Collaboration as a Predictor for Success in School Reform

Marilyn Friend
Northern Illinois University

Lynne Cook
California State University, Northridge

Although school reform has captured the attention of this country, considerable controversy exists regarding the feasibility of reform, appropriate strategies for implementing reforms, and the adequacy of preparation of school professionals who will work in reformed schools. We propose that collaboration is the theme which unites the various dimensions of school reform and that the potential of school reform success can be analyzed by examining the extent to which the conditions needed for collaboration can be created in schools. We apply this notion to three key reform issues: (a) professionalism; (b) empowerment; and (c) restructured schools, specifically as recommended in special education. We conclude that educators should more carefully deliberate the conditions required for collaboration, should more directly address the preparation of school personnel for collaborative activities, and should call for realistically matching expectations for reform with implementation opportunities and constraints.

Reform has become the educational anthem of the 1980s and 1990s. The massive national efforts to restructure and improve schools began in earnest with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and have continued through a flurry of additional reports (e.g., Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986; Sizer, 1984), through hundreds of state and local education reform packages (Orlich, 1989; Timar & Kirp, 1989),

Requests for reprints should be sent to Marilyn Friend, PhD, Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115-2854.
and through ongoing debates in the professional literature (e.g.,
Glickman, 1989; Grimmett, 1987; Ralph, 1989).

The most frequently espoused rationale for school reform is the
United States' declining stature as a global leader because of its
diminishing ability to compete in the international marketplace (Giroux,
1989). Proponents of reform argue that reestablishing this country's
economic leadership requires better educated American youth and that
schools must significantly change in order to effectively prepare stu-
dents to become the productive workers and national leaders needed
(Kearns, 1988; Orlich, 1989).

The reforms proposed for American schools affect virtually all aspects
of education; they represent a bewildering array of options and direc-
tions. For example, recommendations for reforming curriculum center
around increasing academic standards, particularly for high schools
(Blust, 1986; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983);
lengthening the school day and year; and adding math, science, com-
puter, and foreign language requirements (National Commission on
Excellence in Education, 1983; Sirotnik, 1983). They also incorporate
alternative learning approaches such as cooperative learning and other
team learning methods (Odden & Marsh, 1988; Slavin, 1988) and higher
order thinking skills (Goodlad, 1984).

A second domain for reform is the governance of schools. Reform
proponents argue that teachers have too long been isolated without a
sense of ownership in the school organization (Maeroff, 1988). They
further point out that teachers should be enabled to more fully partici-
pate in the daily decisions regarding their classrooms, their schools, and
their school districts (Erlanson & Bifano, 1987; Maeroff, 1988). Peer
coaching (e.g., Joyce & Showers, 1988) and site-based management
(e.g., Cawelti, 1989; Lieberman, 1988) are two types of strategies
emerging from the recommended governance reforms as are sets of
administrative approaches for nurturing teacher participation in school
management (Cuban, 1984).

A third domain for school reform is the structure of schools. Specifi-
cally, reformers propose that traditional classroom groups and grade
levels may need to be reorganized (Cuban, 1989). In particular, strate-
gies for enhancing at-risk learners' success in school is emphasized
(Goodlad & Oakes, 1988; Murphy, 1989; Trent, 1989). Another dimen-
sion of the structural reform of schools is the use of career ladders and
other expanded career paths for teachers (Carnegie Task Force on
Teaching as a Profession, 1986; Kearns, 1988).

For all the attention to reform, no clear picture is emerging about how
to accomplish reform or what a reformed school should look like. Some
argue that reform has degenerated to nothing more than meaningless
rhetoric (Giroux, 1989; Orlich, 1989). Others point out that the current reform is simply an echo of educational reform movements of the past (Edson, 1983). Yet others note that the various recommendations coming from the reform movement are contradictory (Glickman, 1989; Wise, 1988) and may effectively neutralize any reform attempts. Anecdotal reports about "reformed" schools have described narrow slices of reform efforts (e.g., Huberman & Miles, 1984).

Into this collage of ideas, issues, trends, and fads, we propose to isolate and examine the concept of collaboration among school professionals. We begin with the premise that whether reform is considered from the perspective of curriculum, governance, or structure, the ability of staff to collaborate is integral to school change. For example, in discussions of curricular reform, teachers pursuing professional development are encouraged to enhance their knowledge and skills through collaborative staff activities such as peer coaching and peer supervision while staff developers are advised to ensure local teacher participation in designing and delivering staff development programs (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Joyce & Showers, 1988). Likewise, in considerations of school governance reform, the term collegiality is repeated again and again. It refers to the "specific support for discussions of classroom practice, mutual observation and critique, shared efforts to design and prepare curriculum, and shared participation in the business of instructional improvement" (Little, 1982, pp. 331-332). Collegiality emerges as a specific type of collaboration. Finally, in school restructuring, the concept of master or lead teachers who systematically assist colleagues to develop their skills is presented as a collaborative endeavor (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986).

We contend that the knowledge base on collaboration, drawn from literatures in the helping professions and education, suggests that certain conditions must exist for collaboration to be successful. And so the extent to which schools are able to create the conditions required for successful collaboration will, in large part, determine how successful reform—whether curricular, governance, or structural—will be. The purpose of this article, then, is to examine several key issues in the reform movement in relation to collaboration. We first consider the definition of collaboration and note the conditions which must exist in order for collaboration to succeed. This discussion is necessary because collaboration is a much-used but seldom-clarified concept. Then, three of the many issues in school reform are analyzed to illustrate the risks and contradictions which may exist in attempting school reform without attention to the conditions for collaboration. The issues to be addressed include (a) professionalism, (b) empowerment, and (c) restructured schools as recommended in special education.
WHAT IS COLLABORATION?

Definition

Attempting to define the term collaboration is a bit like trying to solve one of those three-dimensional wooden puzzles that forms a perfect sphere: The task appears simple enough when presented, but making all the pieces fit together is a lot more frustrating than one would imagine. Although collaboration and similar terms (e.g., collegiality) appear frequently in the professional literature, most writers who discuss collaboration define the concept only in terms of its application in specific activities such as collaborative supervision (Glickman, 1985), collaborative inquiry (Kennedy, 1980), and collaborative schools (Scott & Smith, 1987). However, using the characteristics of collaboration outlined by these authors as well as the discussions of the concept by others in education (e.g., Barth, 1986; Davies & Aquino, 1975; Little, 1982) and the human services professions (e.g., Caplan, 1970; Falck, 1977), we present the following definition:

Collaboration is a style for interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal.

The primary point to emphasize in this definition of collaboration is that it is a style that cannot exist in isolation. As a style, it can only emerge when attached to a process or activity such as problem solving, supervising, or consulting. However, as with an autocratic style, democratic style, directive style, or any other style, a collaborative style can be used within any school process or activity—if needed conditions can be established.

Conditions for Collaboration

Presenting a definition of collaboration only hints at the complexity of establishing collaborative efforts in schools. For educators to be able to meaningfully use a collaborative style, it is necessary to highlight the conditions which must exist for collaboration to succeed, be it collaboration involving individual school staff members, an entire school staff, a school district, or the school district and some other agency (e.g., a local business or university). These conditions for collaboration include (a) a mutual goal, (b) parity among participants, (c) shared participation, (d) shared accountability, (e) shared resources, and (f) voluntariness. In addition, a set of emergent characteristics seem to enable collaboration
at the outset of an activity, and these same characteristics grow in importance throughout successful collaboration. Although it is beyond the scope of this article to examine in detail each of these conditions and emergent characteristics, they are briefly explained next.

Mutual goals. In any collaborative effort, the individuals involved must share at least one mutual goal (Appley & Winder, 1977; Metzner, 1970). They may hold many other goals that differ from one another, but they must reach meaningful agreement upon one goal relevant to their individual needs (Goodlad, 1984; D. W. Johnson & F. P. Johnson, 1987). For example, members of a high school’s math, social studies, and science departments may share the goal of planning the school’s schedule for professional development days. These professionals, though, may have very different goals for their own professional development or their career aspirations.

Parity. Collaboration is not possible if professionals do not sense the existence of parity, the equal value given to each person’s input (Falck, 1977). Current discussions in special education regarding consultation precisely describe the dilemma of creating this condition: Some special educators (e.g., Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin, 1986) maintain that consultation between special education and general education can create parity, even though in most instances it is the special educator providing assistance to the general educator and even though the classic consultation literature clearly presents consultation as an expert relationship (Gallessich, 1982). Others (e.g., Pugach & L. J. Johnson, 1988) contend that collaboration can only be achieved when general educators, staff assumed to truly have parity, help one another without special education intervention. Both perspectives are addressing the critical issue of equal status among participants.

It should not be assumed that parity must exist among participants in situations outside a specific collaborative activity. For example, a principal and teacher may have parity when each has equal representation on a district staff development committee. Outside committee meetings, however, parity does not necessarily exist.

Shared participation. Each professional in collaboration is assumed to be actively engaged in the activity (Hannay & Stevens, 1983; Hord, 1986). Participation has been found to enhance commitment, a sense of ownership, and acceptance of change (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978), but it has also been associated with the sometimes prohibitive time demands of collaboration (Courtnage & Smith-Davis, 1987; Hord, 1986; O’Shea, 1987). Shared participation does not imply equal participation.
As Kennedy (1980) and Lanier (1980) noted, it often means a convenient division of labor among participants. School staff preparing to adopt a new reading curriculum, for example, may assign some members to examine alternative reading approaches, others to obtain sets of materials, and yet others to obtain experts' opinions about the various materials and approaches. Each staff member has an active role in decision making, but the extent to which each actually participates appropriately varies.

**Shared resources.** Professionals who engage in collaborative activities contribute meaningful resources to the activity (DeBevoise, 1986; Lieberman, 1986; Porter, 1987). This aspect of collaboration can promote interactions when resources are scarce (Schermerhorn, 1975), although reluctance to share scarce resources can sometimes impede collaboration (DeBevoise, 1986; Schaffer & Bryant, 1983). In schools, a counselor may bring to a collaborative planning session knowledge about students' needs in the area of self-concept and programs for enhancing self-concept while the teacher may contribute time to implement the self-concept enhancement intervention. The principal may provide release time for planning or funds to purchase materials. Although the resources brought by each differ, all are needed for intervention success.

**Shared accountability.** For collaboration to be possible, participants in collaborative activities must share responsibility for outcomes (Hoyt, 1978; D. W. Johnson & F. P. Johnson, 1987), whether those outcomes are positive or negative. If two history teachers jointly review, select, and schedule films to enhance their instructional programs, but one forgets to confirm the order, they share the consequence of the oversight.

**Voluntariness.** Perhaps the most basic condition for collaboration is voluntariness among all participants. This condition is not directly noted in related literatures, but it can be inferred by the necessity for shared participation, shared resources, and shared accountability. In schools, the concept of voluntariness is straightforward: Despite memos, staff meetings, and evaluation procedures, school professionals coerced into joint activities with colleagues will not be collaborating.

**Emergent characteristics of collaboration.** At least three characteristics of collaborative relationships are frequently mentioned as necessary conditions for collaboration, but are also noted as outcomes of collaboration. We refer to these characteristics as emergent. For example, one emergent characteristic is a belief or attitude system which values
collaboration. At the beginning of a collaborative activity, participants must at least be willing to experiment with a collaborative approach. However, participants in ongoing collaborative activities report that their confidence in the style grows with their experiences (Little, 1982).

A second emergent characteristic of collaboration is trust. Individuals collaborating must initially trust their colleagues enough to commit their time and energy to the collaborative activity. As noted with attitudes and beliefs, through successful collaboration, this sense of trust grows, often into genuine respect for other participants.

The third emergent characteristic is the establishment of a sense of community. Early in collaboration, community is exemplified by participants' attempts to formulate a common language through which to communicate. As collaboration proceeds, community extends to become a culture that surrounds the activity.

SCHOOL REFORM ISSUES AND COLLABORATION

To illustrate how the conditions for collaboration relate to issues and contradictions involved in the school reform movement, we have selected three reform topics which are generating considerable debate in the professional literature. The topics are (a) professionalism, including pre-service professional development for teachers and career advancement strategies; (b) empowerment, including legislated versus empowered reform and site-based decision making; and (c) restructured schools as proposed by some special educators. For each, we highlight current reform activities and identify conditions for collaboration that may not be able to be established or may be difficult to achieve because of contradictions among activities. We note at the outset that the distinctions we have drawn among the topics are for the convenience of discussion; in practice, the topics and issues are closely related.

Professionalism

A number of reform proposals have been made to enhance the professionalism of teaching. For example, the Holmes Group (1986) recommended that teacher education should require training beyond the baccalaureate level. The Carnegie Task Force (1986) proposed that national certification should be available for teachers. It would not be mandatory but would indicate a high level of training and commitment to education. It also recommended the designation of master or lead teachers for schools. A master teacher would be an experienced, highly credentialed individual who had chosen teaching as a lifelong career.
This individual would be responsible for providing instructional support and guidance to other school staff members, not in the manner of today’s principals, but as a knowledgeable colleague. Another attempt to enhance professionalism is the development of career ladders and merit pay; both are strategies designed with the intent of rewarding deserving career educators.

Each of these attempts to sort teachers on a continuum from adequate to exemplary has some merit, but each also leads to conditions which are contradictory to the collaborative nature proposed for the reformed teaching profession. This is most evident in considering the condition of parity. Currently, teachers, regardless of amount of experience or education, have approximately equal status in their schools. This should enhance the possibility of collaboration, and is, in fact, the basis for structured problem-solving approaches recommended for general education teachers serving students with apparently intractable learning and behavior problems (Barth, 1986; Pugach & L. J. Johnson, 1988). Introducing lead teachers, mentor teachers, master teachers, and other hierarchical arrangements may upset this balance of teacher status which creates parity. Thus, although the Carnegie report (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986) proposed that “teachers work together in a school, not separately in isolated classrooms; they take mutual responsibility for the curriculum and instruction on the basis of thinking together” (p. 58), it also assigned responsibility to lead teachers for “helping colleagues who [are] not performing up to par by arranging for coaching, technical assistance, coursework or other remediation” (p. 58). The first statement suggests collaboration, including parity; the second conveys a superior-subordinate relationship.

Other conditions for collaboration may also be in jeopardy given current recommendations for improving professionalism. For example, voluntariness may be more difficult to achieve if some but not all teachers are implicitly or explicitly given responsibility for evaluating their peers. Likewise, attempts to establish career ladders and merit pay may diminish the possibility of teachers establishing mutual goals because of the competition they engender (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988).

**Pre-service education.** One specific proposal for enhancing professionalism is increasing rigor in teacher education. The Holmes Group (1986) proposed that this can be accomplished by a 4-year program in liberal arts followed by intensive preparation in pedagogy. Others noted that standards for admitting teachers to professional preparation programs should be raised (Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1988; National Commission on Excel-
lence in Education, 1983), that more content expertise should be required for all teachers (Maeroff, 1988; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), and that extended internships should precede credentialing (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988).

These recommendations have led to considerable concern for the impact they could have on teacher supply and the economic implications they carry. However, the reform literature is exceptionally silent on the topic of preparing teachers for the very different teaching profession, that is, the very collaborative profession, they would be entering. Lortie's (1975) text documented well the isolation of teachers; this will not be tolerable in reformed schools. In addition to added coursework on school subjects and more rigorous treatment of teaching methodology, teacher trainees need to be prepared to collaborate. They need an understanding that a collaborative school, one implementing significant reforms, requires professional skills not traditionally associated with teaching. Developing an understanding of the conditions for collaboration is not typically part of teacher education curricula; it must be for reform, of whatever sort, to proceed. In particular, teachers should acquire the knowledge and skills for sharing resources, sharing participation, and sharing accountability with others because these are not part of the current professionalization of teachers. Similarly, developing the ability to work toward identifying common language and trusting others in order to collaborate should become priorities in teacher education curricula. The contradiction in the current reform literature is that teachers are being set up to fail. They are being asked to enter their profession armed with content expertise and method, but without the skills to work effectively with their colleagues and to set realistic expectations for their own professional behavior. In the example of pre-service, then, the issue is not one of addressing particular conditions of collaboration, but is instead a matter of having overlooked the necessity of systematically preparing teachers for all aspects of collaboration.

**Empowerment**

Teacher empowerment refers to enabling educators to increase their participation in educational decision making so that they are more respected and more autonomous (Maeroff, 1988). Expected outcomes are increased job satisfaction and morale leading to higher quality job performance (Meek, 1988). However, the reform recommendations for empowering teachers, when considered from the perspective of conditions for collaboration, again confirm the existence of contradictions and issues.
Legislated reform versus empowerment. A critical issue facing school reform proponents is the contradiction in the reform messages being conveyed. On one hand, reform has in many states become a blizzard of legislated mandates which prescribe in greater detail what schools—and teachers—should be accomplishing (Blust, 1986; Glickman, 1989). On the other hand, teachers are being told that their judgment is the best basis on which to make educational decisions (Glickman, 1989). As Darling-Hammond and Berry (1988) pointed out, if all of education could be improved by better regulation, no need would exist for higher quality teachers.

The contradiction between legislated reform and empowerment occurs because the former, even though well-intentioned, tends to trivialize the latter. Legislation and policy which mandate shared fiscal resources and programs shared among school staff often violate the condition of voluntariness. Requirements for accountability (e.g., state-wide school report cards which rank achievement district by district) may call into question the trust and respect so integral to collaborative interactions. For school reform to proceed, decision makers should recognize that imposing external standards increases the risk that reform will be at best superficial compliance and at worst will lead to a stilted, inadequate curriculum completely at odds with that envisioned. The conditions for collaboration do not preclude setting standards, but for legislated reform and the concept of empowerment to co-exist, teachers should have a more critical role in setting and operationalizing those standards, and in adapting standards to meet the needs of their students.

Site-based decision making. The essence of empowerment is teachers' participation in decision making in their schools (Goodlad, 1984). Although this concept appears to support the conditions required for collaboration, proposed reforms have taken too simple a view of the implications of site-based decision making for the conditions of collaboration to be created.

The germane issues have to do first with voluntariness. Although increased decision making may be desired by some teachers, mandating it eliminates the choice for others to decline participation. For example, Belasco and Alutto (1972) found that some teachers prefer not to be engaged in administrative decision making in their schools; this finding was confirmed more recently by Johnston and Germinario (1985) who found teachers willing to participate in decision making only if they felt the decision to be made was personally relevant.

The Johnson and Germinario (1985) study also raises the issue of just what decisions teachers should participate in making. Whether willing
to participate or not, shared accountability should only be expected for
decisions related to teachers' responsibilities, not for matters appropri-
ately placed in the administrative realm. The conditions for collaboration
do not imply that different types of personnel should equally share each
others' role responsibilities: Teachers are skilled at making some types of
decisions, administrators at reaching others, and each should rely on the
other for their expertise as needed. This fact seems to be overlooked in
much of the discussion of site-based decision making.

At least brief mention must be made of teacher preparation in the
context of site-based decision making. As with other aspects of reform,
few recommendations have been made regarding readying teachers to
understand and contribute meaningfully to school-based decision mak-
ing. As noted earlier in the discussion of teacher preparation, the skills
needed are those for understanding and implementing collaborative
activities in schools. In addition, teachers should acquire a new type of
professional self-concept which includes confidence to participate in the
type of decision making which occurs in reformed schools.

*Time for empowerment.* A discussion of empowerment would be
incomplete without briefly mentioning time, one of the most valuable
resources shared as a condition in collaboration, a fact easily confirmed
by a brief chat with any teacher in a school attempting to implement
reforms. Teachers often become overwhelmed by the committee meet-
ings, outside tasks, and interruptions to teaching that often accompany
reform efforts, to say nothing of the expectations that they will also meet
with colleagues in order to implement a reform strategy (e.g., peer
coaching, team teaching, collaborative school planning).

Time is an issue of monumental importance to teachers and is a
well-documented shared resource in collaboration (Hord, 1986; O'Shea,
1987), yet it has received scant attention in the reform reports (Carnegie
Task Force on Teaching as a Profession, 1986, being a notable excep-
tion). Maeroff (1988) noted that time is essential for empowerment
because teachers in many schools barely have time to complete their
traditional job responsibilities, but his proposed solution of bringing in
outside organizations to assist schools does not include options for
increased teacher time for participation in collegial activities. Other
authors arguing for teacher empowerment (e.g., Erlandson & Bifano,
1987) suggest a wide variety of important methods to achieve empow-
erment, but have failed to address this key topic.

Again, the success of reform seems to be directly related to the ability
of schools to create conditions for collaboration, here through shared
resources. Further, the time issue raises a potential source of difficulty
for achieving parity in school settings in which time for working with
colleagues is given to some teachers (e.g., master teachers, special education teachers) and not to others.

**Restructured Schools as Recommended in Special Education**

Restructuring refers to any number of reform proposals related to the physical and administrative arrangements for serving students. For example, Goodlad and Oakes (1988) recommended grouping students heterogeneously instead of using traditional homogeneous grouping arrangements. Newmann (1989) suggested a form of restructuring in which teams of high school teachers share responsibility for specific groups of students and plan schedules and activities using their professional judgment. However, the third example we have chosen to illustrate the issues and contradictions in the reform movement which can be analyzed using the framework of conditions for collaboration comes not from the general school reform proposals, but from the reform proposed by and for special education. We focus on restructured schools in special education because current trends in special education encapsulate the entire range of fundamental difficulties in attempting reform without understanding the prerequisites of collaboration.

**The Regular Education Initiative (REI).** Although others have debated whether special education has received adequate attention as part of overall school reform recommendations (Pugach & Sapon-Shevin, 1987), it is clear that services for mildly handicapped students currently are the target of many proposed reforms. However, a new emphasis on restructuring was introduced into this argument with Will’s (1986) call for special and general education to share the responsibility for educating students with learning and behavior problems. Since then, some special educators have been proposing that schools be restructured to promote collaboration between general and special education teachers in meeting the instructional needs of these students (Jenkins, Pious, & Peterson, 1988; Lilly, 1988; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). Recommended implementation typically involves some type of change in service delivery, with special educators spending less time providing services to handicapped students in pull-out programs and more time working with students and teachers in general education classrooms (McGill & Robinson, 1989).

To present a balanced view of this reform issue, it should be noted that the REI is not without its critics. The reform has been questioned because of its assumptions about student needs and feasibility of providing specialized instruction in general education classrooms.
(Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988), the lack of support for and participation in the REI by general education professionals (Davis, 1989), and absence of data supporting school programs based on REI principles (McKinney & Hocutt, 1988). REI opponents argue that restructuring schools to eliminate some traditional special education services should not be undertaken without better evidence of its value and potential for success.

**Conditions for collaboration in the REI.** The special education REI proposals for restructured schools are as subject to the conditions for collaboration as other school reform recommendations. In fact, because of the traditional separation between classroom teachers and special service providers, collaboration is, if anything, more essential if proposed restructuring is to be attempted. For example, voluntariness is a condition for collaboration which has not been adequately considered by many REI proponents, and as a result, implementation may be problematic. The voluntariness operates on at least three levels in this example of a reform attempt. First, states enacting legislation which mandates that handicapped students be accommodated in general education classes undermine the sense of voluntariness practitioners need in order to collaborate. Second, even when district administrators support REI programs, staff may feel that they are being coerced into providing a type of service which violates both special and general educators’ understanding of what their jobs should be. Finally, when practitioner input is sought for REI programs, special educators often receive more training and more information than general education teachers. Not surprisingly, in such situations general educators feel that the REI is a special education initiative in which they are the victims.

Another condition for collaboration often in jeopardy in REI-based programs is parity. The REI literature often suggests that general education classrooms are deficient, that they need to be “fixed” so that they are better places for students to learn. Further, an implicit message is that general education teachers do not possess certain critical teaching skills and that special education teachers can provide these (Huefner, 1988; Idol et al., 1986). Both of these conditions prevent the establishment of parity because they imply that special educators should remediate general educators. The contribution that general education teachers and classes have to make in preparing handicapped students to function as productive adults is often overlooked, despite the fact that this is essential for REI programming.

A final condition for collaboration which demands more focused attention is the identification of mutual goals. The historical development of education has given special and general educators different
overriding goals for their students. General education teachers are engaged in the business of getting a relatively large group of students to master a specified set of content in a 9-month period. Special education teachers are pursuing the goal of assisting individual students to master a tailored set of objectives at a rate deemed optimum by a team of professionals. These differences in general goals are likely to interfere with the establishment of specific goals needed to collaborate.

It is not so much that the conditions for collaboration mentioned here, along with those not discussed separately, cannot be met in schools restructured through REI concepts, but it appears the gravity, the depth, the fundamental nature of the changes recommendations have not been translated into realistic proposals for widespread implementation.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this discussion was neither to debate the merits of the various reform proposals currently influencing public education, nor to suggest that collaboration is a panacea for the problems facing education. What we have attempted to do is to draw attention to the need for considering the feasibility of reform efforts from the broader framework of conditions for collaboration, in part because the plethora of reform documents and emerging literature promotes but does not systematically identify this reform theme, in part because of concern that without addressing the conditions for collaboration, school reform efforts are unlikely to ever be fully implemented and so evaluation of their efficacy will not be possible.

Our analysis leads us to the conclusion that additional action should be taken to match reform strategies to conditions which must exist in order for those strategies to succeed. And although many suggestions can be made regarding changing this state of affairs, we make the following broad recommendations. First, professional education curricula should be designed to reflect the changing education profession. This includes attention being paid to the necessity for teachers to understand what collaboration is and how it is currently affecting teaching. Further, it suggests that all teacher trainees should acquire the skills for participating in collaborative activities. Similar preparation is needed for school administrators because they, too, play a crucial role in creating a climate for reform and making decisions which may facilitate or constrain reform implementation.

Professional preparation should address in-service educators as well. This group of individuals may have needs that are slightly different from those of pre-service trainees. They may be in schools already affected by
reform, and as they come into contact with reform components having a direct impact on their schools, they may find it difficult to see the "big picture" of reform. As with pre-service trainees, providing knowledge about the conditions for collaboration and skills needed for promoting collaboration would assist them to acquire that broader perspective, but they may also have an urgent need to reconcile their previous training and experiences with their emerging roles. For administrators, knowledge about the conditions coupled with information about establishing them would complement the inundating amount of information being disseminated about reform strategies themselves.

Another recommendation we make deals with setting realistic expectations for reform on the basis of the extent to which conditions for collaboration can be met. Legislators, state education agency personnel, local education administrators, and teaching staff are encouraged to recognize and discuss the extent to which reform is feasible based on conditions of collaboration and to set program goals consistent with that analysis. Likewise, schools planning to implement reform programs should strive to establish the needed conditions in order to enhance the possibility of success.

School reform is a complex and often frustrating undertaking. By conceptualizing it from the theme of collaboration, it may be possible for the key decision makers and teachers who implement reform to address it in a more unified, less fragmented manner.

REFERENCES


Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1988). *Student achievement through staff development*. New York:
LONGERMAN.


