The Impact of State and Local Union-Management Partnerships and Educator Collaboration on Teaching and Learning

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Overview

Why: The Case for Union–Management Partnerships and Educator Collaboration?

1. Push Back
   - Against Outdated Industrial Model of Organization

2. Pull
   - Based on the Impact of Collaboration on Student Achievement, Teacher Retention & Poverty
   - Productivity of Democracy

What & How: Building Lasting Collaborative Systems

- State
- District
- School
Colby Motor Co., Mason City, Iowa 1911
Divide Complex Knowledge into Simple Parts

Create Narrow Standards for Each Part

Separate Classes of Employees: Thinkers & Doers

Invent Management for Division of Labor & Compliance
Why Shift from Mass Production Thinking & Organization

- Mass Production Industrial/Factory System Failed:
  - Not responsive or flexible in face of global competition
  - Lacked a focus on quality & customers
  - Undervalued knowledge & contributions from workforce
  - Division of labor that separates “thinking” and “doing”

- Increased importance of every employee’s voice:
  - Employees not interchangeable parts – Highly Skilled Professionals
  - Quality of Decisions & Implementation

- Team-based structures – Group vs. Individual Focus
Union-Management Collaborative Partnerships and Educational Quality

Public School Improvement based on:

- District-level, School-level, Faculty/Staff Union-Management Partnerships
- Empowering Educator Collaboration in Schools
- Shared Decision-Making, Goal Alignment, Discretion, Educator Voice
- Innovation from Educators within Districts & Schools
- With Focus on Teaching and Learning
Why Collaborative Partnerships?

- Quality of Decisions
  - People Closest to the Problem
  - Educator Voice

- Quantity of Solutions
  - More Resources Devoted to Improvement

- Quality of Implementation
  - More Support
Institution for Conflicting Interests: Collective Bargaining
Institution for common interests?

Union-Management Partnerships for Teaching Quality and Student Achievement
National Performance Data

- % of Students Performing at or above Standards
- English Language Arts (ELA) and Math
- District Partnership
- School Collaboration
- Controls for Poverty & School Type
- 4900 Educators
- 25 Districts
- 400 Schools
- 6 States: California, Illinois, Maine, Mass, Minn, NJ
Variables:

- % of Students **Performing at or above Standards**
- English Language Arts (**ELA**) and **Math**
- **Partnership (District):** Union leaders and district administration working together to improve teaching and learning. District initiatives are developed collaboratively.
- **Collaboration (School):** Teachers and administration working together on innovations to improve teaching and learning, engaging in significant problem-solving activity, and developing school initiatives collaboratively.
Collaboration and Student Performance

(From McCarthy and Rubinstein, 2017)
Collaboration improves student performance, including in high poverty school districts.

Increases in student performance:
- 12.5% English Language Arts
- 4.5% Math
When district partnerships are strong, so is school collaboration

(McCarthy and Rubinstein, 2017)
Union-Management Partnerships as an Catalyst for Educator Collaboration

- Creates Positive Climate
- Builds Trust
- Directs More Resources toward Improvement
  - Creates Problem Solving Infrastructure
- Better Communication and Information Sharing
- Support for Joint Decisions & Implementation
- Union is a Network – Social Capital
COLLABORATION PATHWAY

Formal Union-Management Partnerships

Greater School Collaboration

Educational Impacts: Student Outcomes, Teaching, Culture
WHAT ARE EDUCATORS COLLABORATING AROUND?

Student Performance Data

Curriculum Development

Instructional Practices

Mentoring
Partnership Quality and Density of School Communications

- Low partnership (lower third): 17%
- High partnership (upper third): 30%

School communications density:
Percentage of teachers with regular communication ties to each other
Middle School with Density of 69%
Teacher Turnover: Collaboration, Poverty and Turnover (McCarthy and Rubinstein, 2016)

- 150 departures 2009-2010 thru 2014-2015
- 30 Schools in 1 District
- Teachers in high poverty schools leave at over 3.5 times the rate of teachers in low poverty schools.
- But, for each one-point increase in collaboration (1-4), the effect of poverty on the rate of turnover goes down ~20%.
COLLABORATION MITIGATES THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF POVERTY ON TEACHER RETENTION

- **WHEN COLLABORATION IS LOW:** Teacher turnover is 3.5x greater in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools.
- **WHEN COLLABORATION IS HIGH:** There is no statistical difference in teacher turnover between high-poverty and low-poverty schools.

(McCarthy and Rubinstein, 2017)
Collaboration mitigates the negative impacts of poverty on teacher commitment to the profession.

Collaboration, poverty & increased teacher commitment to the profession

- Low Student Poverty
- High Student Poverty

(McCarthy and Rubinstein, 2017)
Components of Collaborative Culture:

- **Goal alignment**: The extent to which teachers and administration are working towards common goals. High goal alignment is demonstrated by a common purpose and shared priorities.

- **Shared decision-making**: The extent to which school administration and teachers work together on important decisions. In environments high in shared decision-making, school administrators regularly consult with teachers for input on significant issues.
Dimensions of Collaborative Culture:

- **Teachers' Efficacy**: Teachers in this school have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning.

- **Discretion**: The amount of autonomy afforded to faculty within a school. In high employee discretion settings, teachers have latitude to make classroom level decisions independently.

- **Principal as Resource**: My principal is a resource for me.

- **Union Rep as Resource**: My union rep is a resource for me.
Dimensions of Collaborative Culture:

- **Psychological Safety:** The extent to which employees are comfortable voicing their concerns and sharing their opinions. Employees that experience psychological safety believe that they will not be harshly judged for making mistakes or voicing concerns about school policies. Psychologically safe environments allow for respectful discourse that includes all viewpoints.
Shared Decision-Making and Viewing Principal as a Resource
Shared Decision Making and Association Rep as Resource
Shared Decision-Making and Teacher Efficacy

coef = 0.70924669, se = 0.0404348, t = 17.54
Shared Decision Making and Mentoring

Mentoring Communications vs. Shared Decisions

coef = 0.21486146, se = 0.0438958, t = 4.89
Shared Decision Making and Problem Solving

Problem-Solving Communications

Shared Decisions

coef = .27938562, se = .03672641, t = 7.61
Shared Decision Making & Communication on Cross-Subject Integration

coef = .60012975, se = .04567926, t = 13.14
Sharing and Diffusing Knowledge & Innovation: Union as a Boundary-Spanning Network
Union Leader Ties & Knowledge Sharing
Unions & Partnerships as Boundary-Spanning Networks for Innovation

- Teachers in Schools with **Stronger Partnerships** are More Likely to Know About & Implement Innovations from other Schools
- Unions Reps who have **more ties to other Union Reps** Facilitate this Knowledge Transfer
- Knowledge Transfer is **Strongest when School Collaboration is Strong** & Union Reps are Better Connected
- Union Adds Value to Knowledge Transfer through its Contribution to Building Networks: Organizational Social Capital
Summary of Findings

- Union-Management Partnerships Lead to More Extensive Collaboration between Educators in Schools

- Collaboration Improves Student Performance (ELA and Math) even after controlling for Poverty

- Strong Collaborative Partnerships Reduce the Impact of Poverty on Teacher Turnover & Increase Engagement

- Highly Collaborative Schools and Strong Union Networks Increase Cross-School Innovation and Learning
Findings (continued)

- Collaboration including Shared Decision-Making, Teacher Discretion, Goal Alignment, and Psychological Safety are all Associated with:
  - Teacher Efficacy
  - Principal Seen as Resource
  - Union Rep Seen as Resource
  - Increased Communication

- Partnerships are Institutional Networks for Problem Solving, Information Sharing & Diffusing Innovation
Partnerships and Changes in Union Leader Roles and Perceptions of Core Responsibilities

- 9 Districts
- 261 Union Building Representatives (Reps)
- Statistical Controls for:
  - District, Tenure, Age, Years in District, Years in Union Leadership Role, Level of Education, Size of District
ASSOCIATION REPS CHANGING ROLE PERCEPTION

WEAK PARTNERSHIP = PRIMARILY PERCEIVE ROLE AS FOCUSED ON TRADITIONAL UNION ACTIVITIES

STRONG PARTNERSHIP = MORE BALANCED ROLE

COMMUNICATION AROUND BARGAINING & GRIEVANCE ISSUES

ENSURING EDUCATOR VOICE IN DECISION-MAKING & EDUCATION QUALITY

COMMUNICATION ABOUT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (INTERNAL)

COMMUNICATION ABOUT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (EXTERNAL)

COMMUNICATION ABOUT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (EXTERNAL)
Changing Union Leader Roles:

- Stronger District Partnerships Associated with:
  - Union Rep Ensuring Teachers have Voice in Education Quality
  - Union Rep Ensuring Teachers have Forums to Participate in School Decision Making
  - Union Rep Ensuring Teachers have Voice in School Policies
  - Union Reps Communicating with Teachers about School Improvement Issues
Implications for Local Unions Engaging in Partnerships

- Partnership as a Vehicle, not an End in Itself
- Management as a Task not Class of Employees
- Taking Leadership for Educational Quality
- Balance representation and partnership roles/management
- Rethinking Local Structures & Roles & Resources
- Mobilize & Internally Organize Members
- Capacity Building: Collaboration, Problem Identification, Joint Decision Making, Problem Solving, Planning, Implementation, Team Building
Partnership as Organizational Network
Study of Long-term Collaborative Partnerships (Rubinstein & McCarthy 2011)

- Urban and Rural, NEA and AFT, North and South, East and West, Wealthy and Poor
- Sustained for More than 10 Years
- Culture of Union-Management Collaboration
- Recognition of Common Interests
- Focused on strategies to improve teaching and learning
Common Patterns around Four Themes:

- Motivation to Collaborate
- Strategic Priorities
- Supportive System Infrastructure
- Sustaining Factors
Focus on Strategic Priorities: Teaching and Learning

- **Emphasis on System Quality**: Problem Solving, Innovation, & Willingness to Experiment

Examples of School Improvement Projects/Initiatives

- Articulation
- Cross-Disciplinary Integration
- New Teacher Induction
- Textbook Selection
- Peer Assistance
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Professional Development
- Energy Conservation
- Semester vs Marking Period
- 9th Grade Math Scores
- Sharing Instructional Practice/Classroom Visitation
- ESL
- Scheduling
- Advisory Period
- New Courses
- Technology
- Homework
- Curriculum
- Exam Coordination
- Mentoring
Supportive System Infrastructure

- Embedded Culture of Collaboration & Inclusion
- Organization & Systems Change not a Program
- Collaborative Structures at All Levels:
  - Joint District Leadership Teams, School Leadership Teams, Grade-level & Department Teams
  - Shared Decision Making, Management & Effective Implementation
- Joint Learning Opportunities
Key Elements: District and School Capacity

- Establishing a Culture of Collaboration
- Sharing Leadership
- Identifying Priorities for Improvement
  - Related to Teaching and Learning
- Joint Problem Solving Initiatives (What?)
- Decision Making at Activity at All Levels (How?)
- Engaging Faculty & Staff in Improvement Activity
- Exposure to National Best Practice Models
- Assessing and Measuring Success
- Training for Capacity Building
- Community and School Board as Partners
NJ Public School Labor Management Collaborative

I. State
- 5 State Associations: NJEA, AFTNJ, NJSBA, NJASA, NJPSA
- State-wide Summit

II. District/School
- District/School Capacity Building Workshop

III. Scaffolding Support
- Inter-District Learning Network (Twice a Year)
- District Facilitators
- Website, Online Community, Resources, Courses

IV. Research
To Date:

- 16 Districts
- 67 Schools
- 246 Administrators
- 4,334 Teachers
- 39,733 Students
- Adding 6-8 Districts 2018-19 School Year
- 10% of NJ Districts (60) in Next 3 Years
DISTRICT/SCHOOL CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP

- Capacity Building Workshops: 5 days: 2-1-1-1
- Problem Identification & Problem Solving
- Conflict Resolution/Communication
- Planning
- Leading Organizational Change
- Decision Making
- Roles/Responsibilities District Leadership Teams & School Leadership Teams
- Research Impact Collaboration on Teaching/Learning
- Changes in Individual Roles
- Meeting Skills
- Follow-up Consulting
Additional Research

- Expand Study to Include More Districts and 1000 Schools (currently have 400 schools)
- Examine Patterns of Grade & Subject-level (ELA vs. Math) Collaboration and Student Performance
- Looking at More Student and Teacher Outcomes
  - Graduation, Drop-out, Discipline, Suspension, Attendance, other Performance Metrics
- Examine Inter-school Networks and Collaboration including Role of Union in Facilitating Adoption of Innovation across Schools
- Learning across States – Laboratories of Democracy