 minutes. Sometimes we would talk about school but sometimes not about school or about a student.

Teacher: I mean, the questions on the survey are, "How many colleagues do you talk to?" And it's still pretty isolated. I don't have a common prep period with people; I haven't seen anybody else's work; I don't know how somebody else grades, and that would be really helpful. Do I overgrade? Do I undergrade? All of those things. Letter grades are the most common. How much do I write versus another teacher and is there a better way to do it and do kids get what I'm giving them?

Although teachers generally reported increased closeness with other teachers and that principals were more accessible, they did raise concerns about how the energy associated with conversion should not be overlooked by school administrators. In one school where administrators were considering applying for an additional grant, teachers were concerned that principals were failing to see the arduous workload their current efforts entailed.

Teacher: They've just brought up the possibility of going for a new grant and I remember when we were out visiting schools, one administrator of a school said, "Yes, we're grant whores. We'll get in bed with anybody who will give us money." And that's kind of the way I feel about going after this new grant, I think, I don't want to do that. I am not going to write anything for that. If somebody else wants to go for the money, fine – but I'm tired of manipulating what we do here in order to fit somebody's guidelines and get money.

Teacher: Well you know sustainability is the thing. "You've got us on the right track, Gates, because you've got the money and you've helped us this long," and now that money is going to be done with we've got to start fighting another grant and then when that one is done, another grant.

Most teachers said that collegiality was better in democratic schools, and that meeting regularly with other teachers from the same grade helped keep the focus of the school on the kids. Teachers also expressed how seeing their principals more often made her/him more accessible, and that principals helped teachers more when they asked for it.

Across All Schools

Changes to work environment were more consistent across all schools than were changes to work. In general, teachers at OSSI schools felt like conversion produced ambivalent effects on collegiality. On a positive note, grouping teachers by small school and even grade level promoted closer relationships with students, cross-disciplinary collaboration and an overall sense of knowing other teachers better.

School counselor: Again, one of the advantages of smaller schools is I think the notion of trying to build relationships with kids and I really think that it has been one of our benefits, is that we get a smaller group of teachers and they know the kids a lot better than I think they did previously. They also know each other better.

Teacher: But I mean, it's really been awesome to get to work with these teachers who have so many great ideas. Oftentimes, teachers go into their classroom and they shut themselves up; they really don't have any connections with anybody

except maybe people in their own department. With our academy, because we meet so often, that hasn't been the case; we almost feel like a whole other family.

Grade-level meetings between teachers of various subjects often focus on students, as opposed to curriculum or content. These meetings are effective in helping teachers understand how to better work with students as people, instead of simply pupils learning content in order to pass tests:

> *Interviewer*: Do you feel like being in a small schools environment…is that going to help [student behavior]?
> *Teacher*: Yeah, I think so because there are less people to pull the wool over their eyes from the kids' perspective. And then once we are aware that a student pulls this kind of thing, then we meet as teachers and talk about different students, we give each other a heads up and we say, "So and so does this or so and so does that."

> *Teacher*: We send emails, talk with each other in the halls – we do everything we can pretty much. So that's been really important: communication. I know that in other school districts you hang out with just your discipline area, so you don't really talk with anyone else but the science teachers. But this forces me to talk with other science teachers, English teachers, and whoever else and I can talk about particular students and it gives you a lot more insight about whether it's just my class the student is failing or if he's struggling across the board. So I think that's really important and is something that I'd want to do a lot – go out and talk to other teachers about my students.

Sometimes though, teachers can feel more isolated from faculty in other small schools on campus. Again though, effects on collegiality are mixed.

> *Teacher*: When we moved to small schools, for the first couple of years I still knew most of the people. But now I would say that I know hardly anybody in the other academies as far as staff is concerned. I'll know the people that have been here as long as me, but the rest of them, I might know their name, but I also might not know who they are. So that has been the bad side of it. The good side is that the people I work with in this academy, I know better. The question you asked about people that you talk to on a personal level – I would say that number has increased rather than decreased because I feel more comfortable with these people.
> *Interviewer*: Sounds like you have more close friends, but less acquaintances?

> *Teacher*: Yeah: less acquaintances but more people that I would talk to about serious things. I think we have better communication about our students because we share the same students all of the time. It doesn't matter if it's an elective class…we'll have the same students in common and that's really good.

Overall, teachers report feeling more connected to their small school than to the former, comprehensive school:

> *Teacher*: I like the idea of being involved in this school. I feel a lot more tied into [my small school] than I was tied to [the former comprehensive school]… it feels like there are a lot of people who are pre-bought into this school and they care about what's going on in the school; maybe not everyone, but there are more than I would imagine five years ago.

> *Teacher*: It's really fun now because I feel like we'll get together with the junior/senior teachers and we all have the same kids and early on in the year, it was kind of neat to be able to just talk about some different kids that stood out in your class, whether good or bad, and having time to do that; it just seems meaningful and I thought that was neat. I have never eaten lunch in the staff room in all fifteen years I've been here. So it's just been kind of neat to be connected to people. The other thing is that because our schools are thematic, it's a lot of the same types of people that gravitated to want to be in this school. They're the ones I want to spend time with.

Finally – and consistent with one other report on culture in conversion schools (Shear et al. 2005) – some teachers bemoan the breakup of traditional academic departments. While in comprehensive high schools professional development and teacher collegiality is centered around academic departments, small schools campuses reorganize teacher collaboration primarily around their schools, or even a grade within a school. As described above, such organization enables teachers to know students better individually and discuss, with other teachers, how individual students are doing and how personal issues in a student's life may be affecting her/his performance. Some teachers in my sample regarded this depth of insight as critical to a strong teacher-student relationship.

At the same time, teachers miss interacting with other faculty from their discipline, as such collaboration becomes scarcer in restructured small schools.

> *Teacher*: One of the biggest problems that I see with this system is that your survival and happiness really depends on the administrator that you have. In the old system where you were with departments, you at least had four or five other people with your specialty and interest that you could go knock heads with, get ideas from, get feedback or help from, you know? And you had a common prep area where you'd go and eat lunch with those people and there was some real camaraderie there. In this system, that type of support isn't there. I mean, I could go talk with a math or English person, but as far as the real college-level, "This is the information I have; let's talk about how you teach this in your class," it isn't there, because the people that I see on a daily basis are teaching totally different subjects. So, yeah, they're nice people to work with and fun people to be around, but on that basic level I can't sit down with an English teacher and say, "I'm really having trouble getting across the concept of torque to the kids – got any ideas?" They'd have to go to the dictionary to look that up. So as a system, you don't have that type of collegiality, so that means that your administrator really has to take a leadership role. And if you administrator is buried in paperwork or discipline or has a number of other responsibilities, or has a personality that doesn't fit, then you have some real problems.

> *Principal*: And we also have a [new] group. And they are the remnants of kind of the old model of department heads. So, we value our department heads because even though I have English teachers in my school, I want them to have access to some person who has a lot of knowledge and skill and access to the other English teachers in the other small schools. So we don't want to lose that structure.

Results regarding changes to work environment are ambivalent across the board. While conversion usually engendered more collegiality and interaction between school personnel, these effects were not ubiquitous nor without some costs, such as the atrophy of departmental collaboration. Overall though, the benefits appear to outweigh the costs for these schools and work environment: conversion brings teachers, students and principals closer together.

Changes in Job Satisfaction

Finally, survey data reveal no differences regarding job satisfaction between democratic and authoritarian schools. Table seven presents mean values, by school type (democratic or authoritarian) for job satisfaction items, including satisfaction with current salary, change in satisfaction with salary (since conversion to small schools), satisfaction with the job security associated with a teacher's current position, change in satisfaction with job security (since conversion), satisfaction with benefits (including health care, retirement and savings options, etc.), change in satisfaction with benefits, teacher commitment to the school (three questions about the relative importance of the school, the teacher's paycheck, and whether or not the teacher cares about what happens at the school), desire to quit one's current job as a teacher, and how feelings about quitting have changed since conversion. All twenty-five teachers interviewed completed these items.

Wilcoxon rank tests revealed no significant differences between teachers at authoritarian and democratic schools regarding job satisfaction. The most reasonable conclusion to be drawn about job satisfaction is that teachers at all schools, in spite of conversion work and politics and moderate levels of satisfaction with salary and benefits, feel that what happens at their school is very important and they are not interested in quitting their jobs as teachers.

By and large, interviews confirm these conclusions. Generally, teachers felt as though what was truly important was to be good with kids, to make education applicable to the real world, and that good teaching – and not any particular reform practice – is what is most effective for helping students succeed.

Teacher: What makes teaching work is whether or not an adult can get up in front of a bunch of kids and make that dynamic work. There isn't rescuing. There isn't "I'm going to rescue this or rescue that" and there isn't any education machine that's going to rescue that. That's what makes the essence of teaching good. It's teachers that care, teachers that are really enthusiastic about their subject and just all of those kinds of things. That's still the basic foundation.

Teacher: I mean, there are essentially two kinds of teachers out there. There are those who really want to teach their subject material and they're passionate about the material and they don't need kids to do it. The kids are there but they want to teach their material. The other type of teacher is the teacher who is here for kids and the subject matter is the vehicle by which they reach kids and we need to hire people who are here for kids and also are very competent in their subject material.

Although work and work environment may have changed, the foundations of good teaching and teachers' satisfaction with their jobs did not. Further, job satisfaction does not appear to affect prospects for conversion success, nor do the politics of school change affect teachers' feelings about the importance of helping their students or the value of their work.

Evaluation of Hypotheses

Table eight presents hypothesis tests in the form of a truth table. In authoritarian schools, teacher workload increased, work environment improved and job satisfaction remained constant. In democratic schools, work environment improved and neither workload nor job satisfaction changed substantially. These findings confirm my hypotheses in some ways, but not others.

Hypothesis 1: Democratic participation minimizes increases to teachers' work.

My data confirm hypothesis one. Work in authoritarian schools increased, largely in the form of additional class preps. Work in democratic schools remained fairly

constant. These changes have to do with organizational features of the school and teachers' jobs (such as academic schedules and how preps are distributed to teachers), and not simply the burst of energy reform required during the initial stages of design and early implementation. Because these changes are associated with the organization of work in the school – and *not* with getting the reform up off the ground – I do not expect they will simply recede as time progresses: restructuring the school in some way would be necessary to minimize these increases to teacher workload.

Hypothesis 2: Democratic participation will contribute to an improved work environment.

My data confirm hypothesis two, although they also suggest that improvements to work environment go beyond the politics of change, and are largely a product of organizing schools via the small schools model. Teachers in democratic schools received the best of both worlds in this sense: they reaped the social benefits of being a part of a smaller faculty, as well as the ways that good teacher-administrator relationships and democratic participation help build trust and buy-in for the change effort. Based on this buy-in, they were better able to make use of grant funds to promote significant curricular innovation, and their schools had more success with the conversion process. In contrast, while teachers from authoritarian schools also benefited from smaller faculty groups and principals that were more available, the presence of sustained school conflict and a bad relationship between teachers and administrators engendered sour feelings from faculty about conversion. Lacking a bedrock of trust and amicability, conversion at these schools divided faculty against each other and maintained a culture of distrust, adding fuel to a fire of bitterness.

Hypothesis 3: Democratic participation will be associated with improvements in job satisfaction.

My data show no differences regarding changes to job satisfaction for teachers in both democratic and authoritarian schools. This suggests that *teacher feelings about the importance of their job and the goals of public education are indifferent to the politics of reform*. Further, one might conclude that such feelings may not play an important role in the success of conversion; I find this extension erroneous. This study confirms results found in others about the importance of buy-in for reform success. It is reasonable to hypothesize that teachers who do not care about their jobs would be unlikely to buy in to a reform effort that requires considerable energy. Irrespective of feelings about OSSI and whether or not it was a good idea for the school, every teacher that participated in my study talked about how much he or she cared about "reaching kids" and helping them succeed in school. Looking back, it seems unlikely that teachers who did not care as much about their students or their school would have given up their in-school preparation time to talk with me. With this in mind, the reliable conclusion these data suggest is that, at each school I visited, I talked with teachers who cared, and that for these teachers the success or failure of school reform was irrelevant for how they felt about helping their students succeed.

Challenges and Contradictions

Interviews provided a wealth of information on important challenges associated with the reform process. This information extends beyond the major hypotheses of this study, and even the expectations I had going into the project. Teachers expressed strong

feelings about the grant's failure to provide teachers assistance with what they "really"

needed – such as textbooks and funds to lower class sizes – and the difficulties associated

with being accountable to a private organization, E3: negotiating the demands of a private

organization in addition to federal and state standards proved complex for school

administrators and teachers. Consistent with other studies on small schools (Lee and

Ready 2007; Ready, Lee and Welner 2004; Shear et al. 2005), changing school culture in

a way that provided equally rigorous schools was difficult too.

Not Good Enough

Although approximately one million dollars was provided to each OSSI school,

use of the money was restricted in a way that failed to address what teachers considered

to be their real needs: namely, lowering class sizes and procuring instructional materials.

Grant assistance provided some help to school personnel, but it wasn't quite good enough

to really help teachers with crucial school issues. Despite the good intentions of Gates'

philanthropic efforts, the need for staff, salary and materials remains unaddressed, thus

forcing teachers to work harder without additional help. While this reform is student-

focused, it fails to support teachers in ways that will lead to sustainable educational

improvements.

> *Teacher*: The Gates money has said, "Let's restructure the school." And we almost got frustrated with that because we just need a textbook and curriculum that works.
> *Interviewer*: So what has the Gates money been used for?
> *Teacher*: It's been used for training – and I don't think that you can even use the Gates money for textbooks, even though that's what we need! If the money could go to something, then that's what we'd need.

Teacher: You could hire speakers, and so several speakers were asked to come in and talk about project-based learning and different things like that. But still, up until like two or three months in, the thought was, "Oh, we can purchase things?" And no, you can't. And the community didn't understand that and people didn't realize that – "Oh, they got this million dollars so think about everything that they're buying," and we couldn't buy that stuff. And the community – and that's a whole other issue – but they believed that because we got this grant, that's why we went to small schools.

Principal: And the other thing with the E3 money, it was nice to have it. We did a lot of staff development with it, but you couldn't buy things. The things that we really needed to get programs up and running, we couldn't spend it on anyway. We rewrote curriculum: that was helpful. We spent a lot of it traveling and looking at other schools. But it had to be that kind of thing; it couldn't be "Oh, we need DVD players, computers, lab equipment."

Teacher Leader: And there is no understanding in OSSI and E3 schools – most of these schools are getting kids coming in with reading levels that are one or two grades below where they should be. If that understanding is occurring, why aren't they changing the entire grant and the language on what the money could be used for? Because nowhere in that grant is there a stipulation that says you can use this money to build up reading and math and support that effort, and have at least a couple generations of kids to go through summer school to get them there. There is no such stipulation: you can't buy anything that's educational with that money. Speaking of textbooks…we've been dealing with all sorts of book shortages. You have to make ends meet in September and October: that's not covered. And class sizes!

The usage of grant funds is limited – they primarily fund teacher professional development. While such professional development activities may improve teaching, they constitute additional work for teachers void of additional resources or compensation. Although they may be used to improve teaching through professional development activities and trips, grant funds may not be used to hire additional staff (i.e. reduce class size) or to buy classroom materials such as books, calculators or science equipment. Further, although funds can be used to restructure schools to make them smaller, funds

cannot be used to decrease class size. This paradox – small schools with large classes – echoed across both democratic and authoritarian schools.

The paradox described above begs a critical question: what, according to E3, is teacher professional development? And what exactly does the OSSI grant provide to schools? Grant funds largely paid for teachers and principals to visit other small schools campuses with the intent that they could meet with principals and teachers from a conversion school and garner some lessons for their own restructuring process. However, these visits were, at times, plagued with organizational problems: many visits were to "new start" schools that bore little resemblance (regarding student population or funding levels) to their own, so comparison was irrelevant; presentations by other school staff were perceived as idealized, "canned", or "painting a rosy picture" of what the school was actually like, and teachers and principals were unable to ask real questions about the difficulties of conversion.

> *School Change Coordinator*: The first year we spent a lot of time going on site visits to schools around the country to schools that have already done this. Unfortunately, there weren't that many conversion schools we were able to see because there aren't that many, but we did go on a lot of school visits.
>
> *Principal*: And I chose that trip because they said that every one of the graduates from their high school graduated with one year worth of college completed. And I thought that's really cool. And so we went down there…but we come to this little school where it was a converted office building and it was a charter school, it wasn't a regular public school so there were a lot of differences in it…And I don't know – other people with other experiences came back saying things that were really cool but in schools that were so different – apples and oranges, I guess; schools in big cities where there were magnet schools.
>
> *Teacher*: But it's absolutely essential to get teachers from schools who are going to try this out to other schools that are similar to themselves. If you go to schools that don't match whatever their present situation is, it's not convincing…The thing that sold me is talking to kids at a generic high school in [another city]. I

just walked through the campus and just walked up to a kid and said, "How do you like this?" Because if you talk to the teacher leaders or the people who are responsible they're not going to say, "Well it's been a total waste of my time and I've done a really lousy job."…That's not what's happening down at the street level. So really, you should talk to kids and talk to the teachers in their own classroom and they will, if they feel the need to, they'll talk and you can hear what they have to say.

Interviewer: And on your visit, you feel like you got that opportunity?

Teacher: Yeah because there was this school that was similar to ours and just getting a chance to talk to the teachers, the individual teachers, and primarily the kids because to me, nothing we do matters at all unless it gets to the kids.

Principal: It was great because [one school we visited] was an inner-city school that's competing with [a different, more affluent school] in a lot of ways, and not only was our visit very casual and such, but the principal sat us down, gave us a presentation we asked questions, the bell rang and we walked right out the door, and here's kids walking out everywhere and he's grabbing kids and saying, "Hey, these folks have some questions for you." Nothing was staged or planned – it wasn't a show. It was the real deal, you know? We figured out what we wanted to do and got some ideas [from the more affluent school] about how to do it and implement them on our scale with our budget.

These excerpts highlight how, when the schools visited were similar to the school

of origin (i.e. conversion schools with a similar student body) and the visits offered a

sincere opportunity to ask honest questions without "a show", teachers and principals

were able to learn more from the visit, thus facilitating buy-in. Well planned visits to

schools that served "rough" kids were the most effective at inspiring teachers that

conversion could work at home.

Teacher (and former School Change Coordinator): And the visits to the schools: I was absolutely flabbergasted by the number of people who came back just believers because we very carefully planned every trip down to every single detail. The idea is so that they can see what small schools could be and that doesn't mean that we didn't see some failures because there were a couple of schools that we walked out of going, "Shwew, we don't want to do that!"

Teacher: And that school is totally cool and they were tough kids and doing some awesome things and so it wasn't like [a more affluent, fancy school], which I saw also and figured they could do anything, but it got me fired up and I think a lot of

other teachers got fired up about that and even the teachers who didn't go there kind of caught on to some of that energy maybe. I would like more teachers to maybe do that again, I don't know if that…it obviously costs money but that was really positive for me to see this group of tough kids from a tough part of town.

Grant funds were also used to send teachers to workshops on curricular change, like project-based learning. Such training was time-intensive and expensive: without grant assistance, it is unlikely any of the schools visited could afford teacher training like that. Principals acknowledged the lack of sustainability inherent in this model of professional development – or the idea that, once the grant was gone, they would be unable to fund such training – yet were grateful for the opportunity to have sizable funds for such development.

> *Interviewer*: How do you think you and the other teachers are doing as a whole?
> *Teacher*: I would say a lot of people are feeling burned out. I think we might have the most dramatic changes in our curriculum as compared with the other schools, but I may be wrong in that. [The changes are] pretty intensive because you have to learn the software and how to use that, and if you're an older person who's not so into computers, that could be really difficult. After I went to that one meeting, I thought "Oh yeah, I can do this," but it's really challenging to try and set these projects up so that they learn while they're doing them. I didn't realize it would be so challenging, but it really is. But it's really just the whole kind of mind twist on how to set that up and so it really is taking up a lot of energy and a lot of people are exhausted from that.

Even some teachers who were resistant to conversion from day one acknowledged the benefits of a grant designed solely to boost instructional quality.

> *Teacher*: You know, what has made my dissent difficult is that I feel like sports are a big part of our school, and this was a million dollars or whatever that was just going to get pumped into academics. Shit. Why wouldn't I be on board with that?

In summary, while the grant afforded teachers substantial opportunities to develop curriculum and pedagogy ideas, other underlying needs associated with a lack of

resources and large class sizes remained, in large part, unaddressed and unmet because the grant was not designed to hire additional teachers and thus reduce class size.

Private Accountability

The money brought new responsibilities to schools, making them accountable to E3 and, ultimately, the Gates Foundation. At times, the goals of E3 conflicted with those of school administrators, students, staff and parents. These responsibilities often proved difficult to juggle for school administers, and difficult to rationalize for teachers, at both democratic and authoritarian schools.

> *Teacher*: At one point because of the Gates Foundation grant, basically – and there is a lot of animosity about this – but at some point, the Gates Foundation says that they don't like the way our schools were organized, and we were pressured into changing…Like, "If we don't do this, we won't get the money." I don't think many of them wanted to do that and so because of the Gates Foundation funds, there were a lot of changes to our original design and to be honest with you, I would say that, if anything placed small schools in jeopardy in the school district, it was the Gates Foundation. I think it had more of a chance to be successful had we not gotten a grant.

> *Teacher (and School Change Coordinator)*: So once we got the grant, the process of getting the grant was kind of out here because it was a small group of people. Then we got the grant and then everything – I don't know – everything kind of became focused on, "Well, this is what E3 requires!" and "This is what E3 wants!" So then it kind of became, "How do we fulfill the requirements of the grant?"

> *Principal*: You know the challenge that comes with a relationship with money is an interesting one because – and it's good that we pushed, with the change coach that's provided through E3 – it's a constant balancing act because that person is not here every day to see the hard work that's occurring and then they come in and they push and they push and they push: sometimes we like to push back, and that's a natural reaction. So, that's always a challenge. You're continually being questioned. Schools aren't really challenged enough from outside entities. It's very easy to get into a comfort zone and sit back and do what you do on a daily

basis. And this is difficult: to have someone from the outside come in and examine you on a weekly basis and ask difficult questions and push back.

Teacher: I don't know that [the reform] has ever been totally popular.
Interviewer: Is that because some people just don't want to change?
Teacher: No, I think they just didn't see the merits of converting to something and being held accountable by Bill Gates or whomever. Once we were being held accountable – you can't see that on the recording, but I'm doing my quoting fingers in the air – that changed a lot people's mindsets regarding what the purpose of it was. Meaning, instead of worrying about how our kids are doing, we spent a lot of time worrying about how we're appeasing these people that we don't ever see, that just give us money. So I think a lot of people would say that we spent a lot of time working on that and never saw the fruits of our labor, for lots of different reasons that I spoke to already about economics and whatnot, but then we haven't spent enough time dealing with the kids and dealing with their issues and their problems. So I think that's the main reason why people don't love it totally.

Teachers and principals alike resented aspects of their relationship with E3, particularly those that emphasized the power associated with approximately one million dollars per school, and E3's interest in fidelity to their conversion model. These aspects were especially destructive at adversarial schools where such pressures only further injured an already crippled relationship between teachers and administrators. However, the strings associated with private dollars in public schools were salient everywhere and ubiquitously difficult to negotiate. Probably the most common issue of contention was the degree to which schools were to be autonomous. At every school, autonomy sparked arguments and, at times, battles over how separate the schools should be. Even when certain concerns, such as how the campus would still have the same athletic teams after conversion, were assuaged, the organizational details of conversion produced never-ending debate over what stakeholders wanted their school to look like.

Teacher: And really, I've done some research about autonomy and, really, I don't think there's any foundation for it. And to me, with the school that I'm in, we're

trying to become more global and understand the whole world. Well to me, I think we need to have less barriers and less walls and be able to work together more.

Principal: When we were attending E3 presentations, that was one of their big issues: they wanted total autonomy. And so we worked toward that and it was very difficult. Not only autonomy with budgets and scheduling, but also they didn't want kids crossing form academy to academy, which is probably one of the hardest things. Because when you go from a comprehensive high school where the history and tradition is that you can take anything on this campus and all of a sudden you go, "Oh, no – you can only take this set of courses."
Interviewer: That's a huge cultural shift.
Principal: Yeah. And not only with kids, but with parents too – it was probably worse with the parents!

In addition to being at odds with school administrators, students and parents about what type of reorganization is best for any particular school, faculty and administrators were often frustrated by a lack of clarity, inconsistent expectations, and insufficient technical support from the grant provider, E3. School faculty complained about unclear protocols for tracking and reporting data and overall poor management and communication on the part of the grant providers.

Teacher leader: You have the OSSI coordinator who has to constantly communicate with and be the liaison between the school and E3, which is nice. But other than that, there's no instructional support. So there's many issues. If you're looking at these E3 data templates, the reason why they exist is because E3 asked for this type of data and asked our school coach to get us to provide demographic data. And I sent her an email back, asking her if she wanted me to put the data into the grant template by August 8th, and do two half-way templates for the schools we have this year. Or, did she want me to build a new one and provide it on August 8th? And when you're saying "simple demographics", what exactly is that? The instructions are vague. How many more times are you going to send out a document that says "simple demographics" before you're just gonna make a clear template for everyone to use?

Teacher (and School Change Coordinator): I think the most frustrating thing has been the management of the grant. I don't think OSSI has managed it well. I don't think that they have known what they wanted. Some of the paperwork nonsense where they would ask for things one way, then the next time it would be a different way, and it wasn't how we tracked anything, so we had to spend so

much time getting information for them just for the sake of getting them information, not because it was benefiting us in any way.

Interviewer: Someone else here showed me one of their templates and how they didn't match up with the way you store data at all, and then I heard that she had to go around and ask all these different people for information.

Teacher: That's what we had to do! Constantly! …And then we go to present our budget and they want it in a different format than they've ever had it before, and I have to restructure all of this stuff, and they want us to report on our spending from the previous year, but they want us to use this new format instead of the one that we'd been using. And then I asked, "Why did you use this format?" Because they never gave us one – they never told us how we were supposed to report anything, because they hadn't decided yet. And it was just obscene. So I think that was the top frustration for me: the amount of nonsense we had to do for them. And at the time we had a school change coach that was useless: she was horrible and wasn't anything like the one we have now. The woman that we have now is very helpful. The woman from before, I would ask her, "You know, our science teachers are coming to us and they want to know what schools are having success with a science program once you've separated it into these small schools." I mean, you're a biology teacher or a chemistry teacher, so you can't do each subject in one academy – but you also can't have a different teacher for every science in every academy – you can't sustain that. So we asked, "Who does this? Who has a model that works?" We want to know who to contact and whom we could go visit. Who is succeeding? "Well that's a challenging area," was her reply.

Principal: I actually proposed to our group here that a freshmen academy would be a small school to consider. And other people were coming up with other ideas, you know, themes, etc. So our coach comes back and says, "No, a freshman academy is not a model that E3 supports." Now this is two and a half years ago, so we drop it. Well, somewhere in the mix of all this a few months go by and all of a sudden other schools are being told, "That's a great idea – go ahead and do a freshman academy." So we don't really know what happened there, but clearly what happened there was that E3, after struggling with different ideas, decided that they should back off. But then all of a sudden the model was given a go-ahead.

Beyond the hassle of having to ask permission for a multitude of conversion-related decisions (and negotiating the interests of a private organization within a public school), the inconsistent nature of E3 feedback was frustrating to all school personnel, especially those primarily in charge with overseeing conversion at each school. While E3 demands

did become clearer and consistent as time went on, the early stages of conversion were already plagued with challenges for the schools, challenges that were further complicated by E3's inconsistencies.

Trust, Resistance and Buy-in

Interview data shed additional light on the relationship between pre-reform levels of teacher-administrator trust and conversion outcomes. At democratic schools, teachers were able to effectively negotiate, via committee participation and voting, with principals, other teachers and school boards in support of their interests. These negotiations helped teachers protect themselves against arduous workload increases. In a sense, conversion politics were a continuation of the pre-existing school political climate.

> *Teacher*: I have since read an interview in a national magazine by Gates talking about how he and the organization had gone into this sort of naively thinking that teachers would just want to change. I mean, it sort of sounded like sour grapes to me but apparently ours was not a unique experience. But I can remember sitting down with the change coach one day and saying, "You know, until we change this culture of conflict, nothing here is going to change." And he said to me – and this was about this time of year and he was gearing up for the next school year – "[Teacher], next fall we're starting off with all of these statistics and they speak for themselves." As soon as somebody says that, it's just going to be really oppressive. I'm thinking, "This is our change coach, our guide." So I said, "You know what? Let me explain to you how your statistics are going to be woven up here." And I said, "The teachers are going to walk away from this saying, 'This is [Superintendent]'s fault because of this and this and this.'" And then he says, "Well, you understand that your school has a lot to lose here and we could just very well back out of this whole thing and just take our money and go." And I said, "Well let me explain how the teachers will spin that one for you. You don't get it: until this culture changes…" I think they were a cocky group, like they could just walk in and "Microsoft" and all that and teachers would go, "Ooooh!" and then just bow to them.
>
> *Principal*: And [she] was the principal here then, and the superintendent and principal really were the driving force behind it: she was the one who got an

administrative team interested in the grant. [Our current principal] then kind of joined along with it. And that's why I was saying that it wasn't a faculty-driven idea: all of a sudden it just kind of came out of nowhere. And there was some resistance and for quite a bit of the staff it was like "Well, wait a minute – we didn't decide to do this!" So there's been a resistance all along.
Interviewer: So it was a surprise. Was it a shock? Was it a trust thing?
Principal: Shock's not the right word, but they were apprehensive – like, "Where did this come from?" When it continued, even though there were some concerns voiced, I think there were some trust issues that came along with it. It's such a radical, gigantic change to what's going on. One thing I've learned early on is that, clearly in education and in big business, when you're gonna make a big change to how something functions and you're gonna take 70 people along with you, it obviously makes a lot more sense to have buy-in before you jump, rather than to say "Guess what – now we're gonna do such and such." Now, if it's a big business you can do this, but in education you can try it, but often you see people trying to force changes on a staff that aren't willing, something gives. And it's usually not the teachers, but the program that doesn't make it.

Teachers also reiterated the inappropriateness of the business model for schools.

Teacher: One of the things that really bothers me is when people say, "Schools have to be run like a business." You don't want it run like a business because business is cut-throat: survive, or I fire your ass. You don't want me to do that to your child. You want me to give every single break possible to your kid.

Without adequate buy-in, faculty members remain too divided: although

disagreement and discussion are trademarks of a democratic conversion, an excess of

conflict leads to a rocky, problematic implementation.

Teacher: Small schools is a great idea that did not get implemented well here and so you've got some strong buy-in and also some that said, "I don't want to be a part of this." And you can't have one or two small schools and the rest doing nothing. And that's what's difficult I think, is to get an entire staff to buy in.
Interviewer: It's all or nothing?
Teacher: It has to be all or nothing and we're not there. Small schools may never get a fair chance to develop because of pre-existing [trust] issues.

The decision-making process was fundamental to how each small school

developed. As one principal suggested earlier, although democratic and consensus

processes takes more time, in the end people are more accountable and things work more

efficiently in the long run. Balancing the time requirements of a "consensus" model is especially challenging though, and sometimes reaches a point at which it is no longer a productive model.

> *Teacher (and former School Change Coordinator)*: Well I feel frustrated about it because I've always enjoyed being involved in the process. But there's also some times when all we've done is process and no product [laughing], and that's very frustrating. So on one hand it's good to have some, "Here's what we're going to do," but nowadays there's also quite a bit of, "Well, we're just gonna wait and see what [the principal] decides," instead of us deciding what's best for us and making a recommendation. And so, it's kind of a weird spot.

> *Principal*: Well, each of the small school staff has their own method of decision-making, but for the most part everything is consensus…If someone's really strongly against something it tells you that you probably should go back to the drawing board.

> *Teacher (and former School Change Coordinator)*: From when I first got here up until, I think [the principal] came, we were entirely consensus and it was, I mean, it would make you want to strangle somebody. We're going to stop everything because one guy doesn't like it? Find another job! So that was extremely frustrating and so when we kind of moved away from consensus, we really didn't establish anything else, and so it was kind of by default: we're going to put it out there and if nobody kicks and screams, then we're going to move forward with it.

Procuring buy-in from parents was a challenge at many schools too. Communicating a sense of urgency around academic improvement was quintessential here: parents had to be shown that students were failing at unacceptable rates, and that small schools offered the community a reasonable chance at improving academic outcomes for students.

> *Teacher*: We still have huge communication problems, and that's not ok. The community's not seeing that we're retaining these students instead of them being out - in our community it's a meth problem – but they're not seeing that. They're not seeing that these kids do have a choice. If they're here and taking their classes, they're passing their classes, then they can take some electives each term somewhere else. They can still learn to weld; they can still learn to cook. But

they're with a core set of teachers so that if they have a problem, they can go to those people.

Principal: There was opportunities for discussion [with the community], but I don't know how well attended those meetings were. We felt like we did a substantial amount of outreach. But that's the biggest challenge I think, to conversion, is the community perception and the process of change and accepting change and what it looks like because the conversations we have now are substantially different than from years ago. I mean, they envisioned gates coming down on parts of the building where students wouldn't be able to access parts of the building and "What's gonna happen if I only have access to one language arts teacher for four years? What's that gonna look like?"
Interviewer: Right. And how did you address these concerns?
Principal: We continued the listening sessions, we completed a communication audit with our community, we made some adjustments going into next year. You know, I think what we found is that listening is a very powerful tool and making small adaptations and adjustments to fit community needs while community shifts with us. And they really do see that ultimately we're not testing a new protocol, we're not experimenting with their children – it's all about student achievement, we want the best for them, and preparing them for college or whatever they choose to do after high school. That's really difficult, as we're all parents here, to let go of the standard or what we assume schools should look like…the factory model.

Teacher leader: The second challenge, I would say, is that you're working with a community of folks that don't clearly understand the vision and mission that the school has from day one when they walked into the building. And I don't know if that's because people didn't take the time to share that vision and mission with them, or if it's because if you're just being told to go into a building, you're not necessarily gonna buy the mission and vision of that particular organization from the get-go. I guess you need to see something in it that proves the system to be of value to you.

School Culture

Equity amongst small schools is of great importance. Equity amongst small schools refers to how teaching staff and students are distributed across schools, and the quality and rigor of curriculum. One of the goals of small schools is to disrupt the stratification endemic to the tracking practices of comprehensive high schools. These

traditional high schools rely on rational choice mechanisms for maximum utility and distribution of students to different classes. However, such self-sorting by students usually resulted in track reinforcement and buttressing pre-existing achievement discrepancies. This research collectively offers a word of caution to small schools advocates: make sure that school faculty, students and curricula are equally distributed across schools. Balancing this concern with the will of students and teachers intent on being a part of a particular school is difficult though, as having some choice in school allocation is a key feature of buy-in. This project reveals how inequitable allotment of faculty and students early in the conversion process can affect not only achievement issues, but also inter-school culture clashes.

Developing distinctive school cultures is an important part of autonomous small schools. Most are theme-based, so one would expect that schools feel different from each other, and that each school will attract different types of students and teachers. While such differences are generally seen as positive, the segregation runs a risk: most notably, that low-achieving students may collectively gravitate towards one school that is perceived as "easier" than the others, and thus create a low-track or remedial school schools.

> *Teacher*: Rumor is that teachers aren't going to want to go into that one school because you know that it's the slacker school. They're going to get, I think, less able teachers. They're not going to get the cream of the crop so it's going to self-perpetuate as a bad school. We're going to keep going as the good school. I was talking to another teacher and she has a daughter and teaches in [a different school] and she was talking to one of her student's mothers, and she was like, "Why isn't your daughter in [school X]?" because the student's interests are in that field. The mom was like, "I don't want her in the dumb school. She's smart! I want her in the smart school!" And so they chose [my school] and that's what happens. You may have a very artsy kid who you maybe think should be in the

arts and sciences school, but the parents don't want them in that school because they're afraid it's for dumb kids…I think we have to really start mixing the kids up again.

> *Principal*: Like [our School Change Coordinator] has pointed out, we ended up with one school that kind of attracted a hodge podge of kids. It's not uncommon for these small schools campuses for them to say, "Oh, one of their schools has all the bright school" and that's often the Arts schools, because I think that, in urban schools, it's the Arts schools that have all the braniacs…I just was interviewing a new student in my office this morning and we're trying to place her in a school, and the mom and kid say, "School [A] or [B]" and I say, "Why those?" The kid looks at her mom and the mom says, "Because she has to go to college." So there's that perception. So we've gotta beat that. So back to my original thing – what are we gonna do? I sense a real stubbornness for all of us to want to give in on certain things, but when are we gonna start looking at ourselves and say, "We did this and designed something with gross inequalities." When are we gonna recognize that we have built something from scratch that has gross inequalities? But you know, I love my deal, so I want to fix things in other schools so that my deal can stay on. And I believe that in my school, we can live off of average kids – it's makes it nice to have high achievers, but I believe we can get the freshmen and make it happen. But I'd like to have the opportunity to make it happen for four years.

On the contrary, teachers and principals in other schools could not work hard enough to create a feeling of difference between schools. For them, creating distinctive school cultures was almost insurmountable, particularly in spite of the fact that students shared a considerable amount of space in the building.

> *Principal*: So we generally group our students in one main area, but they have crossover so they're able to move throughout [the building]. What's interesting is that if you ask a student about what small school they're in, they know, and they can tell you where most of their classes are. And they have a feel for that general area. And most of my students are clustered, and all small schools have clusterings. But you couldn't tell, as a stranger coming into the school, you couldn't separate the three schools from each other. But you can climate-wise, you can ask the student probably any question about their small school and they could tell you, ya know "This is what we believe in."

> *Teacher*: So I think we have made a decision and we need to stick with it and refine it and try it for five, eight or ten years and then if it's really not working, then thinking about going back but I think it's going to work, but it's transition

and change is hard and change takes time. But I think we're better at having an identity than the other schools here on campus.

Interviewer: How come?

Teacher: I think a lot of that is because [our model school] already had a lot of that framework for us. I think that's the real reason why. And the other ones are more…they've got to come up with it from scratch and so they're starting. Like, at the beginning of the year, [one of the schools] really seemed ambiguous to me and I've really seen them change: they came up with a logo and kind of the theme and so they're starting to focus in more. And the other school kind of has a model to work with too…I guess it just takes time.

Without physical separation between schools, developing new, independent school cultures was difficult.

Finally, inequitable distribution of students and leadership across schools had a significant impact on teachers' work. Generally, in schools with average or above-average students and pro-active, "can-do" leadership, teachers fared well compared to their peers in schools that were less organized and that served lower-achieving students.

Teacher: So I think the effect that conversion has had for the other schools on this campus is – and I'm talking about the teachers that I talk with in the parking lot – teachers in these other schools are freaking out because they're dealing with really difficult students. If you could rank it, teachers in two schools are near explosion, and then one other school has a sort of melting pot thing. Teachers in those other schools also have some sort of schedule from hell: it's alternating days and they've got preps through the ass. They've got a lot of preps where they're teaching four different kinds of classes.

Interviewer: Yeah. I'm surprised that the teachers in your school don't have more preps.

Teacher: So here – and this is huge – here is this big shining example. It has to do with leadership and who is at the top. We've got a "can do" principal – and this is, in my experience although this is only my tenth year of teaching, but I've seen a lot of principals so far – he just gets the job done. I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that he's just willing to put the time in. The rest of them are scattered like rats when the bell rings. Not only does he put the time in but I'll give the man credit: he's got vision. He knows where he wants to go and he's a go-getter and he knows everybody. So if you can combine all of that stuff together, you've got somebody that can make it happen.

Looking across schools, I found that it is difficult to predict how culturally separate schools will be at the outset of the reform. Neither my data nor the literature provides easy solutions for adjusting for high levels of inequality between schools. The most solid conclusion to be garnered from these data is that – and to echo the thoughts of a principal above – something has to be done to ensure that a spirit of academic rigor pervades every school in order to avoid the pitfalls of developing one "slacker" school on campus.

Other Influences Affecting Work in Conversion Schools

Although I did not visit any of the most disadvantaged or autonomous OSSI schools, my interviews did provide hints at how school background and implementation fidelity affect teachers and reform success. Consistent with literature on school change and small schools reforms, I found that both these factors are important. Based on what they perceived to be a realistic assessment of their students' academic potentials, teachers expressed frustration with E3's concern with equity, asserting that it was an unrealistic expectation. In addition, I found that autonomy played a critical role for the success of small schools: specifically, that the close teacher-student relationships (that are the backbone of the reform) are more difficult to establish when students take classes outside their academy, or "cross over".

School Background

Interviews did suggest conclusions about how student body, school layout and staffing mediate the effects of conversion on teachers' work. First, teachers and principals reported that, while academic rigor and autonomy were challenging goals, equity was unrealistic.

> *School Change Coordinator*: So I think that their heart's in the right place and they want equity and they want all students to take an AP class…But the reality is, so great, we lower the gates and anyone can take AP. Well I don't wanna just invite kids to fail because realistically they don't have the skills. So what would be ideal is that everyone can take AP senior English, but we're gonna have a support class for kids who need it to get their skills up. Can that be a reality? Can we do that? Do we have the money to do that? How does that work with the schedule?

While the lofty equity ideals are considered one way by the above School Change Coordinator (who manages the grant at the school and is a strong pro-small schools advocate), other teachers and principals viewed these expectations differently:

> *Teacher*: In this school there are no requirements to get into an AP program or AP class. Here at [my school], "Everyone can learn; everybody can be superior, blah blah blah…" That's the philosophy of this place: anything goes.
> *Interviewer*: Is that part of that E3 small-schools rhetoric?
> *Teacher*: That everyone can be successful? Yeah, that is part of their deal. But I don't know why they say that. They obviously went to college; they know something about intelligence quotients and that they do exist. I've got class loads of kids that, no matter how long you set them in class or what you do, they're never ever gonna pick it up because their IQ is 90. These people are taking AP classes! To me, all that does is rip off the kids that deserve to be there because you're running around having to do all this other crap for the ones that shouldn't be there and the good ones are being neglected.

> *Teacher*: Now [more rigorous curriculum] is awesome for this girl who was in the remedial program and now she is proving that she can do it. But the students I have aren't at the level – I mean, literally cognitively delayed where some might coin the term "mentally retarded" and well, you know, it's like the teacher that just walked in the room, she has a student that wants to do the math and everything but every single problem is wrong. If she helps him with an

assignment, she'll literally have to write down the sentence. If she writes down two of the sentences, he's not able to do that independently.

Principal: The superintendent always does this "Ra-ra, welcome back to school" thing for the district...Basically he went down that road of a business analogy of where they had to hire everybody and what would that do to a business. And regardless of whatever excuse you have the general public perception is that you need to make students successful. Bush's federal program basically states that by 2014, 100% of this school needs to be successful. So, as much as you want to be politically correct and say, "Oh sure," is that realistic? Are we really gonna graduate 100% of these kids with all the things they're dealing with?

Although unrealistic in principle, equity concerns encouraged school personnel to take a close look at who's struggling and how to best support those students. Although unrealistic, the goal does encourage maximum academic support and a stark examination of educational practice.

School Change Coordinator: I think teachers are very aware that the administration and academy leaders – EVERYONE – is looking at data about their kids: when the kids take their tests they're looking at it by teacher. They're also looking at all these failing students from the freshman class: where are the most F's coming from? From what teachers? And how can we change their instructional practice?

Principal: I think the main thing is that what small schools has done for us is that it's caused us to examine our practice. And that's been the most beneficial thing. And it's unfortunate that it takes this kind of thing to cause that to happen, but I think that needed to happen. You know if you could get a system – and this was a good system before small schools – but if you can move a system in a speedy manner and adjust to the changes it needs to adjust to with a staff of 70, then I don't think you'd have a need for this as much. But that's not possible: when you get that big it's too hard to move the ship or turn it around. So the small schools staff is so different now than it was before because our focus is not on information, but it's on curriculum, it's on students...And it's really all about teaching and becoming better teachers. And that sometimes gets lost with the [E3] rubric: rigor, relationships and relevance; if the teaching hasn't improved...How good I am at getting objectives to the kids? Are they learning what they need to learn? So you could have kids that come from troubled backgrounds, but if you have a school that knows how to teach well you're gonna make progress with kids of all backgrounds.

While the expectation of equity was perceived as unrealistic, efforts to bring up the lowest achieving students reverberated with teachers and principals. In this capacity, goals around equity were beneficial to schools trying to reduce dropout and improve college readiness.

Autonomy

My data suggest that autonomy is important because a major point of small schools is to reduce the number of student-teacher contacts (or the number of *different* students that teachers see each day) so that teachers and students develop closer relationships. When schools are not separate and students can crossover to other schools and take classes outside their own academy, schools lose their "close" feeling: teachers once again find themselves teaching students they don't personally know, just as was the case in a comprehensive school.

> *Teacher*: I don't know if there are many other teachers who have all students from their own school, but because I'm teaching the freshmen and sophomore social studies for all of the students [in my school], that's just how it has worked out. Everyone's got [what the school is about] so that's great for me because they all know me and I know all of them, which is nice.

> *Teacher*: I was a little wary about us converting to the small schools because for one, the building is not set up and it would be really hard and there were a lot of teachers that went on these trips that were built specifically for the small schools from the get-go. You've got 1500 kids but they're in separate wings and I think that's great. They wear their own t-shirts, they have their own colors, so to speak. But then you get back here and you're like, "There's no way we can do this." And you know, to be honest with you, in a sense, it's like a big school. It really is, in my eyes; I still see it as a big school. I like it – don't get me wrong. Although the class sizes aren't any smaller, I do like the idea of seeing the same group of 100 kids the whole term or the whole semester. My classes are set up that we're in an A/B schedule, so I do see a large group of kids the whole semester…so at least for that first semester, I know these kids really well. But you know, I haven't really

bought into the fact that these are small schools. I still see kids from other schools walking down my hall, I may have had them one year and they may have transferred from [my school] to another school, but I still see them and it's nice still, I like that. But you know, inside the classroom is different. I see those same faces and it makes them more comfortable I think, and there is that personal touch in that I know the parents, I start to get to know the parents really well because they email me about grades and such.

Autonomy is structurally difficult for teachers because it generally increases the number of preps they have; without crafty scheduling on the part of school administrators, a workload increase is inevitable. Workload concerns and budgetary constraints are not the only barriers to autonomy though. Teachers at all schools reported that parents were concerned and oftentimes upset about autonomy on a number of fronts, including the availability of electives, honors-level and AP curricular offerings to students.

> *Teacher*: Yeah, so you are pushing against a community that has a strong tradition in their school of having a very broad number of course offerings. And this school, at one time, had some of the best vocational programs in the state and because of that, people did not want to give up some of those things and there is still a lot of animosity about the lack of vocational programs that are still available.

> *Principal*: So when we started talking about equity and access for all students, you have some real parent concerns – "Well what does that mean?" Does that mean you're gonna teach to the lowest denominator? What is [our school] going to offer its first year for advanced placement courses and, "What do you mean you can't offer AP calculus?" when there's ten kids here that want it. There's TEN that want it – that means there's 1000 that don't. And I think some parents felt really threatened that if we were gonna make this a school where we strove to have all students take AP classes, then what does that mean for THEIR kid because THEIR kid was gonna be successful anywhere in an AP class, and if all kids are gonna do that then their child might not be as special. I mean, that sounds terrible, but it really does come down to that.

Spatially reconfiguring students in an existing building was difficult at all sites, particularly in regards to science and art rooms and supplies. The grant would not pay for

the structural modifications necessary to make schools spatially autonomous, so school staff had to work with what they had. However, sharing spaces and equipment was difficult, especially if schools had separate schedules.

> *Principal*: But all of [the students in a school] have to go to science classes in the science building. So you're never gonna have that autonomous, sit-alone kind of school, and that was one of the original things that I pointed out about how this campus set-up is a road block. Then you go through and notice that PE is clearly one that you can't separate. Then you go to music, then science…so there's a lot of roadblocks.

> *Interviewer*: Is the fact that the science rooms are centrally located, but then you have teachers from each of the schools there – does that seem to bother E3? Is there an issue with them, or do they just say, "That's fine"?
> *Principal*: They say, "That's how it is." And there's a couple of reasons for that. No one wants to go down the road of funding capital improvement – it's bottomless. And where it's frustrating to E3 and to us and not in any conflicting way, but in a cooperating way, is that begins to drive bigger pictures than it seems like it would. Because we really made an effort to put all of our schools in continuous spaces! So for [this school], we tried to get everything we could together, and that defeats some of that be having those shared spaces. Oddly, it begins to drive some of your master scheduling around when you can get your kids into the chemistry room: if you're a five-period school trying to share with a seven-period day school it creates conflicts that begins to drive everything. On the one hand, we know we can't do without that, and on the other hand, we'd love to shred the whole shared piece and go as autonomous as we can, so that's where that push-pull tension comes from.

Lack of staffing was also a major challenge for conversion schools. Personnel from every school visited commented on how difficult it is to fund autonomous small schools that feature adequate time for teacher collaboration and professional development. On regular school budgets, staffing small schools and providing adequate resources is difficult to achieve, especially when schools are attempting to be autonomous: the increase in workload associated with autonomy is simply too much work for teachers.

Teacher: One of the biggest problems was you had departments gone. What happened to all of the equipment that was in those departments? How does that equipment get split up? Where do all of the extra textbooks come from? We were told we were doing this to be very innovative so go ahead and be innovative, invent classes and do all of those wonderful things and we went ahead and did that and then it was like, "Oh we don't have any money to be innovative. We can't implement the things that you need, want or desire to do. We don't have money for textbooks. You have four science departments that you're setting up but we don't have money for four science departments because they cost $30,000 a piece and we don't have any money for those types of things."

Teacher (and former School Change Coordinator): We were very upfront with the teachers that this would not be easy, that this is a hard process, and that the work wasn't going to get any easier. To complicate matters further, we were in the midst of some real budget problems, like all the other schools. So our staff had been just slashed. We were down to bare bones, huge class sizes…it was a tough year.

Teacher: Funding – I don't think we have enough staff to do autonomous small schools – I'm sure you've heard that before. We can increase class size and increase the number of classes we're teaching and the different styles, and as a math teacher I'd be teaching probably four or five different areas. And that's insane! You can't do that! You can't plan lessons everyday: you'd get swamped with that.

Thus, while district support was integral to the prospects of reform, no OSSI schools reported receiving additional funds from a school district to help compensate for the stretching of teaching resources.

Teacher (and Teacher Leader): The compromise we're looking at in the future is not because we're trying to please OSSI or the district, it's because we've witnessed a failure rate that is too high in our student population. As long as you don't get a "bend backward" from the district – if you would have had that "bend backward" attitude and you would have been given the extra FTE, then you could have done wonders. But you're not given extra FTE, and that reduces the amount of freedom that you have with autonomizing your schools.

These findings suggest that autonomy is important, yet expensive, and that many teachers and administrators believe E3's expectations regarding equity to be unrealistic. Despite their skepticism regarding equity, teachers at most schools tried to increase

support for students as part of conversion. This support often took the form of academic

help or tutoring, talking with other teachers about individual students, and talking with

students about their personal lives more. Autonomy supports these efforts: when teachers

have students from other schools in their classes regularly, efforts to improve their

relationships with their students can more easily fail. Schools with high crossover retain a

particularly deleterious characteristic of comprehensive high schools: the ability for

students to go to class and not be personally known by the teacher. This anonymity

makes high expectations for students much more difficult for teachers to have, and it

enables students to pass through high school without being challenged.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The effects of conversion on teachers varied considerably across sites, and were largely based on the politics of school change and the process of teacher participation. In this final chapter, I discuss sustainability prospects for the reform, other political factors affecting reform success, and examine whether or not teachers are satisfied with what the reform does for their school.

Teacher Satisfaction with the Reform

Despite the political differences among schools, teacher feelings about whether or not OSSI changed the school for the better usually fell along similar lines. This suggests that there exist some systematic benefits and pitfalls of the reform itself – these qualities have less to do with the politics of implementation than they do with how the reform is structured in the first place. Although the relationship between participation and work is clearer now, the ambivalent findings presented in chapter four beg the question of whether or not teachers are happy with what conversion did for their schools.

Small schools – particularly those that are more autonomous – promote better collegiality amongst teachers, better teacher-student relationships, curricular innovation and rigor, opportunities for teachers to design classes that fit their personal interests and strengths, and a climate of greater accountability. Autonomy is critical here. For collegiality to improve, teachers must interact more with each other both by department,

and especially within their school: within-school collaboration about individual students inspired teachers to develop ways of "reaching the kids" instead of simply teaching course material. This student-oriented focus helped improve the relationships between teachers and students: students had less places to socially hide during the school day and were likely to have discussions with teachers when they were not fulfilling their academic requirements, or were dealing with difficult personal issues. In combination with more academic, constrained curricular choices (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993) teachers can more realistically set high expectations for their students via these closer teacher-student relationships: without a strong relationship with a teacher, students can too easily slough off their work, and expectations around "equity" become totally unrealistic.

> *School Change Coordinator (and teacher)*: But I think that [knowing the students better] is going to keep the teachers from getting burned out as much next year, because it's like, "Hey, I had you last year and I know what I have to do to help you."
> *Interviewer*: So it's actually less work in that sense.
> *School Change Coordinator*: It's less work because they already know the kids – they already know what the problems are with those kids. And because we're doing grade-level team meetings in every small school, so the teachers that mainly teach ninth-graders are getting together and talking about those ninth graders, and hopefully the idea is that they will loop with them and they will teach the tenth-grade classes, and then be able to pass the information on. So the big benefit is the relationships. But from the relationships, you can demand the rigor of the kids. And I see that with [one student] and last year at the end of the year she was here working on a day that was a teacher in-service day or something and it was the last day to do anything about your grade, and she comes stomping back into the classroom and said, "[My teacher] won't let me get a C! She says that I have to do this because I'm smart enough!" Well, if that teacher hadn't of had the relationship with her, she never would have been able to push her and say, "I know you can do this, and I won't accept this from you." And that's where building our relationships is going to push us to ask the kids for rigor.

While teachers are doing more work in terms of curriculum development and delivery, there is reason to believe the work is paying off, and that lesson plans are becoming more challenging and stimulating for students. Further, teachers (at some schools) were provided more opportunities to design and develop classes that fit their personal interests; a good portion of these opportunities were around hands-on class projects.

> *Teacher*: I'm really excited because I'm going to be making a lot of changes. This year I just went along with what the Chemistry teachers were doing because we were trying to keep it the same, but I think projects are going to make it. Chemistry is really challenging because it's so abstract I think. That's my idea of why I've decided it is so challenging. And so I think projects are going to be really helpful to make it more tangible for them.

It is clear by now that teachers, students and principals know each other better in small schools. This increased familiarity boosts the level of accountability persons from each of these groups have for each other: teachers ride their students harder about turning in work; principals have a more difficult time ignoring the requests and needs of their teachers; and teachers can less easily sit back and "teach their curriculum" without discussing it with colleagues or principals. My data suggest that the additional accountability in small schools helps boost student performance because there are less opportunities to shirk responsibility for providing the academic support students need.

> *Teacher*: I really like the fact that we're finally thinking about all kids. You know, that's something that's significant. We'll teach the kids who want to come to the lab pool and ones who come down to the river to drink and that's always been the opinion: that's an old-school teaching paradigm, that "I'm going to teach the kids who want to learn." They're pretty easy to teach. The question is, how do you inspire them to want to learn and how do you help those kids for whom learning has always been very painful? How do we take care of them? We have a very high-risk group of kids and I like the fact that we're finally having that conversation. It doesn't mean the conversation is over, it doesn't mean that we've

cured cancer or anything like that but we have at least identified that elephant and said, "We have to teach every child."

In spite of the improvements, the news is not all good for teacher feelings about the success of OSSI. Foremost, schools are still struggling with inadequate budgets, and too often budgetary issues limited the degree to which substantial reform was possible. For many teachers, "surviving" often took precedence over the interests of the grant. While goals of rigorous, autonomous schools were appreciated, teachers need manageable class sizes (of twenty five students or less, roughly) and adquate materials (a book and desk for each student, lab equipment, computers, etc.) to effectively deliver curriculum. Without these materials, significant school improvement is unrealistic.

> *Teacher*: And conceptually [small schools] is awesome; that's what we need. But because we're not financed in the state of Oregon adequately – we're understaffed and so you're going to have huge class sizes. And every small school that we've visited that is successful has small class sizes. And if that's not an option, there is another strike against us.

The amount of committee work and group discussion regarding small school logistics was, for many teachers, overwhelming and unnecessary. This applies to democratic schools, where teachers were putting in significant amounts of time creating ideas that did come to fruition in the organization of their new schools, as well as authoritarian schools were a majority of staff development, academic seminar, and faculty meeting time was devoted to conversations that were largely viewed as unproductive or irrelevant.

> *Teacher*: But [many teachers and administrators] have no understanding of curriculum articulation – that teacher A over here is supposed to know what teacher B is doing, and they're supposed to kind of be on the same page, assuming that they're teaching the same class. That is, my junior English class

should be covering almost the same thing that another junior English class is covering. But not even close – not even close!

Interviewer: What about teacher development time, or during faculty meetings?

Teacher: That's not for teachers (laughing). They call it that but our teacher development time has been spent primarily on academy issues. And then once every couple three months I can actually get together with other English teachers. The rest of the time it's academy meetings. So I sit. We go to a meeting with the other people in my academy and we don't talk about kids, we talk about fund-raising and junk like that; what the latest deal is for the honor role breakfast, and the culinary department.

Teacher: So we were able to come up with some ideas that were ok, but they were within well-specified parameters.

Interviwer: And where was this? During meetings?

Teacher: Yeah. Last year we had SO many meetings. It was just the teachers from [my school], so it was fourteen of us, or whatever. So we took half days – there were subs called in – and there was a lot of design work that got done last year.

The demands of committee participation were too much to swallow for some teachers, especially in regards to how they perceived their absence to affect their students.

Teacher: So depending on what it was, a lot of decisions were made at the committee level and then were partitioned out. I didn't do a lot of participation for those because all of those committees demanded that I would be out of the classroom about 10 to 15 days per trimester. Originally it was like, "You're only gonna be gone 10 or 12 days a year" which is about four days a trimester. Well I can handle that. And those would have been a day here and there. But then they wanted to add district level meetings, and that's another 12 or 15 days. And you have to get trained to do that, so there's another 3 or 4 days. And so suddenly it became a serious commitment…And I made a decision – and at the time I was teaching a lot of serious science classes, some of which were pretty high level – and I said, "You're not gonna find a substitute that's gonna do these kids any good. And so if you're gonna tell me that I'm gonna be gone for three weeks, I don't think that's fair to my students." So I stayed at the much lower level of committee participation than the big groups.

Teachers also reported qualms regarding the prioritization of E3's lynchpins. To teachers and principals, E3 emphasized equity first, then autonomy, then rigor. Teachers saw equity as highly unrealistic, and autonomy largely impossible given school budgets; to them, rigor was a tool useful across the board with any student, yet E3 offered the least

assistance for it. Teachers would liked to have seen more help understanding what rigor

is, what it looks like, and how to make it happen in the classroom instead of being caught

up in logistics associated with equity and autonomy.

> *Teacher (and former School Change Coordinator)*: And a problem across the
> board is that we are all so wrapped up in this, and so it's hard to actually have
> anybody see the big picture. It's a lot of administrivia: it's a lot of logistics but it's
> not a lot of vision of, "This is who we want to be and this is where we want to
> go."
> *Interviewer*: The grant demands a lot of meetings?
> *Teacher*: Yes. It absolutely does and so we get further away from teaching, which
> is where I think 99.9% of the time needs to be like, "What's going on in the
> classroom?" And getting students more involved: that's the real deficit that we
> have.

Finally, many OSSI schools adopted the use of an "advisory" class. The purpose

of this class was to provide students an opportunity to personally connect with a teacher

in a non-academic venue. By and large, teachers reported that advisories were fairly

useless for this purpose and offered only extra work, as it constituted an additional class

to prepare (a prep). Advisory is particularly worthless in non-autonomous schools, as

teachers may have students from other schools in their classes or even advisory sections.

Although the goals of advisory – such as encouraging school pride, personal maturity and

morals, and closer teacher-student relationship – are notable, a separate advisory "class"

is the wrong way to foster them.

> *Teacher Leader*: And [small schools] does provide the opportunity for teachers to
> "own" their students better. But we have this pathetic idea of what an advisory is.
> In the beginning it was kind of like an environment where it was about building
> relationships with our students. We had plans every week and activities that we
> were supposed to conduct with our students, and about half of the staff
> appreciated that, and the other half said "Don't try and shove something down my
> throat" in terms of trying to build that relationship. Others had issues primarily
> with, "You're asking me to make friends with a group that you just gave me?"

That's not a natural path – that's not how you do that. These people are forgetting that these advisories should be academic advisories.

Teacher: As far as advisory goes, I have some different thoughts. Like we had ideas of doing more group projects and every time we would try to do them – there are so many roadblocks! It's so difficult because of the money, the regulations, liability and all of that kind of stuff just makes it so hard to do any kind of big group project. One of the other science teachers recommended this thing called Odyssey of the Mind. Students get these problems and they could be in the sciences or some other area and they have to work together to problem solve and come up with this thing and they go to competitions and present it. I thought that was a good idea, something that could be done for advisory, and really build that team feeling, that they're all working together on this project.
Interviewer: So it would be academic too.
Teacher: Yeah. A lot of times I feel like there's not enough rigor to [advisory] and it's kind of just like you go in there and have a conversation and that's good. And you need to establish those connections. But I feel like if there is something more concrete that you're working on that would make it more enjoyable for everyone.

In addition to the extra work it entailed, advisory often lacked clear direction.

Teacher: So the hardest part about planning advisories is that everyone's advisory is really different. So in a classroom environment you have the kids go through it at the same pace and there's kind of a steady increase in what the students do. And in advisory you can talk for thirty or forty minutes with one group, but then the next group comes in and it takes five minutes. So you never really know how that's gonna work. So that's hard to deal with. And what the students have trouble with is that they don't see advisory as having any direction. So when we were coming up with it we had a lot of ideas about what we wanted it to be like and I think we kind of tried to put too many ideas in at once, so the students never really knew what they were doing: "Am I getting to know the person next to me, or am I working on my career and future, or am I looking at issues in my community?" It jumped around enough that I don't think they ever figured out what advisory was – it's like it didn't have a purpose for them. Since it didn't have a purpose, most of them haven't liked it very much.

Teacher: There was one point where we got completely overwhelmed with planning advisories: it had gotten away from us and that morning we realized that we had nothing planned and we had to just wing it. And there was a whole week where we just had to wing it every day and it was very stressful because it's such a chaotic class environment and they don't have structure for a lesson plan, so you're just gonna herd cats for thirty or forty minutes.

Sustainability Prospects

Many elements of OSSI are costly: teacher professional development is expensive, restructuring is difficult, active development of teacher-student relationships requires emotional energy, and concern with equity goals often sacrifices higher-end academics. Being costly, the sustainability of this grant was an issue at all schools. How can schools continue aspects of OSSI beyond the four years of funding provided by E3?

While the training that teachers received helped promote more rigorous curricular ideas and better teaching, it was expensive: teachers often had to travel for their training, the training itself was costly, and schools had to hire substitutes during a teacher's absence. Reflecting on these costs, principals admitted that funding this level of teacher professional development without grant funds is probably not feasible.

> *Interviewer*: Sounds like you all do a lot of innovative instructional stuff. That's really cool.
> *Principal*: Yeah, it's just really expensive (laughing). It's hard to maintain, but we know we're going in the right direction. The question is how you maintain that kind of level of service.
>
> *Principal*: But [by visiting other schools] we figured out what we wanted to do and got some ideas about how to do it and implement them on our scale with our budget. Hopefully it piqued enough people's sense to want to improve, because that's the next thing we need to do: we need more money to do what we want to do, like teachers getting to go to [this training]; they have a summer training institute deal. And we need to have teachers fired up about raising money (laughing) because we need to figure out a way to make that happen.
>
> *School Change Coordinator*: A lot of the money has gone to training the new teachers. To get back to the sustainability concept, that is the one thing that we're realizing is gonna be really tough…[And the trainings are expensive] – for [one training] it's at least $600 per person to be trained – between six and a thousand dollars – and on top of that we have to pay the airfare, the hotel, and their training usually occurs on a weekend so then we also have to pay teachers for their weekend, which costs almost as much as the conference does to just do that…So each small school with its curriculum focus and how they deliver their curriculum

definitely has some sustainability issues with professional development…So sustainability is a big deal for us at this point (laughing).

In a system that requires such specialized training, staff turnover can be particularly devastating:

> *Principal*: But, you know we've got some really talented people and they could be hired anywhere and their job would be easier. And, frankly, that's a worry I have with my own staff: I have among the best trained staff now, with all the different types of workshops and professional development, and they could go anywhere they want. Retraining somebody would cost a lot of money, and then another year to get them up to speed. So it's a concern.

Reorganizing the school is difficult, especially in the initial years. Many teachers and principals felt that sustaining the level of energy required the first year or two of small schools was simply not possible, and looked forward to subsequent years when more pieces of small schools were well established.

> *Teacher*: I hadn't really thought through all of this but the good teachers that are still teaching well and care that we converted, outside of our school, I think are becoming more and more burdened because of the conversion and I'm worried that we're going to start burning them out.

> *Teacher*: I mean, I like [having more freedom] because I feel like when I come up with a good project and the kids are bought in; it just works. But I think that if I had to design all of my projects every year for five or ten straight years it would be really frustrating.

Finally, at the time of my visit most schools were still uncertain about what to do regarding the conflict between equity and curriculum. Put simply, schools that make equity a priority have a difficult time also offering more advanced curriculum, including honors-level and AP courses. The two interests – to simultaneously provide a quality public education for all students, and to offer a top-of-the-line education to more advanced kids – seemed inherently conflictual.

Teacher: Last year, we offered some honors-level classes for freshmen, and we scrapped that. Some people that I've talked to, or just about everyone that I trust, we all agree that we've sacrificed the top end in favor of the lower and middle. I mean, I asked early on, I asked, "What am I going to be teaching?" because that's always the cardinal question. They said "English". And I said, "Okay. Is there going to be a break, a division?" They said, "Nope. It's all going to be the same." So what does it look like now? I've got kids in here that – I mean, it's just a gamut. I've got this kid who has straight Fs: every assignment in every class is an F, and then I've got this kid who has 101% and so then they say, "Well, it's your job to differentiate the curriculum."

Interviewer: What does that mean?

Teacher: Right! What does that mean? How do you do it?

Interviewer: I have to teach *Lord of the Flies* and *Animal Farm*? What does that mean exactly?

Teacher: Right (laughs). And so, I like to think that I'm pretty smart but I don't know how to do that. I don't know how to serve all of those kids in the same room, especially because the one who has straight Fs is constantly trying to sabotage the class. So not only is it curriculum but it's behaviorally, you have to differentiate stuff. That's a sticky wicket. In the other schools, they have a class similar to this one and so they say in those other schools, "If you want to earn accelerated credit, there is a way to do that and it will show up on your transcripts that, in days past, you took an accelerated class." But I don't personally find them having much success with that…A lot of times it seems to boil down to, "You'll just do something more." Now, is that what an accelerated class is all about? Not in my book. In my book, an accelerated class is higher-level thinking where everybody is on board, everybody wants to be there, and everybody wants to try or has the horsepower to use it and head in that direction. It's not to write some extra sentences or paragraphs. So I think we've sacrificed the top end. But you know, it's probably like building an engine or whatever you build. There are always compromises.

Interviewer: Did any advanced classes get eliminated because of the shift to small schools?

Teacher: Yeah, like I don't teach advanced Physical Science. I just teach Science.

Interviewer: How did people react to that?

Teacher: Um, some parents cared. With the freshmen it was not so much, but sometimes. I was talking to a teacher in [a different school] and she said that she had some angry parents as far as not having some advanced English. I don't personally hear it from my kids, but from my parents. You know, what happens is that you get some advanced kids in a class. They want to study, they want to get A's, they're on task, they're good kids, but they're sitting next to some butthead who does nothing; but that's public school, too.

Multiple Interests, Complex Politics

Interweaving the interests of school districts, parents, and teachers' unions at conversion schools was complex. This project has demonstrated the importance of district support and adequate funding, the conflict of interests associated with private dollars in public schools, communication and negotiation with parents about conversion, and the relationship between teachers, principals and superintendents for conversion success. These additional political issues that emerged from interviews are interesting on both a scholarly and applied front.

Middle School Reverberations

Principals discussed the importance of educating middle school teachers, parents and students about small schools too, since kids are asked to make a decision about which school to belong to prior to their attendance at the high school. Principals emphasized the importance of communicating several facets of small schools to these audiences, including the rigor of all schools, the similarities and differences between the schools, and that choosing a school doesn't mean that a student is being "locked in" to any particular course of study.

> *School Change Coordinator*: Essentially we're trying to learn how to market, because we're not good at marketing [the schools] and we need to market similarities before we market difference. And that's where we goofed last year – all our emphasis was on how the schools are different. What we missed is that about 80 percent of what everybody does is the same: if you look at a freshmen schedule from any school, it's pretty much the same for every school. It's the same outcome for each school: to earn a diploma and possibly go to college. And we need to go back and really build around that again, because it's in our community and we're all really worried about it because we know that's how a

school can fail: to be painted as the alt-ed school, or as the vo-tec track, because then they're done. Then no one signs up, you're forcing kids in there who don't want to be there, and teachers become dissatisfied. That's how a school dies.

Principal: We go to freshmen and they sit down in eighth grade, are spastic, and just sit there and look at the videos and presentations and say, "Look at these cool projects! I'll do it!" or "That looks cool!" Now, a kid who is a sophomore will look at that and say, "To do that, I'll have to take algebra two and physics – I'm not doing that crap!"

School Change Coordinator: Because out of [small schools] came the clear realization that, if we change the high school, we by default are gonna change a lot of things. The algebra is a great example – if we're going to algebra entry, we have to work with our middle schools. And how can we help with that so that it's not just driven by "that wild high school"? Like, "What's [that principal] thinking? He can't change our curriculum!" Lots of work started coming out of that. So it's really a K-12 model.
Interviewer: How do the K-8 people feel about changing along with you?
School Change Coordinator: Our easiest people to convince were our elementary and middle school staffs because it's horrifying to an elementary staff to think that a kid can be invisible like they often are in high school…They absolutely understood. They are the masters of deep and not narrow.

Clearly communicating with middle school parents about small schools was critical to streamlining the process for incoming freshmen. Administrators reported that convincing parents that each school would provide high quality educational opportunities could promote equity between schools and help students make better choices about what school to select. Working with parents of high school students was more difficult.

A Sense of Urgency

Encouraging parent attendance at meetings about conversion was complicated in and of itself; clearly conveying the rationale behind conversion to parents and local school boards was even more difficult for teachers and principals. It was not unusual that parents voiced concerns about how selecting a small school at the outset of high school

attendance might prevent their child from accessing a high-quality, broad-based education, and that instead their child might choose a school that is not academically rigorous, and that could significantly confine the child's academic interests and learning opportunities. Parents were also concerned about "pigeon-holing" students into a line of academic study too early in their academic careers. Further, some parents in every community accused the school of converting simply because they received almost one million dollars to do so. Communicating that conversion was in response to unacceptable rates of student failure, and not because of fund availability, was often tricky.

> *Teacher Leader*: I used to conduct monthly meetings with parents in my academy, and I know that one of the reasons that I did the monthly meetings is that I wanted the questions to come up – you always have the vocal ones show up, but it's better to get the questions answered, at least to the extent that they understand "This is where we are in the process, and this is what we're trying to do." So, we're doing this not because we're trying to please OSSI or the district, but because we've witnessed a failure rate that is too high in our student population, and we have gotten the point that our existing school system does not work.

> *Teacher*: So the community was having a hard time buying into the whole idea of academies because it sounded to them like we were asking their children to make a life decision about their career paths. And they were saying, "Look, I didn't even decide what my major was going to be until I was a junior, so how do you want a 14-year old to decide?" And that's still part of the argument in the community; there's still a lot of people who do not like the academies. But one of the things that I don't think we communicated to them very well was that the academies were not put into place so that we could pigeon-hole the students into a specific career path. They were put into place because we had a huge dropout rate, and we needed to make better connections with the students.

From my interviews, I found a delicate balance between change and conservativism that, at times, remained elusive, especially for some overly zealous superintendents. By and large, teachers and principals alike appreciated the goals associated with their superintendent's change-friendly attitude, however it was also not

unusual that this line got crossed. Change requires substantial effort on the part of

teachers, and superintendents that are not sensitive to such implications can quickly

procure a mountain of teacher-based resentment regarding their leadership. In short,

while educational change is important for schools that are not adequately preparing

students, superintendents and school boards should also consider teacher feedback about

workload and come to accurate estimates regarding what can reasonably expected from

teachers.

> *Principal*: If you read the paper around here you wouldn't want to come to [this
> school] because we've had issues with the school board, issues between the staff
> and the superintendent, the superintendent and the school board – it's just on and
> on and on. And a lot of it is that some people don't like the changes [the
> superintendent] has made. So I was interviewing this guy and he said, "I almost
> didn't come to interview here today." And I asked "Why?" And he said that he
> was working in another school and he had talked to a teacher that had worked
> here who had said this wasn't a very good place to be, that there was a lot of
> controversy, and that he didn't agree with small schools, etc. And so I said, "Well,
> we demand a lot of our teachers here. From a teacher's standpoint, there are easier
> places to work than this district." Because it is a tough place to work – there's a
> lot of change going on here. We haven't got it down perfect yet, and it takes many
> years to pull off something like this. So I said, "If you're looking for a place that's
> easy to fit in and is traditional and is predictable year to year, day to day, this isn't
> the place to go. But if I were a student, I would want to be here, because when
> you graduate from [this school], my diploma is gonna mean something." So, I
> guess you have to look at it that way. But I wouldn't say that this is the best place
> for a teacher to work.
> *Interviewer*: Is that what you were referring to when you mentioned controversy
> between the superintendent and the teachers?
> *Principal*: The superintendent is more concerned about the students and their
> success than he is about the teachers and how they feel about school change. He is
> a change agent. As long as he's the superintendent here, we'll be making changes.
> He doesn't believe in getting comfortable and into a rut and doing the same thing
> day after day. You've gotta keep up on it. And that's a lot of work. If you talk
> with him about his philosophy on education and students, you cannot disagree
> with what he wants to do. Now how it's implemented, that's a different story: we
> can all learn something there. But his student achievement system where you
> don't just socially promote kids because they spent time in a seat, where they
> actually have to know something to get promoted – I don't think anyone can

disagree with that. Now, the reality of that – when Johnny doesn't get to go with his classmates because he didn't learn anything – that reality is tough to deal with.

Union Grease

I found that, while union support may not be a necessary for successful school conversion, it definitely helped: in a sense, it lubricated the wheels of reform. Conversion required changes to academic schedules, teacher workload, and teacher professional development opportunities and demands. Fitting these features harmoniously with collectively bargained contracts required administrators and union leaders to work together. For unions, this often meant that administrators must respect teacher concerns about how conversion affects their work; for administrators, working together entailed open, non-confrontational dialog with union leaders about what they want the restructured school to look like and how to best help students while not overburdening teachers. Without transparent, respectful dialogue, conversion risks grinding to a halt.

> *School Change Coordinator*: [Workload] is one of those questions that you have to take to the union. It's a constant balancing act as far as stuff like that goes. Whenever someone comes up with an idea, the first thing that most of us who are on the leadership team now, because of what we've gone through, the first thing that comes up is, "How does this look to the union?" Our best thing now is to call the union right away and say, "This is what we're thinking, what do you think?" This way we don't get caught later on having done something wrong. It's so frustrating because there's a lot of good vision in our building, but a lot of times as soon as something interesting comes up, somebody says, "What about contract?" And then all of a sudden, for some ideas it just stops.

> *Principal*: What we did was we tried to work with the union by informing them along the way of everything that was going on, and ask for their help if a teacher wasn't happy here. How can we get that teacher to a place where he or she is happy? And so that was very helpful, although we have had some pitfalls with that too. I actually was a union co-president at one of the schools I taught at before, and [the union's] whole focus is not student-centered, even though they

say it is: it's teacher-centered. So there's gonna be that kind of conflict. Their interests are primarily for the teachers, not for the students. And I mean, on the other hand if the teacher's not happy then the student's not happy – but their priorities are not my priorities. And so when you forget that you can dig yourself into a hole.

Contentious Principles

My interviews show that there was considerable controversy over full autonomy and academic rigor at conversion schools. Some school communities (including teachers, parents and students) publicly decry the idea of full autonomy at their school, and debates between the school and E3 over autonomy resulted in conflict, compromise, and in two cases, having grant funds revoked early. While E3 insisted that full autonomy is important and pressures schools to adopt total independence, it was not palatable to some school communities. Schools vary considerably according to their levels of autonomy. Some are fully autonomous, with complete separation of academy buildings, staffing and curriculum, and even academic records (i.e. each academy is listed separately for statistical purposes with the Oregon Department of Education). Visiting other campuses, one would hardly know schools are separate at all.

Many parents and school staff felt as though "autonomous small schools" meant the end to collective school spirit and extracurricular activities. However, research suggests this is not the case, and that successful small schools usually retain campus-wide extracurricular activities and resources, including sports, libraries and cafeterias. Funding autonomy is difficult: dividing staff and resources (such as lab equipment and text books) can be hard for schools that are already scraping by. Data from this project demonstrate

that to a school system accustomed to large-scale departmental organization, finding ways to fund four small schools, all with complete curricular schedules, was challenging.

Academic rigor was less contentious. Few schools condemned it as counter-productive, although some teachers said that the professional development activities they participated in did not change what or how they teach, but only took away from time they should have been in the classroom. I found considerable variation amongst schools regarding rigor: some schools changed instruction very little, if at all, while other schools made substantial curricular changes that brought about challenges for students and faculty, forcing them to learn and teach differently. For instance, in one academy that adopted a project-based learning model, curriculum was re-written and teachers had to "re-learn" how to teach. In some schools, teachers had to learn to use new computer software to manage grades and class schedules using an online system. These changes were difficult for teachers accustomed to the previous curriculum and unfamiliar with computer technology, and for students with limited technology access at home. Finally, teachers attended extensive workshops on the new learning model. The time and money invested in such professional development is risky too: it makes teacher turnover particularly expensive for the school.

Finally, many teachers and administrators from OSSI schools exhibit an ambivalent relationship to the concept of academic equity. In principle, few decry it: students most in need of good educations have been systematically denied the instruction and support they need, and this neglect has lead to the reproduction of poverty by schools. In this capacity, schools are guilty of keeping poor people uneducated. However,

and contrary to the romanticized notion of equity proffered by E3, the shop floor work of "bringing the bottom up" is more than challenging. Teachers reported that teaching to heterogeneous groups was difficult, and that having high expectations for all students – including those with severe disabilities or disruptive home environments – was unrealistic. Rectifying equity with what can reasonably be accomplished in the classroom alone was not straightforward.

Policy Recommendations

This dissertation bears important political implications for educators, administrators and researchers interested in school reform. First, this study highlights the importance of democratic participation and a concern for teachers' work in school reform. While teachers' work has traditionally been a topic of sociological interest, it has largely been neglected from the educational evaluation literature dealing with school reform (Cohn and Kottkamp 1993; Freedman 2000; Ingersoll 2003; Provenzo and McCloskey 1996; Smyth and Shacklock 1998). Teachers are responsible for educating and socializing students; being central to the institution of education, their concerns should be considered by policy makers and school administrators considering school change. Teacher participation in reform is also a neglected topic. I had difficulty locating research that focused on the role of change politics for reform success. Because teachers' work and participation are important for school change, they should more often be a focus of these studies.

This study helps bring Bryk's (1998) findings up to date. By adopting his focus on change politics in a contemporary context, this project fills a critical lacuna in the literature. Recent studies about small schools reform fail to adequately address the role of democracy and politics for conversion success, and the effects of conversion on teachers (Cotton 2001; Feldman, Lopez and Simon 2006; Gladden 1998; Lee and Ready 2007; Lee et al. 2000; Mitchell et al. 2005; Nathan and Febey 2001; Raywid 1996; Raywid 1997; Rhodes et al. 2005; Shear et al. 2005). The results of this study clearly suggest that politics and teachers' work are critical pieces of conversion that affect reform success and sustainability. This study also offers methodological examples of how these facets can be assessed and analyzed. My hope is that future studies on small schools and also school reform broadly incorporate these considerations. In doing so, they will more realistically assess the contingencies of conversion and, thus, foster clearer understandings of what makes school reform work.

This project's emphasis on politics helps cast a new light on teacher buy-in too. Results indicate that although there are costs and risks associated with teacher votes, committee participation and administrative incorporation of teacher feedback, the democratic process pays off in the end. In addition to facilitating buy-in, it should be reiterated that teacher "resistance" should be viewed as constructive advice to administrators and change agents. Viewing resistance in this way is more productive and can lead to improvements for conversion. In the case of one OSSI school, such consideration helped create a schedule that minimized preps for teachers, enabling them to attend to other challenges of converting a high school.

Although difficult to finance, I found that autonomy is important. Without autonomy, campuses retain deleterious aspects of a comprehensive high school: most notably, that students can pass through classes without having to form any strong connections with teachers. The concept of crossover highlights this point. When teachers have crossover students in their classes, they are largely unable to make strong connections with a substantial proportion of the class because they see these students once in their student careers at the school: that is not enough interaction to form a strong relationship. Further, crossover students often don't understand what the mission of the new school or how work is accomplished there. Because some small schools adopt innovative curricula and other teaching tools, crossover can be disruptive to the flow of student work and performance reporting. Finally, teachers reported that permitting crossover fails to encourage students to take ownership in their school and the development of independent school cultures. Crossover invokes features of the comprehensive "shopping mall" model of high school, where students have a gamut of non-academic curricular choices available to them. The literature conclusively reports that this model of curricular choice fosters poor academic performance (Bryk, Lee and Holland 1993; Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore 1982; Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993). To the chagrin of autonomy opponents yet consistent with existing literature, I found that limitations on electives helped promote academic rigor and student-teacher relationships in a way uncharacteristic of traditional, comprehensive high schools.

Small schools (including OSSI schools) should collaborate directly with each other about how they have overcome barriers to conversion. At more than one site I was
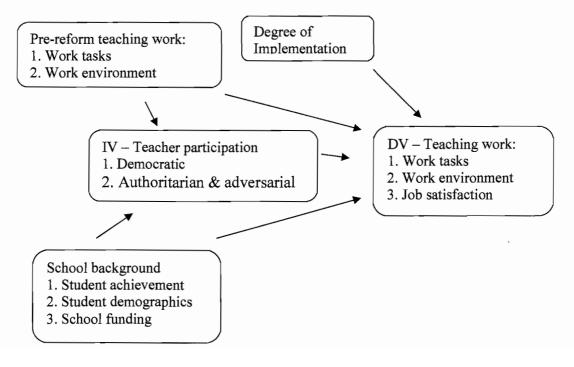
personally impressed with how teachers and administrators worked together to address major conversion concerns. For example, in one school the teacher leader and principal discovered how a five period day over trimesters drastically cut down on the number of preps teachers faced. In another school, conversations between teachers and administrators helped shift, instead of eliminate elective programs. While neither of these issues were necessarily resolved outright, they do present examples of how to effectively negotiate challenges that I saw at multiple sites. Teachers and principals reported that a "good" visit to another small schools campus involved candid communication with school personnel (including students) about challenges and successes of school change, and not elaborate presentations and carefully planned meetings and activities. In line with these reports, I recommend direct school-to-school contact for such collaborative purposes, rather than mediating the communication through grant providers or managers.

Schools need district and state support for quality education to be a realistic expectation. The limitations associated with inadequate funding -- including large class sizes and lack of equipment – are insurmountable for teachers. Although a clear conclusion regarding what teachers consider a "reasonable class size" did not emerge from this study, the message that class size is important rang clear. Small schools are not useful with classes of thirty, thirty-five, forty and forty-five students. In classes that size, teachers have to simply survive. The Oregon Department of Education's estimates of class sizes and teacher-student ratios are unreliable. While ODE reports ratios of approximately twenty-two students per teacher, for each of the schools I visited, I met no more than two teachers with classes that size or smaller. ODE's measure of class size

lacks validity in a critical way, and priorities need to shift to help teachers procure manageable workloads and smaller class sizes so that they can focus on not just curriculum, but kids.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES AND TABLES

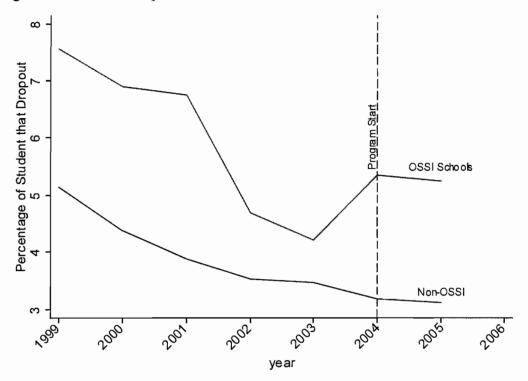Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Teacher Participation and Teaching Work

Figure 2: Trends in Dropout for OSSI and Non-OSSI schools

Source: Oregon Department of Education (2007)

Table 1: Comparison of Non-eligible, Eligible and OSSI Schools for the 2005-2006 Academic Year

School type	N	Size	Spending	Free lunch	Minority	Dropout	Reading
Not eligible	36	1147	$8344	22.05%	16.83%	2.11%	64.22%
Eligible	65	1382	$8284	37.20%	24.54%	3.67%	55.06%
OSSI	11	1342	$8996	45.48%	34.89%	5.24%	49.18%

Note: The first column presents schools by type, including high schools that are not eligible for OSSI funds, those that are eligible, and OSSI participants; all schools enroll, on average, 600 or more students per year and are Oregon public high schools. OSSI schools are included in the table twice: both as "OSSI" schools and "eligible" since they fit both criteria. Size refers to mean school enrollment. Spending refers to average spending per student (all operating funds) for each type of school. Free lunch refers to the mean percentage of students at each type of school who qualify for free or reduced price lunches at school. Minority refers to the mean percentage of students who are of minority racial/ethnic background. Dropout refers to the percentage of students who drop out during the given school year, or the 1-year dropout rate. Reading refers to the percentage of 10th graders who pass reading proficiency tests.
Source: Oregon Department of Education (2007)

Table 2: School-level Data on OSSI Schools for the 2005-2006 Academic Year

School	Size	Spending	Free lunch	Minority	ESL	Dropout	Reading
Crater	1494	$8192	26.60%	23.70%	2.90%	3.90%	44.00%
Lebanon	1332	$7824	47.40%	9.60%	0.50%	6.80%	48.00%
Liberty	1268	$8097	36.10%	41.30%	13.60%	3.50%	61.00%
Madison	981	$11024	67.60%	52.70%	14.20%	4.80%	38.00%
Marshall	856	$10760	66.39%	44.67%	17.00%	5.70%	27.00%
Newburg	1693	$7848	26.50%	15.70%	8.20%	4.30%	75.00%
N. Eugene	1215	$8975	28.90%	28.20%	4.50%	2.00%	56.00%
N.Medford	1941	$7705	23.90%	17.00%	3.90%	3.70%	61.00%
Roosevelt	778	$11209	71.08%	60.92%	15.70%	8.20%	27.00%
S. Medford	1887	$7412	30.70%	18.10%	5.00%	2.30%	69.00%
Woodburn	1316	$9902	74.50%	70.40%	55.70%	9.60%	27.00%
Oregon avg.	1308	$8372	42.20%	28.30%	6.80%	4.20%	57.00%

Note: Size refers to school enrollment for the 05-06 academic year. Spending refers to average spending per student (all operating funds) for each school. Free lunch refers to the mean percentage of students at each school who qualify for free or reduced price lunches at school. Minority refers to the mean percentage of students who are of minority racial/ethnic background. ESL refers to the mean percentage of students who access and utilize ESL services. Dropout refers to the percentage of students who drop out during the given school year, or the 1-year dropout rate. Reading refers to the percentage of 10th graders who pass reading proficiency tests.

Source: Oregon Department of Education (2007)

Table 3: Political Features of School Types

Political type	Facilitative leadership	Active faculty	School conflict	Faculty vote
Democratic	+	+	-	+
Authoritarian	-	0	-	-
Adversarial	-	-	+	-

Note: + indicates consistent strong presence of a variable, - indicates absence, and 0 indicates a mixed or ambivalent result, meaning the variable may be only slightly present or could fluctuate significantly over time. Each row represents the characteristics of each type of school.

Table 4: Expected Relationships Between Change Politics and Outcomes

Democratic	Work	Environment	Satisfaction
0	+	0	-
1	0	+	+

Note: For the column labeled "democratic", 0 indicates authoritarian school type and 1 democratic school type. For all other columns: + indicates an increase in a variable; - indicates a decrease in a variable; and 0 indicates mixed effects or no overall change. "Work" refers to work-related outcomes, "environment" refers to work environment-related outcomes, and "satisfaction" refers to changes in job satisfaction.

Table 5: Changes in Work

Variable	Authoritarian		Democratic	
	Mean	**n**	**Mean**	**n**
Change in average class length	-2	12	-15.8*	10
Change in number of preps per day	0.7	12	0.05	11
Change in proportion of class for lecture	-0.05	12	.01	10
Change in proportion of class for discussion	-0.04	12	.01	10
Change in daily amount of in-school prep time	1.75	12	21.2	10
Change in amount of teacher student feedback	18.33	12	1.5	10
Change in amount of time spent on projects	-8.33*	12	5	10
Change in amount of time spent on discipline	7.5	12	-17.8	10
Change in time spent on extracurricular activities	53.75	12	-10.8	10
Change in amount of time spent on "other" tasks	6.25	12	0	10

Notes: All t-tests are one-tailed at $p < 0.05$; significant effects are marked with an asterisk*. For authoritarian and democratic schools, means indicate the difference in variables between time 1 (prior to conversion) and time 2 (post-conversion, concurrent with the time of the school visit). Because hypotheses are directional, one-tailed t-tests are used to compare work outcomes prior to and after conversion. Changes in class length and in-school preptime are measured in minutes per day; changes in feedback, projects, discipline, extracurricular activities and other tasks are measured in minutes per week.

Table 6: Changes in Work Environment

Variable	Authoritarian		Democratic	
	Mean	n	Mean	n
Change in control over book selection	0	12	0	9
Change in extra-school time spent with other teachers	0.07	14	0.3	10
Change in talk with other teachers about school issues	0.5	14	0.7*	10
Change in talk with other teachers about personal issues	0.5	14	0.4*	10
Change in time required to learn all students' names	0.71*	14	-0.2	10
Change in talk with students about personal issues	0.43	14	0.2	10
Change in talk with principal about school issues	0.57*	14	0.9*	10
Change in talk with principal about personal issues	0.21	14	0.5	10
Change in frequency of assessment of teaching	0.07	14	-0.1	10
Change in helpfulness of teaching assessments	-0.07	14	-0.1	10

Note: These values are ordinal rank data: low numerical values (beginning at 0 in all cases) represent low reported teacher feelings or values for each item. Thus, positive mean values suggest that the teachers report an improvement for a particular issue, such as more control over book selection and an increase in frequency of interaction or greater interpersonal closeness. Wilcoxon rank sum tests are used to compare outcomes. Significant effects at the $p<0.05$ level are marked with an asterisk*. Mean changes are calculated for each item by subtracting the pre-conversion value from the post-conversion value, then taking the mean of these changes by school type (authoritarian versus democratic).

Table 7: Changes in Job Satisfaction

Variable	Authoritarian		Democratic	
	Mean	N	Mean	n
Satisfaction with pay	2.21	14	2.73	11
Change in satisfaction with pay	0.93	14	1.09	11
Satisfaction with job security	3.38	13	3.27	11
Change in job security satisfaction	1.21	14	1.09	11
Satisfaction with benefits	3.14	14	3.09	11
Change in satisfaction with benefits	0.86	14	1	11
How important is the school to the teacher?	3.5	14	3.45	11
Is only the paycheck important?	0.36	14	0.54	11
Does the teacher care about what happens at the school?	1.36	14	1.64	11
How often does the teacher think about quitting?	1	14	0.91	11
Change in thoughts about quitting	0.79	14	1	11

Note: Job satisfaction variables are measured with a ranked ordinal scale; see survey (appendix A) for scaling and wording of these items. Wilcoxon rank tests revealed no significant differences between schools on any item.

Table 8: Observed Relationships Between Change Politics and Outcomes

Democratic	Work	Environment	Satisfaction	Frequency
0	+	+	0	3
1	0	+	0	2

Note: For the column labeled "democratic", 0 indicates authoritarian school type and 1 democratic school type. For all other columns: + indicates an increase in a variable; - indicates a decrease in a variable; and 0 indicates mixed effects or no overall change. "Work" refers to work-related outcomes, "environment" refers to work environment-related outcomes, and "satisfaction" refers to changes in job satisfaction.

APPENDIX B

TEACHER SURVEY

OSSI SURVEY FOR TEACHERS

SECTION 1: TEACHING TASKS

INSTRUCTIONS – Please answer the following questions in regards to what your school was like PRIOR TO CONVERSION:

How long were your class periods? _____ (minutes)

On average, how much of *each class period* was devoted to lecturing? _____ (minutes)

On average, how much of *each class period* was devoted to discussion about educational topics? _____ (minutes)

On average, how much in-school preparation and grading time did you have *each day*? _____ (minutes)

On average, about how much time would you spend providing and discussing feedback about assignments and tests with your students *each week*? _____ (minutes)

On average, about how much time would your students spend working with each other on projects or group activities *each week*? _____ (minutes)

On average, about how much time would you spend handling discipline and behavior issues *each week* (this includes filling out discipline-related paperwork)? _____ (minutes)

On average, about how much time would you spend filing out other paperwork (not related to discipline and behavior) *each week*? _____ (minutes)

About how much time would you spend helping with extracurricular activities *each week*? _____(hours)

About how much time would you spend on other tasks (like hall-monitoring) *each week*? _____(hours)

How often were you allowed to select textbooks for your classes?
- ❏ Almost always
- ❏ Sometimes
- ❏ Almost never
- ❏ Never

INSTRUCTIONS – Please answer the following questions in regards to what your school is like PRESENTLY:

How long are your class periods? _____ (minutes)

On average, how much of *each class period* is devoted to lecturing? _____ (minutes)

On average, how much of *each class period* is devoted to discussion between students and yourself? _____ (minutes)

On average, how much in-school preparation and grading time do you have *each day*? _____ (minutes)

On average, about how much time do you spend providing and discussing feedback about assignments and tests with your students *each week*? _____ (minutes)

On average, about how much time do your students spend working with each other on projects or group activities *each week*? _____ (minutes)

On average, about how much time do you spend handling discipline and behavior issues *each week* (this included filling out discipline-related paperwork)? _____ (minutes)

About how much time do you spend helping with extracurricular activities *each week*? _____ (hours)

About how much time do you spend on other tasks (like hall-monitoring) *each week*? _____(hours)

How often are you allowed to select textbooks for your classes?
- ❑ Almost always
- ❑ Sometimes
- ❑ Almost never
- ❑ Never

SECTION 2: WORK ENVIRONMENT

INSTRUCTIONS – Please answer the following questions in regards to what your school environment was like PRIOR TO CONVERSION:

About how often would you meet with another faculty member(s) outside of work?
- ❑ More than five times a month
- ❑ Three times a month
- ❑ Once or twice a month
- ❑ Never

With how many other teachers in your school would you talk about school issues, such as problematic students or qualms with school principal(s), other school administrators, or school policies?
- ❑ More than five
- ❑ Three to five
- ❑ One or two
- ❑ None

With how many other teachers in your school would you talk about personal matters (not related to your school), such as family and relationship issues?
- ❑ More than five
- ❑ Three to five
- ❑ One or two
- ❑ None

How long would it usually take you to learn the names of all the students in your classes?
- ❑ One or two days
- ❑ Three days to a week
- ❑ One to two weeks
- ❑ More than two weeks
- ❑ I often never learned all my students' names

About how many students in each class would voluntarily talk with you one-on-one about personal issues, such as family life, personal problems, etc.?
- ❑ More than five
- ❑ Three to five
- ❑ One or two
- ❑ None

About how often would you talk with the school principal?
- ❑ Daily
- ❑ Once or twice a week
- ❑ Once or twice a month
- ❑ Never

How often would you talk with your principal about personal issues?
- ❑ Once or more a week
- ❑ Once or twice a month
- ❑ A couple of times per year
- ❑ Never

How often was your performance (i.e. your teaching) monitored or assessed?
- ❑ Once a month or more
- ❑ Once every two or three months
- ❑ Once per year
- ❑ Never

In terms of improving your teaching, how helpful was this assessment to you?
- ❑ It helped my teaching a lot
- ❑ It helped my teaching a little
- ❑ It didn't help my teaching at all

INSTRUCTIONS – Please answer the following questions in regards to what your school environment is like PRESENTLY:

About how often do you meet with another faculty member(s) outside of work?
- ❑ More than five times a month
- ❑ Three times a month
- ❑ Once or twice a month
- ❑ Never

With how many other teachers in your school do you talk about school issues, such as problematic students or qualms with school principal(s), other school administrators, or school policies?
- ❑ More than five
- ❑ Three to five
- ❑ One or two
- ❑ None

With how many other teachers in your school do you talk about personal matters (not related to your school), such as family and relationship issues?
- ❑ More than five
- ❑ Three to five
- ❑ One or two
- ❑ None

How long does it usually take you to learn the names of all the students in your classes?
- ❑ One or two days
- ❑ Three days to a week
- ❑ One to two weeks
- ❑ More than two weeks
- ❑ I often never learned all my students' names

About how many students in each class voluntarily talk with you one-on-one about personal issues, such as family life, personal problems, etc.?
- ❑ More than five
- ❑ Three to five
- ❑ One or two
- ❑ None

About how often do you talk with the school principal?
- ❑ Daily
- ❑ Once or twice a week
- ❑ Once or twice a month
- ❑ Never

How often do you talk with your principal about personal issues?
- ❑ Once or more a week
- ❑ Once or twice a month
- ❑ A couple of times per year
- ❑ Never

How often is your performance (i.e. your teaching) monitored or assessed?
- ❑ Once a month or more
- ❑ Once every two or three months
- ❑ Once per year
- ❑ Never

In terms of improving your teaching, how helpful is this assessment to you?
- ❏ It helped my teaching a lot
- ❏ It helped my teaching a little
- ❏ It didn't help my teaching at all

SECTION 3: JOB SATISFACTION

INSTRUCTIONS – The following are some questions about how you feel about different aspects of your job and the school that you work at. Please mark one box for each question.

How satisfied are you with the amount of pay you get?
- ❏ Very satisfied
- ❏ Satisfied
- ❏ Neither
- ❏ Dissatisfied
- ❏ Very dissatisfied

Since conversion, has your satisfaction with pay changed?
- ❏ It has increased
- ❏ It has stayed about the same
- ❏ It has decreased

How satisfied are you with the amount of job security you have?
- ❏ Very satisfied
- ❏ Satisfied
- ❏ Neither
- ❏ Dissatisfied
- ❏ Very dissatisfied

Since conversion, has your satisfaction with job security changed?
- ❏ It has increased
- ❏ It has stayed about the same
- ❏ It has decreased

How satisfied are you with the benefits your job provides (such as health care and retirement benefits):
- ❏ Very satisfied
- ❏ Satisfied
- ❏ Neither
- ❏ Dissatisfied
- ❏ Very dissatisfied

Since conversion, has your satisfaction with benefits changed?
- ❏ It has increased
- ❏ It has stayed about the same
- ❏ It has decreased

What happens to this school is really important to me:
- ❏ Strongly agree
- ❏ Agree
- ❏ Neither
- ❏ Disagree
- ❏ Strongly disagree

I don't care what happens to this school as long as I get my paycheck
- ❏ Strongly agree
- ❏ Agree
- ❏ Neither
- ❏ Disagree
- ❏ Strongly disagree

Since conversion, have your feelings about what happens to this school changed?
- ❏ I care more
- ❏ I care about the same
- ❏ I care less

I often think about quitting my job as a teacher at this school:
- ❏ Strongly agree
- ❏ Agree
- ❏ Neither
- ❏ Disagree
- ❏ Strongly disagree

Since conversion, have your feelings about quitting changed?
- ❏ I think about quitting more often
- ❏ I think about quitting about the same
- ❏ I think about quitting less often

APPENDIX C

TEACHER INTERVIEW

OSSI INTERVIEW FOR TEACHERS

❑ Personal history
❑ Participation history and feelings
❑ Decisions
❑ Opinions of others
❑ Present involvement
❑ Concerns
❑ Changes in work
❑ Satisfied with conversion?

Background:
1. When did you first start teaching in the K-12 system? When did you first start teaching high school?

2. When did you start teaching at this high school? Have you always taught the same subjects and grade levels?

3. What are some of the things you like about this school? What have been some of the challenges you've faced teaching here?

Initiation:
4. When did you first find out that your school was going to apply/had applied for OSSI funding? What were your initial feelings about changing your school?

5. Please describe your involvement during the early stages of reforming your school. Involvement can be attending a meeting, serving on a committee, talking informally with other teachers about the OSSI, going to some workshops about small schools, talking with your principal, or other communication and thinking about the reform.

6. Do you remember any meetings where big decisions about the new school organization were made? What was decided at these meetings? How were the decisions made? Were there recommendations from a committee or administrators? Was the decision voted on? Who voted? Did you feel like the decisions made took your concerns into account?

7. To the best your knowledge, who have been some of the biggest advocates of the reform? What types of things have they argued for? Who have been some of the biggest opponents of the reform? What types of arguments have they made?

8. Please talk about how different people, such as the principal or school administrators, union representatives, and other teachers felt about OSSI during the planning phase. What were some of the opinions these people shared? To the best of your understanding, did any teachers leave this school because they didn't want to be a part of the conversion?

Implementation:

9. After the decision to adopt OSSI had been made, what were some of the new responsibilities you had? These may include attending workshops, working with other teachers or school change personnel on planning a new small school, or other changes in workload. How were these new responsibilities difficult to take on? Were they rewarding in some way?

10. Once changes were being made, what were some of your main concerns regarding the new small schools? Which of these concerns were resolved? How were they resolved?

11. Tell me about the types of changes school administrators or people from E3 have talked with you about. Which of these changes would you say you've incorporated into the way you teach? Which of these changes are still goals you have? Which of these changes do you feel are unrealistic or not useful?

Outcomes and reflections:

12. What are some of the most significant changes you've experienced in regards to:
    a. Your workload (class preparation, working with students, grading and assessment, extracurricular responsibilities)
    b. Your work environment (how often you talk with other teachers or the principal, how well you know your students, the control you have over learning materials such as books, how your teaching is monitored and assessed)
    c. Overall job satisfaction?

13. Today, how do you feel about the changes in your school? Have they been worth the effort? What are some of the highlights your school has experienced? What are some of the challenges your school faces?

14. Do you think that your school is making these changes because the grant money was available? Or because it can really help boost student achievement? Or because of something else?

15. What has been the most personally rewarding thing you've done to help change your school? What has been the least rewarding aspect of your participation?

APPENDIX D

PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL CHANGE COORDINATOR INTERVIEW

PRINCIPAL AND SCHOOL CHANGE COORDINATOR INTERVIEW

Checklist:

❏ Autonomy	❏ Change committees
❏ Conversion status	❏ E3 – help and hinder, consult
❏ Instruction/equity/expectations	❏ Teachers affected?
❏ Structural layout of school	❏ Staff, SPED, library affected?
❏ Conversion history and	❏ Union: OEA
concerns	❏ Celebrations and challenges

Major factors:

1. Autonomy – How autonomous are the schools? To what degree do students spend all their time in their particular school? Are the schools still housed under a common comprehensive high school, or are they totally separate (on AYP reports)?

2. Conversion status – How close to "full conversion/implementation" is this school? Are students from all grades in an academy, or are only some grades in academies? Is this temporary/phased in, or is "full" conversion not a goal for the school?

3. Instruction/equity/expectations – What types of curricular and instructional changes have been made as a result of this grant? How is the school doing regarding academic equity? What strategies are in place to boost achievement and also narrow the achievement gap? What other types of expectations or cultural changes have been made to the school as a result of the conversion?

4. How does the structural layout of the school facilitate or inhibit conversion? Is the school built in a way that makes physical separation of schools difficult? If so, what is being done to alleviate these structural barriers to autonomy?

Background

1. When did you start working here? What are your main responsibilities?

2. What have been some of the highlights of your employment here? What have been some of the biggest challenges?

Stage one – Initiation.

3. Who was primarily involved with planning the conversion?

4. What were some conversion-related concerns that people talked about during this time? Which of these were resolved? How were they resolved?

5. Who have been some of the biggest advocates of the reform? What types of things have they argued for? Who have been some of the biggest opponents of the reform? What types of arguments have they made?

6. What concerns persist today? How do you feel they may be resolved?

7. How has the Oregon Education Association (teachers' union) been involved with the conversion process during the initiation stage/planning period?

Stage two – Implementation.
8. How was the school originally organized under the OSSI? Has this changed? If so, how?

9. Other than the division of the school into academies, what were some of the other major changes that occurred to the school as a whole? Has conversion affected power relations between teachers, staff, and administrators?

10. What are some of the committees that are involved with conversion? Who sits on these committees? For what decisions are these committees responsible?

11. What kind of support or consultation do you get from E3? How often do you meet with E3 staff? What have been some of the highlights and challenges of your relationship with them?

12. How were teachers affected by these changes? What are the main things that teachers are supposed to be doing to implement the OSSI?

13. How were other school staff such as counselors, librarians, special education faculty, or classified office staff affected? How has buy-in or lack thereof from these people affected the conversion process?

14. What were some of the major conflicts during this phase of conversion? How were they resolved? Which of these persist?

Stage three – Outcomes and reflections.
15. Has the conversion process promoted the goals your school originally proposed? How? How have the original goals of the school changed?

16. How has conversion surpassed earlier expectations? How has conversion been a disappointment to you and your school? What are some of the main challenges your school still faces regarding conversion?

Conclusion – Implementation elements

Interviewer: "To wrap up the interview, I'd like to talk with you about some of the main elements of school conversion, or some of the primary themes your school has focused on in order to bring about some big changes to instruction and school organization."

17. From your perspective, what goals for small-schools conversion does E3 emphasize? What do you think are some of the most important goals from their perspective?

18. On a scale from 0 to 5 – 0 being minimal, 5 being completely – how close would you say your school is to full implementation as defined by E3 (such as in the areas of equity, autonomy, high expectations, and community engagement)? What are the areas you've implemented thoroughly, and what are the areas you're struggling with? How likely or realistic is it that you will achieve full implementation?

19. What E3 areas or goals do you feel are unrealistic? What areas or goals do you feel are the most useful to helping your students learn better? What areas or goals do you feel are the least useful?

20. Are there any other major changes your school has made as part of the conversion process you'd like to mention?

APPENDIX E

CODING GUIDE

1 Conversion

1.1 General school and conversion history – general history about a school and conversion, including dates for school opening, school history, grant application, initial conversion, etc.

1.2 Conversion status – present status and progress of the conversion; conversion trajectory; rationale for conversion

1.3 Conversion politics and process – includes voting procedures, implementation strategies from administrators, overall teacher participation strategies, and community engagement

1.4 Conversion conflicts and solutions – major conflicts and issues associated with the conversion process and their resolutions, including scheduling, funding, organization of academies, etc.; *this would necessarily be paired with a more specific code describing the content of the conflict*

1.5 Change committees – what committees helped with conversion and what these committees accomplished

1.6 Autonomy – how separate are the schools? How much crossover occurs?

1.7 Challenges and goals of small schools – challenges and sustainability of small schools conversion both at a particular school, as well as in general; goals regarding small schools reform

1.8 Satisfaction – satisfaction with small schools conversion including academic, organizational, and social aspects; satisfaction with small schools ideology; is small schools realistic? Is it a sustainable goal?

2 School structure

2.1 Academic organization of school – how academic subjects are divided and scheduled (currently and historically); organizational and academic affects of conversion, including changes in curricula and pedagogy

2.2 Achievement, equity, and expectations – school academic achievement; background student academic and social inequalities and how these are addressed; school expectations for students for academic success and how these expectations have changed

2.3 School culture and relationships – school culture and discipline; student-teacher relationships, mentoring, and student engagement; and effects of conversion on relationships

2.4 Structural layout and organization of school – number of students at the school and student characteristics; how students and schools are organized within the campus, and how the physical structure of the campus affects conversion and organization of the schools

2.5 Staffing and class size – distribution of staff and staff resources; overall characteristics and quality of teaching staff; how class size mediates teaching work and small school effectiveness

2.6 Policies – school, district and federal policies that affect teaching, education, teachers, students, and other stakeholders

2.7 School goals and challenges – goals and challenges of the school that are unrelated to conversion

2.8 School governance – how school governance and leadership is distributed in the school

3 Teachers and conversion

3.1 Teacher characteristics and history – individual qualities and history of a teacher

3.2 Teacher participation in conversion – things individual teachers did as part of the conversion process (other than E3-related professional development) such as committee participation, going to meetings, talking with other teachers, etc.

3.3 Teacher buy-in – feelings and actions of teachers that showed support and buy-in for conversion (can include committee participation, etc.)

3.4 Teacher resistance – feelings and actions of teachers that showed resistance to conversion

3.5 Conversion effects on teachers – how conversion has affected teachers and their work; did any teachers leave or have classes cut due to conversion?; changes in work or relationships

3.6 Teacher professional development – professional development and collaboration time at schools; professional development activities and opportunities outside of school (can include E3-related activities)

3.7 Collegiality – overall social vibe between teachers and how this affects conversion and teaching

3.8 Teacher-administrator relationship – overall levels of trust between teachers and administrators; history between teachers and administrators; how teacher-administrator relationships and leadership affect the school and conversion process

3.9 Conversion effects on SPED, classified, and other staff – how conversion has affected other staff and services at the school

3.10 Satisfaction and reflections on teaching work – other comments and feelings about teaching work as well as education generally

4 External collaboration

4.1 E3 – description of collaboration between local school staff and E3; E3 goals and related challenges; assistance from E3 and barriers to successfully working with them

4.2 School district and administration – issues other than trust related to school district effects on schools and conversion success, such as budget, previous reform efforts, and personnel changes in the district office

4.3 Union/OEA – collaboration, assistance, barriers – description of collaboration between local school staff and the OEA locals

4.4 Parents and students – collaboration with parents and or students; parent and student concerns about conversion

5 School

5.1 Crater
5.2 Lebanon
5.3 Liberty
5.4 Madison
5.5 Marshall
5.6 Newberg
5.7 North Eugene
5.8 North Medford
5.9 Roosevelt
5.10 South Medford
5.11 Woodburn

6 Personnel

6.1 Teacher
6.2 Principal
6.3 SCC
6.4 Other

7 Annotations and other

7.1 Favorite quotes
7.2 Advisory
7.3 South Medford HS
7.4 Data management
7.5 Project based learning

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