

Mary Kay Stein

**Public School 1: The Alfred E. Smith School:
Community School District #2:
A Case Study.**

Mary Kay Stein

February 1998

Introduction

PS 1 sits in the heart of Chinatown in Manhattan. After winding down narrow streets of colorful outdoor vegetable stands, small Chinese restaurants, and tiny shops selling Asian magazines, videos, and snack foods, one arrives at an old, but well-maintained, five-story white brick building at the corner of Henry and Catherine Streets. PS 1 was the first elementary school in the New York City public school system; on the front doorstep one reads a sign attesting to this historical fact: “Grammar School No. 1.”

Continuing to the rear of the building one finds a large, concrete playground surrounded by an iron fence and, beyond that, several high-rise tenement houses. Most of the children who attend PS 1 have recently immigrated from mainland China and now live with their families in these buildings. Most parents work long hours at low-wage jobs in nearby restaurants, shops or factories. On this crisp Spring morning, several children are waiting outside the doors of the school building even though it is just 7:00 am. After school, many of these same children either attend after-school programs, return home to empty apartments, or sit on the floors of factories or restaurant kitchens waiting for their parents to finish work.

Upon entering the school building, one finds a large gymnasium where children begin each day by lining up by class, listening to announcements, and reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance” and the “Pledge of Ethnic Harmony.” Turning to the right, one begins a steep ascent to the second floor where the main offices, auditorium and several classrooms are located. Walking up the stairwell, one can’t help but be captivated by the scores of 5 x 8 black-and-white photographs that line the wall, all of which focus on the engaged faces of students in learning situations.

Arriving on the second floor, one is immediately struck by the cheerful, warm, and inviting atmosphere of the hallways and main office. The inside of the building shows its age, but the creative color and enthusiasm that adorns the walls and faces of children far upstages the 100 years of use. There is a hum to the building, a sense of constant activity -- constant, but purposeful.

This year (1996-97), PS 1 celebrated its centennial. A yearlong string of events ranging from a children's art and historical exhibition at the Museum of Chinese in the Americas to a dinner attended by 500 past and present students, parents, faculty, and community members marked the 100th year of PS 1 serving the most-recently arrived immigrants to the United States, now from China, but in the past from Italy, Ireland, Germany, and Puerto Rico. In the school itself, children marked the centennial by conducting a variety of research projects including the creation of a cookbook (which involved canvassing other children, retirees, parents, teachers, and community members for recipes), the construction of a three-dimensional replica of the school building, and the composition and performance of a song in honor of the school. Parents designed and hand-stitched a quilt in honor of the celebration.

PS 1 is led by Marguerite Straus (MS). MS has forged a productive set of relationships with the community, brought in many new and enthusiastic teachers, and made PS 1 a home for the 700+ students who come there Monday through Friday. Over 80% of the pre-kindergarten through 5th grade children are Asian -- and increasingly from Fouchow, a rural agricultural province. The remainder are comprised of much smaller percentages of African Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasians. Most of the Asians and many of the Hispanics do not speak English

when they first arrive at PS 1. Many of the children from Fouchow province also are not formally educated in their first language.

PS 1 has designed an intricate system of bringing these children into the American educational system -- a system that is guided by the belief that the sooner non-English speakers can be fully integrated with English speakers the better. At each grade level, from Kindergarten through the fifth grade, there are three different language-based options available: bilingual (instruction conducted in Chinese and English with intensive work toward the development of English), regular (all instruction conducted in English), and dual-language (instruction conducted in both Cantonese and English, the goal being for students to learn and remain fluent in the language and culture of both countries.) Children who have just arrived will typically begin in the bilingual classroom at an age-appropriate grade level and then gradually, as their English skills improve, be moved into a regular classroom. Children are placed in the demanding, federally funded, and nationally recognized dual language classrooms based on parent request and/or teacher recommendation.

At the intermediate grade levels, PS 1 has created two "bridge classes." Each is a bilingual classroom that combines children of fourth- and fifth-grade ages. The most-recently arrived 9 - 11 year olds, those with the poorest English skills, are placed into one of these bridge classes where they are assisted to acquire the very beginnings of the English language; as soon as possible they are shifted to the other bridge classroom in which there is more consistent encouragement to make the transition into English. Once their English skills are solidified, they transfer to a fourth- or fifth-grade regular classroom.

PS 1's record on student achievement has been one of constant improvement.¹ This past year, PS 1 students posted a 20 percentage point gain in reading as measured by the California Testing Battery (CTB) Reading Test. The percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile rose from 45.9% in 1996 to 66.1% in 1997.² Before 1996, the students also showed constant improvement in reading scores. Based on the test used during the earlier part of this decade (the Degrees of Reading Power [DRP] by Touchstone Associates), the percentage of students scoring at or above the 50th percentile improved from 39% to 49% between 1993 and 1995. Mathematics scores on the California Achievement Test also improved by about two percentage points per year over the past three years. In 1997, 72.2% of PS 1 students scored at or above the 50th percentile in mathematics.

This is a case study of the "school-level" community of Public School 1. An objective of the case study is to identify and describe the ways in which the adults in the school configure themselves in order to provide the best possible learning opportunities for students. As such, this study focuses on a pivotal and timely issue in public education: how schools can function as professional learning environments for the teachers who work within them.

This is also a case study of a school situated within a district. As part of a carefully designed program of research which aims to study the interlocking features of district, school and classroom learning communities (Resnick, Alvarado, & Elmore, 1996), our analysis is informed by

¹ The information presented in this paragraph was based on data provided by Ed Levine at the District 2 Office.

² This comparison is based on an estimated adjusted score for 1996. The adjustment was made by the Central Board of the NYC Public Schools in order to compensate for changes in the population of students who were required to take the test.

the larger system of which PS 1 is a part. Although there are many descriptions of well-organized and successful schools, we have few, if any, descriptions of how such schools interact with and gain meaning from the larger district environments of which they are a part (Elmore's presentation at IFL seminar, 7/8/97). PS 1 is located within Community School District 2 in the New York City Public Schools which has established a reputation as an extremely forward looking and successful district. By organizing all central staff and resources around the instructional needs of schools, establishing a district-wide focus on good literacy practices, and developing a model professional development program District 2 has raised student achievement scores to the second highest of the 32 districts in the city (Resnick, Alvarado, & Elmore, 1996). In this study, we will draw connections to district goals, activities, and support systems whenever possible and appropriate.

Finally, this is case study of a school within a district at a particular moment in time. At the time that the data were collected (Spring 1997), MS had been principal for seven years and many external symbols of a mature professional learning community were evident (e.g., common meeting time for teachers, teachers comfortably moving beyond the boundaries of their own classrooms). In our work, we attempted to delve more deeply into these external symbols in order to identify and describe more thoroughly the essential features of the community, how these features create learning opportunities for teachers, and the organizational strategies that make them possible. The time of data collection also coincided with a district-wide movement toward standards-based education. During the 1995-96 and 1996-97 school years, teachers and principals throughout the district participated in meetings and study groups which examined detailed performance standards for students (the New Standards) and discussed strategies for assisting their

students to meet those standards (the Principles of Learning). In Spring 1997, District 2 began administering the New Standards Reference Exam in grades 4, 8, and 10 throughout the district. This represented the district's commitment to push forward with a standards-based model of instructional improvement -- a model that was hoped would result in learning gains in every classroom, for every subject, and for every child.

The purpose of this case study is two-fold: (a) to identify and describe one school's attempt to configure itself as a learning community for teachers; and (b) to describe how District 2's move toward standards-based improvement is being interpreted and carried out within that school. As such, this is a study of how a particular school in a particular district at a particular moment in time grappled with two key issues in public education today: how to set up and maintain high performance learning communities and how to move all students toward high standards.

A word about what this study is not. This study is not an evaluation of the status of the adult learning community or about the degree of uptake of standards at PS 1. Nor is it a study of the effect of the adult learning community or standards on classroom instruction or on student learning. In order to answer those questions, more time would have needed to have been spent in the school and different strategies for data collection and analysis would have been designed and used.

Methodology

The collaboration of researchers who studied PS 1 represented both insider and outsider perspectives. One of the researchers was a principal of another school within the same district and so was very familiar with the principal role and the District 2 context. The other researcher was an

educational psychologist from the Learning Research and Development Center whose areas of expertise are classroom teaching and learning and teacher professional development.

Qualitative methods were used to collect information about the two questions noted above. After spending a day in the school touring the building and getting acquainted with the principal and teachers, we conducted a three-hour interview with the principal, asking her a pre-designed set of questions about her leadership strategies, her teaching staff, and the ways in which standards were playing out in her school. Then, observations were conducted of a sample of the strategies and events that MS pointed us toward as key elements in her attempts to build and maintain community and seed standards into the ongoing work at PS 1. Finally, interviews were conducted with 18 out of 21 1st through 5th grade teachers and half of the 8 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers. Also interviewed were three parents, two in-house staff developers, two cluster teachers, a Reading Recovery teacher, the director of the Teachers' Center, and the administrative staff. All together, approximately 15 days were spent at the school.

Interviews which were audiotaped were transcribed. Transcripts and fieldnotes were then reviewed and emerging themes were flagged. After all data were reviewed, hypotheses were formed regarding ways in which the community operated and standards were being used. The data were then revisited, looking for confirming and disconfirming evidence. Finally, additional information was sought from the principal on four occasions and from an in-house staff developer on two.

The paper is organized into two main sections: the learning community and the introduction of standards

The Learning Community at PS 1

I switched schools several times mainly because I was looking for a school that supported my philosophy and a school that had very strong staff support and cohesiveness . . . I feel that here, the staff here has a real passion for both the children and for the art of the profession. (Teacher interview, p.2).

In interview after interview, the vast majority of teachers at PS 1 echoed the refrain heard above. When asked what they found unique about PS 1, teachers spoke about the collaborative spirit among the staff, the extent to which they felt supported and valued as professionals, and their common commitment to the children. New teachers, in particular, talked about the degree of support that they had from both the principal and their teacher colleagues:

Staff cohesiveness and professionalism was also evident in interactions that were observed and events that were attended. For example, after an early-morning meeting during which students shared their writing portfolios with their parents, the classroom teacher who led the event sat in the principal's office with a staff developer reviewing what had gone well and what she wished had gone differently. This reflection was marked by critical examination of the event in light of her goals. Although parents were clearly pleased with the event and the students appeared motivated and engaged throughout, this teacher had marked several things that could have been done differently . . . and in her mind better.

At another level, the professionalism of this staff is suggested by their attitude toward and thirst for continued challenges and learning opportunities. Most teachers have taken advantage of the district's many offerings in literacy and mathematics, as well as the Professional Development

Lab³ (PDL) and programs for new teachers. The staff's professionalism is also suggested by the fact that three teachers have taken the highly time-consuming and rigorous National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) examination.

Features of the School Learning Community

In this section, the themes which appeared most frequently as characteristic of PS 1's school environment are identified and described.

It's about Learning, and Only Learning

Everybody is really clear as to what my commitment is. There's never a change in that. Our role here is to make a difference in children's lives and to do the best we can do for them. There's never a question about that. Whatever we do, we do for children. (Principal interview, p.6)

If District 2's first and foremost principle is, "It's about instruction, and only about instruction" (Elmore & Burney, p.7), the central principle at PS 1 is, "It's about learning and only about learning." A focus on learning is the glue that holds together the professional staff and students, as well as the glue that binds the teachers' union to the school community and the school community to the neighborhood.

Figure 1 is an adaptation of Tharp and Gallimore's (1988) theory of learning as assisted performance within a school organization. This theory proposes that each person's main responsibility should be to assist the person next in line to better assist the person directly "below" him or her. For example, district leaders' jobs should be to help principals to assist their teachers

³ The Professional Development Lab is a professional development program set up by District 2 that involves a teacher spending three weeks observing an expert "resident" teacher in her classroom, along with

to do a better job with their main function: instruction. Similarly, the principal's main job should be to help teachers to assist their students to do a better job with their main function: learning. According to Tharp and Gallimore, school systems would greatly benefit from placing more emphasis on assistance as opposed to the more traditional focus solely on assessment (where each person defines his or her job as evaluating or assessing how well the next person down is performing).

Insert Figure 1 Here

As suggested by the first three circles in Figure 1, District 2's philosophy, goals, and actions closely align with this "ideal" model. District leaders have taken the responsibility of helping principals to help their teachers become the best teachers they can be. As discussed by Elmore & Burney (1996), this is done by bringing an unrelenting focus on instruction to each and every interaction, from budget negotiations to the way in which professional development is organized and delivered. The way in which district leaders "reach through" their principals to assist teachers is perhaps most vividly illustrated in the periodic walkthroughs conducted by district leaders in each school. During these walkthroughs, each teacher is visited by district leaders and the principal; all discussion focuses on how to assist that teacher to become better.⁴

As suggested by the final three circles in Figure 1, this same transference of a clearly focused message occurs within the walls of PS 1. MS defines her main role as helping teachers to

preparatory and post-follow-up support.

better assist students to learn. Most discussions at the school (in meetings and in informal conversations) focus on student learning; administrative details (e.g., notices of upcoming events, testing dates, etc.) are handled through brief written memos. For example, during an after-school meeting to discuss the third-grade, extended-day program, the discussion was observed to center on the quality of student learning (not on scheduling problems, testing dates, or other non-learning issues). After a brief discussion about instructional resources, MS steered the conversation toward a discussion of the consistency of student engagement, the amount of carryover to the regular school program, and concrete ways to assist a few, identified, struggling students. Just as district leaders often know individual teachers, MS knows individual students in her building; by working so closely with her teachers on instruction and learning issues, she “reaches through” them to the students. MS was often observed greeting children by name, giving them affectionate hugs and asking them how a particular project was going.

A dedication to students’ learning also sits at crossroads of MS’s relationship with the teachers’ union. According to MS, the reason that she has been able to forge a productive working relationship with the union leader is because they “both share a philosophical belief of our responsibility to children” (Principal interview, p. 10). As a result, a relationship with the potential to be adversarial is instead collaborative. The UFT Chapter Leader put it in these terms:

I think we have a very unique and special community. . . . Parents, staff, all staff, administration. Look at our jobs. . . they are all basically different, but for the same goal

⁴ In those cases in which a teacher has repeatedly failed to show progress, the discussion will eventually turn to ways in which the teacher can be removed from the school.

and so we work together. . . . We all put in long hours that we don't get paid for because we want to and because we feel great about it. (UFT chapter leader interview, p. 19)

Finally, the shared goal of student learning has assisted the school in overcoming language, socioeconomic, and cultural differences between the families who send their children to PS 1 and the staff. Although the majority of new students come from provinces of China that have different language and customs from even the Asian staff at PS 1, the families do, according to MS, share the value of learning: “My population being a very poor, immigrant population is significant because, there’s a real caring about learning.” (Principal interview, p. 3). MS went on to make a distinction between formal education and “the value of learning.” The former, many of her families do not have; the latter, they do.

Over the years, MS has obtained the confidence of these families that PS 1 shares their commitment to the learning of their children. Parents of a second-grade child who were interviewed talked about how pleased they were with their daughter’s teachers through the second grade. They added that a feature of PS 1 that really impressed them was the kindergarten and first-grade teachers’ ongoing interest in their child:

And even to this day, all the teachers Mary has had will greet me and ask me about Mary and include me in conversation even though no appointment has been set up. And so we’re both very pleased with that approach. (Parent interview, p.9)

Student Work and Literacy Practices: The Loom Upon which the Community is Built⁵

⁵ We’ve borrowed the term, “loom” used in this way from an anonymous guest on National Public Radio. We are using it in a similar vein to how Elmore uses the term, “connective issues” to describe the common expectations for work among principals and teachers across schools at the district level (p. 4 Variability memo).

The commitment to student learning discussed above constitutes a deep, emotional, almost-visceral current that runs through the community at PS 1. But communities also need more day-to-day, visible, features or structures around which they can interact and define themselves. At PS 1 there are two ubiquitous features that serve as a common set of experiences or work practices around which the community gathers: a focus on student work and a common set of literacy practices.

Focus on student work. PS 1 has a long history of looking to student work as a gauge of how they are doing and what they could be doing better. After MS's arrival, a small group of teachers began to meet together on a regular basis to examine samples of student work and to discuss what that work suggested in terms of appropriate instructional strategies. Initiated and led by a well-read, student-centered third grade teacher (who has since moved to a district level position), this group of teachers took seriously the idea that instruction is about developing the child (from wherever he or she is emotionally and cognitively), not about transmitting a body of facts.

The tradition continues to this day, but with a much larger group of teachers and known by the name of Breakfast Talks. Teachers, staff developers, support staff, and administrators gather to examine samples of student work and share coffee and breakfast rolls. Since the formal introduction of performance standards and portfolios (from the New Standards), a more formal language has been overlaid onto these discussions, as well as a more explicit focus on standards, of "how good is good enough." But the idea of focusing on student work had already been deeply ingrained into the work practices of the PS 1 community.

Common set of literacy practices. At PS 1, children learn to read, speak, and write using a Balanced Literacy program that is advocated by and supported through district staff development programs. Although basically following a whole language approach, this program incorporates attention to phonics as well as learning to read and write in context. It includes a set of classroom practices built around children's literature and incorporates time for both independent and shared reading, as well as guided reading (a time during which the teacher pulls together small groups of children who need assistance with similar strategies.) Another goal of the Balanced Literacy program is to assist children to become more independent readers and writers. Classrooms are arranged for ease of access to a variety of kinds and levels of reading materials, children learn how to select books at their level of ability and interests, and various strategies are taught to enable students to learn how to monitor their own comprehension.

As one observes classroom after classroom, one is struck by the commonalities with respect to the physical layout of the space, the kinds of reading and writing resources available to children, and the classroom "routines" that teachers and students follow during the literacy blocks. As one observes meeting after meeting and listens to conversation after conversation between teachers, one is struck by the attention to these practices and the common language that is used to reference them.

We call these two features (focusing on student work and a common set of literacy practices) the loom upon which the community is built because they provide a common set of expectations that bind together staff, teachers, and students. As we heard several times: "This is what we do here at PS 1." Although other schools within District 2 may also possess these

features, we propose that they play a particularly significant role at PS 1 because they comprise the common thread that weaves together regular mainstream classrooms, bilingual classrooms, and the dual language classrooms -- classrooms across which one might expect to find a different set of activities, expectations, and goals. They also are significant because they tie the school to the district (the literacy practices define the district as well as PS 1) and the school to the new initiative in standards (the focus on student work made PS 1 an especially fertile ground for the introduction of performance standards).

Open Communication

If there is something happening in the school, we have conversation because I think that it's important to keep people as informed as possible. Once you're informed you know where the decisions are coming from, you buy into them. I don't like surprises. I don't like to surprise my staff -- or the parents. I think that is really important. . . .We're in this thing together, and this whole game of "I know something you don't know" doesn't work. (Principal interview, p. 11).

The principal's commitment to open communication is illustrated by the door to her large, inviting office which is literally open 95% of the time. Teachers and administrative staff freely walk in to seek her advice, ask questions, or simply "touch base." Along with visitors and parents, they appear to be attracted to the office's cheerful atmosphere: bright walls adorned with photographs and children's artwork, a candy dish sitting on a large conference-style table surrounded by comfortable chairs; a pot of fresh coffee nearby. Frequently, the office serves as a meeting place

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for groups of teachers: the meetings of dual language teachers and extended-day teachers that were observed were held in MS's office.

MS also reaches out to communicate with teachers in other ways. She conducts daily walkthroughs of the building, visiting teachers in their classrooms as they are conducting lessons. And she attends grade-level meetings for each grade at least once per month, in addition to being present at other kinds of teacher meetings (untended teacher meetings, core group meetings, etc.)

Shared Leadership

Along with open forms of communication, MS also seeks and takes seriously the input of teachers and staff:

I think this is a school with one of the most collaborative leadership styles I have ever seen. I think it is stunning. . . . Although MS is definitely a leader, she also shares leadership and empowers people, not in the rhetoric, but in the action. (Staff developer interview, p. 33)

The in-house staff developer who offered this assessment of MS's leadership was relatively new to PS 1 (about 4 months), but she was a seasoned staff developer who had worked in many schools, both in New York City and elsewhere. She went on to relay an incident in which MS and several of her staff (the administrative assistant, another in-house staff developer) were hosting a group of federal monitors on a tour of the building followed by lunch. The staff developer commented on the ways in which MS offered her staff opportunities to field questions and provide explanations. According to the staff developer, MS was very comfortable sharing the role of "school spokesperson," thereby expressing confidence that the others were capable and interested in speaking on behalf of the school.

MS also extends a voice in decision making to teachers and staff. Several teachers, administrators, a parent and the UFT Chapter chairperson sit on the “school-wide projects planning committee,” a group that offers advice and input with respect to policy setting. According to MS, this group reviews the budget, discusses school-wide projects that will be instituted, and has a voice in determining how monies will be spent.

Everyone is Out There Actively Doing

As an observer at PS 1, it is not difficult to view teaching and learning interactions. Not only does a walk down any hallway lead past many open doorways to classrooms, but a glance into the auditorium might find children rehearsing a song that they created (under the guidance of two teachers working together), sitting in the principal’s office may offer a glance of students who have come to borrow books from MS’s private children’s bookshelf, or sitting with teachers in a classroom eating lunch might afford a glimpse of a tutoring session between a teacher and a student in the back of the room. Teaching and learning is extremely visible at PS 1; in fact, it makes the principal anxious if she doesn’t see it happening. Everyone is expected to adopt the stance of aggressively helping children, including the support staff. The following quote from MS is illustrative:

I’m a very hands-on person so I expect my guidance counselors to be talking to teachers, to be working with children, and working with parents. I don’t want them sitting doing paperwork all day. And there are people who will say, well they’re just doing the [paperwork for] middle school choice. And they’ve got all of this paperwork to do. It’s a different philosophy. Everything that we do here needs to be for kids. (Principal interview, p. 29)

There is another sense in which “everyone is actively out there doing.” The school and teachers appear to take real advantage of the wider world surrounding them. During the days of our data collection, groups of children attended a matinee performance of a Broadway play, sketched pictures from the deck of the Brooklyn Bridge, and took the subway to the zoo. In several classrooms, we observed pre- or post-field trip activities and/or other learning activities that drew upon children’s familiarity with their immediate environment. These connections to the larger world provided a vibrant quality to the learning atmosphere.

Adults Serve as Models for Children’s Learning

People communicate what is important through their words and actions . (Principal interview, P. 8)

At PS 1, the principal often reminds teachers that they serve as models for the students in everything that they do and say. In a community-based model of learning, the children are seen as being socialized into the practices of the established community by participating in that community, not by being, “taught, examined, and reduced to mechanical copiers (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 30). In this model of learning (which is discussed in more detail in the next section), knowledge, values, predispositions, and skills are communicated by what community members do in the course of their daily work, more so than by direct teaching. The following suggests that MS knows this intuitively.

Adults model values. At PS 1, one core value rings out loud and clear: the love of reading and writing. The adults clearly love books and reading; many of them keep writing journals themselves. Books can be found everywhere in the school, including the gymnasium which is

developing a library on sports history and biographies. The principal has a bookshelf in her office filled with children's books. Even the science program is built on a literature base.

When asked how they judge whether or not they know they are being successful, the majority of teachers included some reference to their children's learning to value books and learning. For example, one teacher said:

If they (the children) say to me, I love to read, or I love to write or I love doing math, it's showing me that I'm doing something positive because not only do I want them to read well and write well and do math well, I want them to love it." (Teacher interview, p. 4)

Adults model what good readers and writers do. If children learn by participating alongside adults in the community, then it would also be important for adults to model good reading and writing practices. In many of the teaching and learning interactions that were observed, teachers (or capable students) exhibited strategies associated with good reading (e.g., looking ahead, predicting, monitoring comprehension). Not only were these strategies made public for all students to view, but often explicit attention was called to them: "This is what good readers do." was heard over and over again.

Adults model a problem-solving approach to learning. Although more subtle than explicitly modeling good reading practices, MS has worked to make teachers aware that they also model an overall stance toward learning. In a teacher meeting, MS was observed to call attention to the fact that children should see adults coming together to work on joint problems. This approach to learning stresses that it is okay not to know all the answers, that risk-taking is sometimes necessary, and that mistakes are all right -- as long as one is constantly working to improve. The concrete ways

in which children can view this in teachers' behaviors include: teachers helping one another in the classroom, teachers sharing resources, teachers persisting at problems that do not yield to immediate solutions, and teachers being willing to admit that something is not working and trying an alternate approach.

How Do Teachers Learn in This Community?

My personal experience has been that this environment has been such a place to allow me to grow. And grow like I want the kids to be taught in that same way which is that room-to-fly kind of growing. Not, learn this new thing. (Teacher interview, p. 5)

Most of what the research community knows about teacher learning is based on the learning of conventional forms of instructional skills and techniques, a “learn this new thing” kind of approach (Wilson & Ball, 1996). Researchers know much less about how to encourage teachers to develop modes of practice that focus on how to assist students in the active construction of new knowledge -- a kind of teaching for which there is no simple prescription to follow. It has been argued that learning to teach in student-centered, inquiry-oriented ways requires deep epistemological shifts in how teachers view the nature of knowledge and their role in helping students come to understand that knowledge (Cohen & Ball, 1990). If we want teachers to become proficient in helping students learn in these new, more meaningful ways, they will need to learn more than skills and techniques; they will need to learn new habits of mind, new dispositions toward what it means to teach and learn, and new ways of understanding their students.⁶

⁶ In many ways, the challenge before teacher educators to help teachers learn to teach in these new ways parallels the challenges before teachers in helping their students to learn in these new ways.

In this section, we provide explanations for the way in which teacher learning occurs in the PS 1 community. Our interpretations of adult learning at PS 1 will be guided by a particular theoretical perspective, one that focuses on interaction as the source of learning, that situates learning in the context of the practices of a community, and proposes that the learning of values and predispositions are integrally interwoven with the learning of knowledge and skills (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1994).

We've identified four aspects of learning within the PS 1 community. In each case, we provide information from our interviews and observations and then place it within the interpretive frame of learning within a community of practice.

Learning Occurs as Part of the Work

During our data collection trips to PS 1, the school-level events which were observed included the following: a lunchtime meeting among primary-grade teachers that focused on planning a poetry celebration, numerous informal conversations about a variety of projects (e.g., "Images of Excellence"), two Friday morning breakfast meetings during which student work was discussed, an untenured teachers meeting in which teachers reviewed progress on their portfolios, co-teaching in an after-school program, a meeting of the dual language teachers, a common planning meeting of first grade teachers, and a parent portfolio breakfast meeting. Based on interviews, we know that these are only a subset of events that happen on a regular basis at the school. Along with daily classroom instruction, these events can be seen as constituting the structure of the work practices in the PS 1 community. Our contention is that the teachers learn continuously by virtue of their participation in these work practices.

These forms of activities would not be featured in more conventional accounts of teacher learning. Many of them occurred during times that teachers met informally and/or gathered to do work associated with a particular event or project. As such, many of them shared the characteristic that they were not intentionally designed as a pedagogical experience for teacher. Rather they were occasions during which the teachers worked together to accomplish something about which they all cared. Sociocultural theorists call such work, “joint productive activity,” meaning that individuals come together with a shared goal and work toward a joint product that is meaningful to all participants. According to sociocultural theorists, such occasions represent fertile ground for learning because individuals bring different levels of expertise and varying perspectives to the work. With high levels of motivation, participants use their differing perspectives and ability levels to move forward and learn.

This is not to say that teacher learning does not also occur in more conventional forums. PS 1 teachers enroll in a number of staff development workshops offered by the district and also take courses at nearby universities. Rather, the point of the above passages is to note that, for learning to occur, it does not need to be in the presence of purposefully structured pedagogical events. Such a decoupling of learning from intentional teaching (Lave & Wenger, 1991) helps us to see the value of the structure of one’s immediate community’s work practices as a “learning curriculum” for teachers.

Differences in Experience & Expertise as Sources of Learning

At PS 1, people are valued for their differences. People who are recognized as being skillful in certain areas are often brought together with individuals who have limited expertise in those areas (although they may be expert in other areas).

One of the most common ways in which people use their differences to learn is when more junior teachers go to their more-experienced counterparts for help in working through a problem:

I've sat down and spoke with teachers about what do you think about this lesson? On teaching this topic? They would tell me that I think it's a good lesson, or they would express the pros and cons about the lesson I had developed. And it wasn't in a negative tone, it was more a constructive perspective (Teacher interview, p. 3)

Another way in which differences lead to learning in the PS 1 environment is the relationships that have been established between the two in-house staff developers and teachers. One of these staff developers, Amy Hom (AH), is charged with leading the teachers' movement toward standards. (Her role is discussed extensively in the final section of this case study). The other staff developer, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, works with teachers on an ongoing basis on their reading and writing instructional practices. These two staff developers are recognized as possessing a "specialized" body of knowledge and skills. AH has a background in performance standards; in addition she has been a resident teacher for the district's PDL program. The other staff developer is well-versed in a host of literacy practices, including the integration of phonics and spelling into whole language approaches, the teaching of poetry, and the use of book clubs to spur motivation for and talk about reading.

Certain teachers also have reputations for being expert in certain areas. For example, one of the experienced, primary-grades teachers is known for conducting excellent guided reading groups. This expertise is readily shared with other teachers. During her prep period this teacher will go to other teachers' classrooms to conduct demonstration lessons; teachers are also welcomed to observe her teaching at any time.

It is important to note, however, that at PS 1 expertise does not necessarily equate with experience; no one is viewed as knowing everything and even senior teachers can learn from junior teachers:

I thought this would be a very nurturing environment for myself because I found everybody was very supportive of each other . . . even senior teachers were supported by the younger teachers, and vice-versa (Teacher interview, p.2).

An example of a more experienced teacher learning from a new teacher was observed this past Spring. Two first-grade teachers were working on poetry units, both with the assistance of the in-house staff developer. The less experienced teacher had been working on the unit longer and her students had become somewhat more nuanced in their ways of expressing themselves. For example, students were purposefully using clever spatial arrangements of words and lines on the page to create or enhance the overall tone and message of a poem. These two teachers spent several lunch hours together, sharing their experiences with the poetry unit and co-planning a public celebration to honor their children's writing. In this case, the more experienced teacher was observed to be eager to learn from her junior counterpart.

An important ingredient in socially based learning is the gradations of expertise and experience that exist when individuals collaborate with one another or with outside experts (Rogoff, 1994). In fact, an overall sense of directionality to the learning process is provided by these naturally occurring asymmetries between more experienced or more expert participants and novices. This overall sense of directionality does not, however, imply that novice or less-experienced learners simply “imitate” or “model” precisely what experts do. Although directionality is provided by experts, inventiveness on the part of learners and ways in which they can guide teaching-and-learning interactions is also acknowledged. For example, less experienced teachers bring fresh perspectives and can often question practices in insightful ways. In short, learners are seen to be transformed by the practices in which they engage and also to transform those practices.

Learning is Associated with Increasingly Central Forms of Participation Within the Community

The interview transcripts and fieldnotes contained several accounts of growth by individual teachers. Most of these accounts were told against the backdrop of the work practices at PS 1, although at least one was told against the broader canvas of the entire district. One example is of an upper-grades teacher (Teresa)⁷ who had been at PS 1 for years before MS arrival. When the Friday morning breakfast meetings first started to catch on as a venue for teacher collaboration, Teresa did not attend. She was always invited; she was always included; but she chose not to come. Not surprisingly, her instructional practices were very traditional and she was resistant to changing them.

As time went on, Teresa began to attend these early morning meetings. She would sit on the periphery and say nothing; but she watched and listened and thought about what she was seeing

and hearing. Slowly, her instructional practices began to change. With more time, Teresa started to add comments or ask questions during the meetings. This year, she presented a piece of student work that was the focus of one of the meetings. A visit to her classroom reveals that, in comparison to the completely basal-driven curriculum that was in place several years ago, she has come some distance.

Teresa's journey can be interpreted within a view of learning as social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Within this view, teacher learning is defined as movement from peripheral to fuller forms of participation; mastery of knowledge and skills is seen as coinciding with increasing involvement in the practices of the community. A newcomer to those practices would begin by performing tasks that, although important to the overall practice, would not be the most complex, venturesome, or demanding. As the newcomer participates at the periphery, she gains views of what the community is all about. What do members do? What do they care about? Where do they put their energies? How do they talk? In this way, she begins to assemble a picture of what it means to be a practicing member of the community. Ideally, she then moves gradually to fuller and fuller forms of participation. As she does, she becomes increasingly knowledgeable and skillful with respect to the full range of practices in which the community engages.

At PS 1, newly hired teachers (or veteran teachers who have been resistant to change) join the community, they are "granted access" to all of the practices that define it. They attend the breakfast meetings, they are invited to celebrations, they are given small parts on the writing of grants, they are encouraged to go on intervisitations. In these ways, they have "broad access to all arenas of mature practice" (Lave & Wenger, p. 110) and hence are able to gain multiple viewpoints

⁷ All teachers and students have been given a pseudonym.
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or perspectives on the community's work. Over time, their participation in the community becomes more invested, more central, and more time-consuming; concomitantly their knowledge and skills increase.

At the level of the district community, AH provides a similar example of learning associated with increasingly central forms of participation. Over the past two years, she has participated in a broad array of District 2's work practices and, by virtue of her participation in these activities, has been granted a view of what members of the community care about, how they act and talk, and what the central values are that drive their work. As she has moved to increasingly fuller forms of participation within that community (e.g., she became a member of a team representing the district at Pittsburgh-based seminars, she became a district facilitator for Standards work), AH has concomitantly acquired new skills and knowledge, she has learned to act and talk like members of the community, and, perhaps most important, her motivation for continued learning has been engaged as she begins to view herself as a member of this community.

Within District 2, there are various ways in which teachers and others can move from peripheral to more central forms of participation. AH stated this as follows:

District 2 lets you do that. I started as a substitute teacher which helped me get into a school. When a teaching position opened, I was interviewed and hired. If you have ambition and drive to learn and work hard, other avenues will open for you. For example, you could be a resident teacher with the PDL program. Whatever the district sees you have an area of expertise in, they will tap into that. They will want you to share your experiences and then

allow you to keep climbing and your experiences will keep building. That's what I did.

That's what District 2 allows you to do. (Staff developer interview, p. 74-75)

Learning includes Developing a Sense of Identity and Belonging

For many teachers, their continued learning appears to be associated with their desire to be a part of the PS 1 community -- to gain a sense of professional identity as a teacher of urban children in a successful school within a first-rate district:

I get up at five-something in the morning so that I can leave my house at six to get here to get a parking spot on little Henry Street. And one time my husband said, "Wouldn't it be easier just to find a job closer to home?" And I don't want to; I want to come here. . . . There's just something, you know, there's something here. You're invited to be a caring, growing teacher and I see that this year even more throughout the whole school. (Teacher interview, p.6)

Placing the study of teacher learning in a community-of-practice framework implies that motivation to learn is tightly tied to teachers' views of themselves as members of the community. The process of becoming part of the community is seen to be intrinsically motivating because it confers a sense of belonging. As teachers invest the increasing amounts of time, resources, and energy that are necessary to move toward full participation, they are simultaneously developing new knowledge and skills and, "more significantly, an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner" (Lave & Wenger, p. 111).

Strategies that Enable the Development and Maintenance of a Learning Community

The features of the learning community at PS 1 that are described above do not happen automatically. In fact, many observers have provided pictures of schools as places in which meaningful, shared goals, joint productive work, and continuous learning by teachers are conspicuously lacking. In this section, we describe the strategies used by MS to both develop and maintain the sense of community and to encourage the forms of teacher learning that have been described.

An Early Focus on Building the Community

There are more accounts of high performance learning communities in operation than there are careful analyses of how such communities were started in the first place. In this case study, our accounts of how the PS 1 learning community was established will necessarily be retrospective and will be told through the eyes of the main participant and architect of that learning community (MS).

In our interviews with veteran teachers at PS 1, we found evidence to suggest that, before MS's arrival, the teachers were not nearly as collaborative as they are now:

It used to be separated into groups but now it's not so isolated. You had no clue what people on, above, or below your grade were doing. You felt like you worked in a big city and had to mind your own business. (Teacher interview, p. 1).

Before MS, the school was very cliquish, composed of very tight groups. Now we are one big community. (Teacher interview, p.1).

The school has changed a lot. When I first came we were still working on Basals. It was a very structured situation . . . It was very rigid, you know, textbook oriented (Teacher interview, p. 2)

When asked about her role in establishing the current community, MS pointed to her attempts to bring focus to the goals and work practices at PS 1: “I believe that the biggest piece is that everybody’s really clear as to what my commitment is . . . There is never a change in that . . . and everything I do is related to that.” (Principal interview, p. 7) The focus that was selected for PS 1 was literacy. Literacy was chosen for two reasons: First, the population of students at PS 1 had this as their first barrier to learning; and second, at that point in time, the district was initiating a serious improvement plan that centered on literacy and hence would be supportive of her and her teachers’ learning in this area.

MS noted that another important element in the establishment of the learning community at PS 1 was the longevity of her tenure:

It’s consistency. And I think that that’s really important. I’ve been here now, this is my seventh year. And I think that it’s really important for a school to have leadership that is continuous and that’s consistent. It’s very hard if you’ve got changes every year or every couple of years, because everybody has a different way of doing things and a different belief.

(Principal interview, p. 7)

Finally MS built support for PS 1 from the Chinatown community, “one family at a time.” She talked about how Chinatown is a very small, tight-knit community and how word travels fast about the commitment of new principals. When pushed for how she “got the message out” that children were her first priority, MS smiled and said, “It’s how you treat people. It all comes down to that.”

The fact that the majority of parents do not speak English constitutes a formidable barrier to involving parents. MS sends all school messages home in three languages: English, Cantonese, and Spanish. In addition, she has hired individuals on her administrative staff that can verbally translate between and among these languages. Two of these individuals' main responsibilities involve interfacing with the families of ESL students.

Breaking down walls between teachers. In terms of actual strategies that were used to open up lines of communication between teachers, MS and others pointed to the student tutoring program that was initiated shortly before MS's arrival. During designated times, entire classrooms of upper-grades students would help classrooms of primary grade students to read and write. To facilitate this program, teachers needed to plan together, discuss their students' needs and resources with one another, and actually be present in each others' classrooms. According to MS, as this practice spread to include almost the entire school, it encouraged a respect for the school as a whole, instead of teachers thinking only about their own grades:

What that [the cross-age tutoring] did was really break down a lot of those kind of stereotypes of what an upper grade class was like to a first grade teacher or a second grade teacher. And what the lower grade classes were like. It gave each of the teachers a real respect for what the others were doing. (Principal interview, p. 23)

The cross-age tutoring was followed by the initiation of faculty conferences, held in classrooms (as opposed to a neutral space) and for a double period (as opposed to one 45-minute period). According to MS, holding faculty conferences in classrooms was another way to encourage teachers' appreciation for the content and strategies used in other classrooms and at

other grade levels. One of MS's main objectives for the faculty conferences was "to bring a coherence to the academic program." They began by asking: "What do we expect a PS 1 graduate to know?" After consensus had been reached, they backmapped to earlier grade levels. For example, if sixth graders must be able to write a coherent report on a current event, what must they learn to do in 4th grade? in 1st grade? The large-group discussions held during faculty conferences were followed by smaller meetings during which teachers in a common grade met to further flesh out their own grades' goals and objectives. These were the forerunners to today's weekly common grade-level meetings.

As she reflected on these early attempts to bring teachers together, MS cautioned: "It takes a lot of time to just get people to feel safe enough, and to feel comfortable enough to be able to talk freely in front of their colleagues. Initially when I came, most people were very shy. They did what they did, but they were not used to sharing ideas with larger groups, in grade conferences, or faculty conferences. Now they do that." (Principal interview, p. 22)

Changing the Teaching Staff

One cannot underestimate the effect that a change in the composition of the teaching faculty had on MS's ability to develop a learning community. MS has hired a significant number of new teachers, many of whom replaced teachers who she felt were not interested or capable of meeting the needs of children. Some of these teachers were counseled into early retirement, some chose to transfer out of the district, a few were given unsatisfactory ratings. MS also used the strategy of moving regular classroom teachers (who in PS 1's self-contained model spend the most time with a

single group of children) into cluster positions (teaching special subjects such as gym or art) which built on their strengths.

The flip side of removing ineffective teachers is recruiting and hiring new, effective teachers. In MS's case, recruiting qualified teachers was exceptionally difficult given her needs for bilingual teachers. MS stressed how difficult it was to find truly capable bilingual teachers and how, at times, she chose to do without a teacher as opposed to hire one whom she felt was not qualified

The extent to which MS was able to assemble a staff that reflected her ideas about the kind of teaching and learning that should be occurring in the school is shown in Figure 2. The initials⁸ of the names of the current teaching faculty appear in the left-hand column and years of hire appear horizontally along the top. The row next to each teacher's initials is shaded starting from their year of hire. The year of MS's hire (1990-91) is shaded so that, at a glance, the reader can identify when a teacher was hired relative to MS's starting date.

Insert Figure 2 Here

As shown in the Figure 2, 15 out of 29 teachers were hired by MS (just over 50%), most between the years of 1992-93 and 1994-95. At each grade level, there is at least one teacher who was hired by MS; all three primary grades have a majority of teachers who have been hired by MS. Examination of other ways of subdividing the teachers (e.g., regular teachers, bilingual teacher, dual language teachers) reveals a mixture of those who were and were not hired by MS within each of these subgroups. The sprinkling of teachers who have been hired by MS throughout the grade

levels, and throughout the three main programmatic strands in the building (regular, bilingual, and dual language) suggests that the influence of MS's hires is widespread.

Strategic assignment of newcomers. When a new person is brought on board, MS carefully considers the best placement for them in terms of grade level, type of class, and the configuration of old-timers and newcomers among whom they will be placed. Several teachers talked about their first year at PS1 in terms of those around them: both those who were also new that year, and the old-timers who were near-by that helped them out.

Investing in newcomers. MS indicated that she always made it her business to become acquainted with each individual new teacher, so that appropriate support could be arranged. She would often discuss the new teachers' backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses with the director of the UFT Teachers' Center (which is located in her building) so that they could design a plan for supporting those teachers. In addition, based on her first-hand knowledge of district staff development offerings and her discussions with individual teachers, she would recommend which of these staff development sessions the new teacher should attend.

Mediating Teachers' Ongoing Learning Experiences

Learning is viewed as a continuous process at PS 1. Hence all teachers, not just newcomers, are expected to continually upgrade their skills. PS 1 teachers regularly attend district-sponsored workshops and take courses at nearby colleges and universities in order to continue their learning. One of the traditional criticisms of teacher learning from workshops and courses is that such learning is often done for the "exchange value" vs. the "use value of the knowledge" (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Teachers often attend workshops in order to gain credit toward advanced degrees

⁸ The initials are based on teacher pseudonyms.
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and/or promotions to higher pay scales, not to necessarily learn ideas that they can then apply in their classrooms. For teachers who are truly interested in skills and ideas for the classroom, the transfer can still be difficult because they return to a school culture that does not provide fertile ground for further cultivation of those new skills. Hence the new ideas and/or skills tend to be transferred as encapsulated techniques (if they are transferred at all), rather than in profound shifts in how they deal with student as learners.

At PS 1, MS mediates off-site learning experiences for her teachers in a number of ways. First, she regulates who takes what when based on her knowledge of the workshop or course and her knowledge of the individual teachers. With respect to the PDL experience, in particular, MS feels that teachers need to know the right questions to ask so that they can target in on those learnings that will have the most payoff. If teachers attend too early in their career, according to MS, their learnings are too scattered. Teachers have come to respect MS's recommendations regarding the best time and sequencing of professional development experiences. For example, when talking about the PDL, a first-grade teacher stated:

I had asked if I could do it last year. MS said it would be best for me to wait, which was a very good decision. Last year it would have been overwhelming. I don't think I had a strong-enough feel for myself as a first-grade teacher. I didn't have a strong-enough sense of what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go last year. This year, I felt much more clear about what I needed to learn, what I wanted to work on, what kind of room I wanted to have, and that kind of thing. (Teacher interview [ES], p. 8)

Second, MS observes teachers when they return, evaluating what they've learned, as well as further supporting their improvement efforts. This sends a powerful message that off-site training is not an add-on, but rather an integral piece of learning to become a proficient member of the PS 1 community. Finally, the overall culture of PS 1 supports teachers in their attempts to put into practice what has been learned at these workshops. The teachers next door are likely to have been through a similar workshop or experience. Conversations and observations with these teacher help the teacher make the transition to the classroom. On a broader level, the values of the PS 1 community (e.g., student-centered inquiry learning) are aligned with what has been learned in district workshops, thereby proving the motivation to implement the practices.

Holding Teachers Accountable

As noted earlier, MS visits all teachers' classrooms daily. Because she observes teachers and talks to students regularly, she usually does not schedule formal evaluations (i.e., setting up the visit ahead of time, conducting a pre- and post-conference with the teacher, following up with a written evaluation). MS turns to these formal procedures of evaluation when the daily walkthroughs do not have the desired impact. According to MS, teachers know when she is not pleased with their instructional practices; her goal is for "there to be no surprises." She works, instead, to set up a collaborative, problem-solving spirit between herself and the teacher in order to make adjustments where needed.

When asked how they judge whether they are doing a good job, most teachers' responses revealed a good deal of self-assessment. An example of teacher self assessment is the untenured teacher portfolio. In addition to meeting regularly with untenured teachers (both individually and as a

group) and observing their classes on a regular basis, MS requires that they produce an annual portfolio which focuses on an instructional area that they have worked on throughout the year. The teachers typically hand in their portfolios during the final untenured teachers' meeting of the year, during which they actually share their portfolios with one another.

After MS reads each portfolio, she schedules a meeting with the teacher to discuss what growth she has seen over the year, as well as areas that still need improvement. Together, they outline what the next steps should be in that teachers' professional development. This meeting is followed by a formal letter from MS to the teacher. The teachers who have done this have responded enthusiastically:

“Instead of having observations we have teacher portfolios that we have to complete as untenured teachers and I think that’s a more viable tool for myself as a teacher to use, as opposed to being observed because when you’re observed you can prepare a lesson, as opposed to writing a portfolio that covers a topic throughout a year and really reflecting on what is good about my program and what is weak about my program and ways we felt my program needed to develop. So the portfolio is a way of tying all the different pieces together to improve myself as a teacher and ultimately all that translates back to the classroom. (Teacher interview, p. 5).

MS claims that she likes the portfolio process better than the formal evaluation process because the latter turns teacher evaluation into an “out-of-context performance.” Teachers prepare the best possible lesson and then “perform” for her. In contrast, she claims that the portfolio process is a professional and mature way to encourage continuous improvement, along with

teachers' ownership over their own learning. Her aim is to instill the practice of self-monitoring and reflection on practice and to make these processes part of the teachers' repertoires, so that they will continue to use them throughout their careers.

In addition to teacher self assessment, teachers appeared to feel pressure to perform from their peers. Given the public nature of the work practices that occur at PS 1, teachers who are not performing up to par are noticeable:

If you are not part of the community and you're not moving in the same direction to help kids then it's not a very comfortable place to be because it not like you can hide. They (all teachers & parents) know what the expectations are so they want for their children exactly the same thing. It's not like somebody can come and give them coverage and people are going to go, "Well, I don't care. . . . It doesn't make a difference." No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. If you've got my kids for 45 minutes, I expect that they're going to get something worthwhile out of that 45 minutes (Principal interview, pp. 113-114)

Teachers corroborate this pervasive sense of "sideways" accountability:

And I'm finding what I'm doing so much more work than I anticipated, so much more work at this job than at my engineering job, but I actually don't mind doing it. So that's a nice thing. And I'm sure they expect us to work hard, because everybody does here (Teacher interview, p.5)

So, I think that there's a lot expected of you, and I think that if you don't produce, you feel it. I think you would feel it. Not that it's really happened to me lately, thank God. But the first year I was here, I wasn't meeting expectations, I don't think. And I was nervous.

Because you feel it as a teacher. When you know you're not meeting the level you're supposed to be you're not happy with it, and you know the others are not going to happy with it. So you want to do the best because you see it in your children, you see it in yourself, and you want to send your kids off to the next grade and you want to be proud of those kids.

(Teacher interview, p. 9)

As indicated by this last quote, the pressure to perform well is also applied through students. Not only do lower grade teachers want to send on well-prepared students, but upper-grade teachers can get pushed by the quality of students that arrive from exceptionally good teachers. For example, at the end of the 1996-97 school year, several teachers commented that the second grade teachers would be really pushed next year because they would be receiving a really advanced class (the first graders grew tremendously during 1996-97).

Managing Time

Figure 3 shows a typical monthly schedule for PS 1. The venues for teacher-teacher interaction are identified with an asterisk. They include a standards core meeting, a standards network meeting, a 1/2 day staff development meeting, several breakfast talks, an untenured teacher meeting, a bilingual teacher meeting and a grade 2 meeting. Several of these activities are scheduled during the regular school day (standards core meetings, grade-level meetings, and dual language teacher meetings) and so require creative scheduling in order to cover children at all times. MS has done this by the creative use of cluster teachers (teachers who take children for one period for gym, science, library, or English language arts). Other activities (bilingual teacher meetings, meeting of untenured teachers and Friday breakfast talks) occur before school.

Creative management is also required to cover the times when teachers attend meetings and workshops off-site (e.g., standards network meetings are held at the district). Because MS encourages so much staff development among her teachers, she has taken seriously the need to develop a highly trained and reliable cadre of substitute teachers. For some of the programs which are sponsored by the district (e.g., the PDL), arrangements for substitute teachers are built right into the program. But for most off-site staff development events, the school must arrange for substitutes. MS has devoted a great deal of thought and energy into the way in which substitutes are hired and managed. Individuals who wish to be put on the substitute teacher list are required to first come to the school to volunteer for one full day. This allows the substitute teacher an opportunity to see what the culture of the school is like, and the teachers a chance to evaluate if this is a person that they would like to teach their children. When teachers are going to be out for training, they arrange for their own substitutes, many times getting the same person so that the children and the substitute teacher experience some sense of continuity.

The present cadre of substitute teachers has been integrated into the school in many different ways. MS has encouraged them to take advantage of the staff development offerings of the district. They are also invited to PS 1 faculty conferences and staff development days. According to MS, everyone benefits from this situation, especially the children who, because of increased amounts of dialogue between the classroom teacher and the substitute teacher, can expect continuity in their instruction.

Managing Expertise for the Best Overall Effect

MS uses the staff at her disposal creatively, based upon their interests and expertise, rather than configuring individuals' roles rigidly according to job descriptions. Teachers with special kinds of expertise are often used in staff development roles. For example, a highly seasoned upper-grades teacher who has developed considerable expertise in mathematics and in grant writing is often released to provide staff development in mathematics and is often asked to head up grant-writing teams for the school. We've already noted the primary-grades teacher who is known for being particularly skillful in conducting guided reading. A new teacher discussed how MS utilized this teacher's expertise:

MS actually recommended who we should talk to. She knew what each teacher was expert in, what they were good at, like Deborah who was always great at guided reading. MS would always send us over to observe her. She'd say, "Did you know that Deborah 's doing her guided reading at 10 this morning? I noticed that you have a prep then. Do you think you'd like to go down and see her? If you want me to arrange a prep for you later so that the two of you can conference, let me know." She would say things like that to us. (Teacher interview, p. 26)

MS also utilizes teachers whose skills she valued who are on maternity leave. During the 1996-97 school year, two teachers-on-leave were hired on a part-time basis (one-to-two days per week) to work with students in small group settings and to provide staff development for newer teachers. MS defines this as a "win-win" situation. The children and teachers get the benefit of these teachers' expertise and the teachers get the benefit of keeping their skills honed for their probable re-entry into the teaching profession (probably at PS 1) in the near future.

Finally, MS utilizes the Reading Recovery teachers in a visible in-classroom role. In doing so, she has been able to break down the walls of secrecy that often surround this program in other schools and to integrate it into the kindergarten and first grade classrooms, thereby having a much wider impact. While recognizing the specially developed expertise that the RR teachers indeed possessed, MS also arranged to have their skills more broadly shared among the teaching staff because she believed (a) that classroom teachers would benefit from knowing the kind of assistance that students were getting in the RR room, and (b) some of the RR strategies could be helpful to the teachers in the classroom setting. MS arranged for classroom teachers to visit the RR room to observe and she also arranged for a RR teacher to do staff development in the classrooms, thus helping teaching think about ways to make the transition from RR as an individualized, pull-out program to an in-classroom strategy

Bringing an Organizational Perspective to Staff Development

The recent induction of SS, a new staff developer, into the PS 1 community provides a good example of the way in which MS uses in-house staff developers in order to advance the entire school organization to a new level as opposed to viewing staff development solely as an opportunity to remediate unsuccessful teachers or enrich successful ones.

MS spent the first day with SS, describing her philosophy and how one could see it playing out in the building. She walked her through the building, introducing her to teachers and talking about each teacher individually with SS. A few days later, MS arranged two luncheons (one for the primary grades teachers and one for the upper grades teachers) during which all teachers had the opportunity to meet and chat informally with SS. For her first assignment, SS was asked to

work with the first grade (five new and very enthusiastic teachers), and two experienced upper grades teachers who were less enthusiastic. This decision was reached based on a combination of who had expressed interest and MS's judgment of where the greatest need and most fertile ground lay.

Of greatest interest here, though, is the manner in which SS has taken on the organizational goals and perspectives of MS and of the school, even as she spends most of her days working with individual teachers in their classrooms. When she talked about the work that she was doing with one of the teachers, SS put it in terms of "bringing her into the community." Although this particular teacher faced many challenges before real change in instructional practice would be forthcoming, SS noted that "we had to keep pushing, we had to keep this teacher in the conversation." Since everyone else was basically adopting a whole language approach to literacy, she felt that this teacher needed to be kept in the loop.

From SS's perspective, she couldn't think of a better place or a better way to work. She had experience in other New York City schools working with teachers in their classrooms, but not over the long-period of time that she will be spending in PS1. She contrasts her earlier experiences with the PS 1 experience saying that, before she traveled from classroom to classroom and from school to school, never feeling as though she had "a center." (p. 18). Since she has been at PS 1 consistently two days of every week, she feels as though she is "becoming part of the school, and I never felt that I was part of the schools in the [other district]. I felt always the visitor. Here I feel a sense that I belong."

SS attributes her growing sense of identity with the school to the manner in which MS and others have taken her in. She noted that going from classroom to classroom even within one building is hard work and can be experienced as decentering. She quickly added:

But I don't feel that way here. I don't feel that way because of MS. Because of Sarah in the library. Because of AH. This leadership team that exists is one that has let me in (p. 23).

Upon reflection, she suggests that one her first experiences at the school was probably very important:

And one of the first things I did was work with them on a grant writing. So, you know, when you sit and write together with a group of people, you feel like you're a part. And that's for something for the school. You feel like you're part of that. (p. 23)

By and large, SS appears to be have woven into the fabric of PS 1 even after just four months. She and MS seem to have developed a style of working together. SS trusts MS's judgments about teachers and instruction. "MS is very astute about what her teachers' needs are and I take her guidance because, certainly she's observed them for a much longer period of time. (Staff developer interview [SS], p. 30) . They both tell stories of conversations at night on the phone discussing strategies. SS attends the breakfast meetings, knows all the teachers on a first name basis, and is doing whatever she can to help teachers to better help kids.

Bringing an Organizational Perspective to Other Activities

Many other activities that are undertaken at PS 1 -- activities that elsewhere would be treated as routine administrative matters -- are also done with an eye toward how they influence the overall sense of community. Many new teachers spoke vividly about their job interview at PS 1, a

group interview conducted by the principal and a subset of current faculty. Interestingly, many of the experienced teachers, teachers who were sitting on the other side of the table, also spoke about these group interviews of prospective teachers. It appears as though this process provided the experienced teachers with the opportunity to further define themselves as a community, to represent themselves and their values to the outside world, and to refine their notions of where they wanted to go in the future based on their judgments of the kinds of person(s) they would like to hire. MS uses a similar approach to the ways in which she conducts tours and meetings with the many visitors that PS 1 receives each year.

Tending the Culture

Just as Elmore and Burney (1996) point out that District 2's organizational methods are much more than a set of management techniques or a bag of strategies, the same could be said for the kinds of things that MS does at PS 1. The culture of warmth and caring alluded to in the opening paragraphs is what makes the whole thing work. Much of this emanates from MS as she sets the tone by "how she treats people."

I see teachers come to MS to share something that they're excited about and I see her put her arm around them and treat them in a way that just so validates what they are. See, I'm getting choked up I mean, it is really beautiful. (Staff developer interview, p. 32).

The teachers have also gone a long way to building up trust and mutual respect among themselves.

I think it's like a family. PS 1 is like a family school because everybody is willing to help each other. (Teacher interview, p.1)

The Introduction of New Standards into the Learning Culture⁹

In this section of the case study, we focus on the ways in which PS 1 introduced New Standards into their learning community. In doing so, we will speak to three issues related to standards-driven improvement strategies. First, we identify conditions within the school and district which may have influenced PS 1's readiness to focus on standards. By describing specific structures, norms, and conditions that were already in place, we can begin to address the often-heard comment from visitors to PS 1: "You can do Standards here because of everything that is already in place." Second, we discuss the ways in which PS 1 administrators and teachers attempted to make standards applicable to what goes on in the classroom on a day-to-day basis, thereby addressing the concern that standards are often viewed as abstract by teachers and not relevant to daily classroom work. Third, we will begin to address the issues of variability and standards (Elmore, 1997). In what ways did MS and AH, the in-house staff developer charged with "rolling out standards" throughout the school, deal with the fact that PS 1 teachers and classrooms were not all at the same level of readiness?

Making the Ground Fertile for Standards

Standards came at just the right time. (Staff developer interview [AM], p. 56)

This quote came from AH, the in-house staff developer, as she was reflecting on her work over the past years "rolling out" New Standards into the PS1 community. In order to more fully understand her comment, we need to revisit the events that occurred at PS1 prior to the

⁹ Throughout this section whenever the term standards is used, we are referring to New Standards.

introduction of the New Standards with an eye toward how these events may have prepared the soil.

Based on interviews and subsequent discussions with MS and AH, we identified a set of conditions and events that appeared to influence PS 1's readiness to focus on standards. Figure 4 illustrates these standards-related conditions and events as they transpired over the past 10 years at PS1.

Insert Figure 4 Here

As shown in the figure (and previously discussed in this paper), prior to MS's arrival (from 1986-1990), there were minimal amounts of professional development, the teachers had little common focus or activity, and most instructional practice was fairly traditional. (This characterization of the general state of the entire school does not recognize the fact that there were several talented and committed teachers on the staff.) Upon her arrival, MS instituted the two structures around which the community formed: the practice of looking at student work and the focus on a common set of literacy practices. MS urged her teachers to take advantage of District 2's new offerings in literacy staff development (Early Literacy In-service Course [ELIC] and Continuing Literacy In-service Program [CLIP]) and followed up by observing their classrooms often when they returned.

In the years immediately following MS's arrival, many older teachers were replaced with young teachers who shared MS's vision. The amount and intensity of teacher professional

development continued to build. Following MS's lead, a consensus started to form around a school-wide focus on literacy, as teams of teachers outlined goals and objectives for student learning at each grade level, as well as strategies that would be used to help students in reaching those goals. As teachers began spending more time working together toward shared goals, the outlines of a learning community began to take shape.

A review of MS's letters from district leadership¹⁰ during the years from 1990 - 1994, reveal steady improvement on a number of fronts: the early classrooms were noted to be print rich with children involved in reading and writing activities and teachers involved in small group work; the bilingual classrooms were described as having become very interactive with a strong focus on speaking, reading, and writing; effective strategies for using good literature were evident in a variety of classrooms; and teachers were working collaboratively on and across grades. Nevertheless, there were still areas in need of improvement and PS 1's style is to continue to push and to be self critical. AH, who was then a classroom teacher, was especially self reflective:

Inside of me there was something wrong, something was not right. There needed to be a change. These second graders should not be writing (only a few) sentences. (Interview, p. 55).

The story of how PS 1 staff and teachers came to know what student work should look like and how that, in turn, influenced teachers' practice, parallels the story of PS 1's introduction to the New Standards. An important element of the standards story at PS 1 is the support that both MS and AH received from the district with respect to their own professional development regarding standards. As shown across on Figure 4, AH began attending one-week seminars at the

Institute for Learning (IfL)¹¹ on a regular basis during the 1995-96 school year. AH was the teacher representative of the District 2 team -- a team that also included a district staff developer and a principal of another school, thereby enabling her to network with others in her own district who were also developing expertise in this area. By participating in the IfL seminars, AH had the opportunity to learn first-hand about New Standards criteria for student work, reference exams, and portfolio systems -- all of which are tied to a set of performance standards which are identified for grades 4, 8, and 10 -- and to talk with leaders from other school districts who were also designing ways to utilize standards in their work.

As AH learned about standards at these seminars, she and MS began to talk about the possibilities that the performance standards offered for their school. Given PS1's tradition of focusing on student work, they could imagine using the fourth-grade performance standards as a way to benchmark what they were expecting of their students. By explicating what good student work should look like, the New Standards performance standards would also serve to raise expectations of what they should be striving for.

At this same time, MS and AH were participating in district-level meetings regarding how New Standards would be implemented in the district. One outcome of these meetings was that PS 1, along with one other school was named an elementary "demonstration site" for New Standards within the district. In accepting this label, PS 1 agreed to act as a leader in developing methods for bringing New Standards into a school environment and to share its successes and failures with other schools. As a demonstration school, PS 1 fourth-grade classrooms took the New Standards

¹⁰ Letters which were written by the Deputy Superintendent immediately following walkthroughs of PS 1.

reference examinations and piloted the portfolio system (a complement to the reference examination in that it provides evidence of performance standards that depend on extended pieces of work and accumulation of evidence over time). In addition, the PS1 community, led by AH and MS, worked intensively to introduce teachers to standards and to support them as they devised ways of using standards in their work.

Making Standards Relevant to Teachers

The task of translating what was learned at Institute for Learning Seminars to the PS 1 school community was initially viewed by AH as daunting: *When we first heard about New Standards, there was no plan, there was nothing that I could follow. So you have to plan your own* (Interview, p. 29).

Starting Small

AH and MS began by forming a Core Group that met each Tuesday morning during the first period to discuss standards. In addition to MS and AH, this Core Group was comprised of one teacher per grade level (teachers who were viewed as “leaders” for their grade), a staff developer, a parent, and a cluster teacher. According to AH, she encountered some resistance at the first meeting. Some teachers claimed that they were already doing everything that was in the New Standards books; others were adamant that national standards could not be applied to PS 1 because of their large limited-English proficient (LEP) population.

AH reported that the teachers’ initial wariness was overcome after they decided to revisit the goals and strategies that they had written in the early 90s (see Figure 4). When the teachers

¹¹ The Institute for Learning, directed by Lauren Resnick, was established to assist school personnel with setting up environments that will be supportive of all students reaching performance standards as explicated

reviewed their earlier goals and strategies, they found that they did not adequately specify what the students should know and be able to do. More troublesome was the fact that the goals and objectives no longer reflected what they were trying to do in their classrooms. Although teachers had changed their practices based on the professional development they had received, they had not revised their goals and strategies to match what they were now trying to accomplish in their classrooms.

“And that is when the whole conversation started. That’s when the talk started.” (Staff Developer Interview [AH], p. 59). According to AH, this group of teachers came to the need to revise their goals for student learning on their own. Once this work began, however, they were ready and willing to examine outside sources, such as the New Standards, as a guide for their work.

Taking it to a Wider Circle

This Core Group acted as a steering group for moving standards into the rest of the school. They also provided support for AH during the 1995-96 school year at the Friday morning breakfast meetings which had become the central vehicle for teachers to learn about standards.

Mirroring the district’s approach to learning, the Friday morning breakfast meetings began with a common set of readings. All teachers received copies of and discussed the New Standards books, and a set of articles by Lauren Resnick (“On Performance Standards: A Conversation with Lauren Resnick and Warren Simmons,” “From the Bell Curve to All Children Can Learn,” and “From Aptitude to Effort: A New Foundation for Our Schools”). They were also given copies of

the Principles of Learning -- a set of principles for learning environments that support students to reach standards.

After several sessions of becoming grounded in the big ideas underlying the standards movement, the Friday morning group turned their attention to what their own students were doing. Starting in October of 1995, they collected a series of “Best Works,” pieces of student writing that they thought signified what PS 1 students were capable to doing. They discussed what Best Work should look like and the criteria that made a particular piece of writing, “Best Work.” According to AH, these meetings were crucial for two reasons: (a) teachers across the grade levels were forced to respond to student work from grades other than their own; and (b) a “routine” was established for a productive way to examine student work. This routine involves the presenting teacher setting the context and then everyone reading the piece of work. Next, criteria are offered for why it is a piece of good work. Then the conversation inevitably turns to a discussion of what could be better. Usually several teachers will volunteer concerns and make suggestions regarding what the presenting teacher can do to push the student further. Over time, the group came to expect that no piece of work was ever good enough, and hence their norm of always pushing to the next level was created.

Most of the teachers that we interviewed stated that the school’s focus on standards has risen the level of expectations and the level of student work in the school. One upper-grade teacher who we interviewed had a particularly good vantage point, as she could observe the changes in students’ level of preparation as they arrived at her classroom year after year:

Mary Kay Stein

As the classes came up, their writing was more expressive. They would explain what they meant. They had good sentences. The structure of their writing was better. They had more skills and ways of knowing, and they also were sharing more. (Teacher interview, p. 67-8)

A cluster teacher who is also able to have an overall perspective on how students at different grade levels are developing commented:

I feel like I'm lucky because I have to go to different rooms all the time to pick up my kids or whatever and I just see such changes in the stuff that the kids are capable of processing and learning about processing. (Teacher interview, p. 6)

Looking back on student work produced in a colleague's class during an earlier point in time, AH states:

*That (students' autobiographical sketches) was okay five years ago because we really didn't know what else was out there, what it **should look like**. But now we know, and look at what they (the students) do now.* (Interview, p. 54)

Including All Teachers

The Friday morning sessions (which were voluntary and for which there was no teacher pay) were regularly attended by most, but not all, teachers. All teachers were brought into the process during a November 1995 staff development day (which was mandatory for all teachers), during which an examination of Best Works continued. At this full -day session, student work for each grade was examined. It was then decided that the school as a whole would re-evaluate the goals and strategies that had been written in the early 90s. As they did so, they would use what they were currently doing (the set of literacy practices) and the New Standards performance

standards as a guiding framework. The intermediate grades teachers found the performance standards most useful because they are designed for 4th grade students. These teachers linked their own goals for 4th-grade students to the New Standards performance standards and then all teachers worked backwards to the earlier grades.

This work continued throughout the remainder of the 1995-96 school year, culminating in the construction of the “grade-level portfolios,” a set of three-ring binders (one per grade level) that specify (a) goals for student learning at that grade level; (b) indicators and strategies for each goal; and (c) evidence (in the form of vignettes and pictures) that students are reaching or approaching those goals and that the strategies are being implemented (see Appendix A for sample pages from a grade-level portfolio.)

Working in teams with their grade-level colleagues and coming together periodically with the entire school staff, all teachers were expected to contribute to these grade level portfolios. MS provided the time and expectations for this work to happen: staff development days were devoted to it; teachers were expected to work on the portfolios during their common planning periods; and substitute teachers were brought in on occasion to free teachers up to work on the portfolios.

When asked to reflect back on this intense period of activity and assess how worthwhile it had been, MS characterized it as “arduous, but important.” She felt that the *process* of sitting down with colleagues and arguing about and eventually agreeing upon goals and indicators of meeting those goals was time well spent. This process, she claimed, helped to develop the common language that they now share; it put everyone “on the same page.” The products, that is, the books themselves, also took on significance for the community. First, they provided a

representation to the external world of what they PS 1 was doing and what they valued. The portfolios have been displayed at parent meetings and are regularly shown to visitors at the school. They have been brought to district-wide functions and to the Institute for Learning seminars. Second, the portfolios served a useful purpose with-in the community. For example, candidates for teaching positions are shown the books in order to help them gain a sense of what is valued at PS 1; once hired, these same teachers often go back to the book for the grade to which they are assigned. The books provide an excellent introduction to what is expected at the grade level. In fact, teachers within the building who transfer from one grade to another also consult the books.

We also interviewed teachers about their perceptions of the process of creating the books and the usefulness of the final products. Although each and every teacher immediately recalled the work, they displayed a mixed set of reactions to its usefulness. Some teachers found the process extremely difficult and frustrating. Most teachers, however, saw the time as well spent. For example, one teacher noted that the district framework and state guidelines were much too general and that PS 1 needed more specific guidance on what to teach and what students should be expected to know. Speaking of the grade-level portfolios, she said, “ Teachers can have a clear idea of what each grade expects of students. It helps them to get students ready for the next grade and to look back to the previous grade.”

Evidence of Standards in the Classroom

The teacher interviews were examined to identify the ways in which standards influenced teachers individually in their daily instructional practice. Three areas of practice were brought up with the most regularly: instructional planning, reflection and self-evaluation, and public explication

of process and product. The first two occur before and after actual instruction; the last occurs during instruction.

Instructional planning. Several teachers mentioned that they had found the performance standards and the grade-level portfolios useful for planning what would be covered during a given unit of study or even over the course of the year. By reviewing what students would be expected to know and be able to do by the end of the year, teachers would get a clearer sense of what kinds of knowledge and skills should be covered. One fourth grade teacher admitted, “There were areas that I used to neglect before my acquaintance with the New Standards performance standards; now I feel more confident that I am covering what I should be. (Teacher interview, p. 2)

Reflection and self-evaluation. When asked how they judge how well they are doing as a teacher, several respondents indicated that they evaluate their effectiveness by how well their students were learning and that a good gauge for student learning was the performance standards and the grade-level portfolios. As will be discussed in the next section, teachers also looked to intra-individual improvement as an important indicator of how students were progressing.

Explication of process and product. In our interviews, we attempted to draw out teachers’ explicit notions of what “standards-based practice looks like.” With this as our prompt, we identified two main translations of standards to the classroom: the public explication of process; and the public explication of criteria for a good product.¹² Most discussion of process was at a general level; it involved bringing to the surface the stages or steps involved in creating a good piece of work. It was sometimes contrasted with earlier forms of teaching during which only the final,

perfect stage was displayed or talked about. A description of this idea was provided by AH as she discussed a teacher whose classroom teaching she felt exemplified standards:

There would be process work up. For example, she wrote this letter to Barnes and Noble to thank them for having the kids in looking at their books and using their store as a model for their library (to look for categories for organizing their books). There would be a first draft of the letter. Then you'll see a second draft and a third draft. But she did it on big paper, like for the public to see. If you asked the kids about it, they would say 'oh, yeah it's like a process. We were learning together.' (Interview [AH], p. 69)

A corollary to making the process public is placing more responsibility on students to work through a task from beginning to end on their own and to monitor their own work. Rather than students depending on the teacher for step-by-step guidance, they are given tools that should enable them to work through the complete task on their own. When asked how standards play out in her classroom, one first-grade teacher replied that she now has kids look at the process: "I used to tell them everything. Now, I make them go through the process and be more independent. I check less and expect more. I don't have to hold their hands. They have more responsibility." (Teacher interview, p. 1)

The public explication of criteria for a good product was manifested in different ways at different grade levels. The fourth-grade teachers talked about using the entry slips from the New Standards Portfolios (see Appendix B for an example) as a method of communicating to students what was expected, often in the context of actually constructing an assessment portfolio. The

¹² We found that intermediate-grade teachers tended to use the New Standards materials more directly; the pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and primary-grade teachers found the New Standards materials less directly

philosophy behind this, of course, is that the portfolio becomes much more than a method of assessment; it also assumes pedagogical functions. As students select and justify the work that is placed in their portfolios, they are learning how to monitor and judge their work.

At other grade levels, teachers reported using the goals and objectives from their own grade-level portfolios and/or adaptations of the fourth-grade performance standards to communicate to students what was expected of them. For example, a second grade teacher required her students to keep writing portfolios and she adapted the writing conventions from the English -Language Arts performance standards as criteria for the portfolios -- criteria that were shared with the students and their parents.

Yet another way in which public explication was manifested was “labeling.” Speaking about an exemplary teacher AH noted:

She would have charts up, just the way she labeled them. She would have a daily public journal of what the kids noticed about themselves as readers. And then she would have a chart about “What do you notice about what a good writer or a good reader does?” It is hard to explain because I don’t want to lose the essence of it. It’s the way she had labeled everything that made it so informative. All these kids were expected to be good readers and writers before they left that class.(Staff developer interview [AH], p. 68-69)

All of these methods of bringing standards into the classroom appear similar in one respect: they are meant to serve a metacognitive function; students are being shown how to step back from the learning process itself in order to monitor how well and how strategically they are functioning as learners. By making students more aware of what good learning looks like -- both the process and

the product -- this aspect of standards-based practice provides an important component of the educative process. When done well, all students are granted access to a set of clearly articulated parameters of what they need to do and how they can monitor their progress in doing it.

Managing Variability

Elmore (January 1997) views the existence of variability at various levels of the educational system as one of the most difficult challenges to overcome in the move towards standards-based education. While district leaders must manage variability at the level of schools and principals, school principals are most directly concerned with managing the variability that exists at the level of classrooms. The two main factors that contribute to variability at the classroom level are (a) the perceived needs and strengths of the group of students in the classroom; and (b) the perceived style and competence of the teacher. In this section, we discuss each of these factors, how they contribute to variability in MS's school, and the ways in which she deals with it.

Variability Among Students

If we take the classroom as the unit of analysis, the most obvious way to discuss variability among students at PS 1 is by language proficiency.¹³ We identified little to no difference in MS's expectations or actions with respect to regular, bilingual, and dual language classrooms. All teachers attend the same staff development and are expected to use the same techniques in their classrooms (e.g., the Balanced Literacy program). In fact, many of the staff believe that some of the participatory, learning-in-context approaches associated with whole language are especially essential for second language learners. In particular, MS feels strongly that the bilingual program be held to the same standard and offer the same opportunities for students as the regular and dual

language programs. Children who have just arrived in this country are expected to achieve in all the content areas and teachers are expected to move the students into mainstream classrooms within 12 to 18 months.

According to MS, the staff always must be on guard about holding the same expectations for all students. In weekly conferences that are held to review struggling students, there is sometimes a tendency not to bring a second-language-learner to the table for consideration as a student in need of extra help because of a tendency to blame their problems on language. MS explained that she and her staff are constantly trying to “get beyond” the language barrier to clearly identify and deal with both the strengths and weaknesses of individual children.

When standards were discussed during the interviews, most teachers at PS 1, as well as MS, stressed the need to characterize students both in terms of whether or not they were meeting standards *and* the degree of improvement that the child shows over some given period of time. After unequivocally stating that all students need to be held to the same standard, MS goes on to express her feelings about also looking at an individual’s growth over time:

The child should be given credit for having moved forward. . . . I think that there needs to be something that looks at that. I really believe that they should move forward, not a question, and I think we should be accountable for their growth and they should be accountable for their growth. . . .But I think that moving forward should count. (Principal interview, p. 123).

Teachers expressed a similar viewpoint:

¹³ All classes are heterogeneously grouped with respect to ability.

I think that it is fair to have the same standard, a high standard, for everyone. . . . But I also really need to know each student individually so I can have a really good sense of what that student is able to achieve, and where that student has come from based in terms of the beginning of the school year; where they are and where they've been and I need to take that into account and the school needs to take it into account and the parents need to take it into account. (Teacher interview, p. 21)

One of faces of the variability issue is the manner in which the district takes into account the conditions that exist at local schools. Given the fact that the majority of students in MS's school arrive unable to speak English, PS 1 appears to have a set of conditions that may warrant a special consideration from the district.¹⁴ This has already begun. At PS 1, some students who have not been successful are provided with more instructional time beyond the normal school day. As part of a district initiative, an extended-day program was offered at PS 1 during Spring 97 for all third-grade students. During the 1997-98 school year, this program will be enlarged to include third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students and will begin much earlier (October). Finally, all students at PS 1 were given the opportunity to attend an extended-year program during Summer 1997. At PS 1, an overwhelming majority of students took advantage of this program.

Variability Among Teachers.

PS 1 teachers can be placed roughly into four main groups. The first group, which is by far the largest, is comprised of teachers who whole-heartedly buy into the direction in which the school is moving. Many are young teachers who are new to the profession and who are developing -- if

¹⁴ Overall, 20% of the students in District 2 are ESL students.

not already displaying -- competent instructional practice. In MS's words, "They take ideas and run with them." Most, but not all, of these teachers were hired by MS.

The other three groups are much smaller. Together, they do not equal the size of the first group. One characteristic that they do share is that they were all on board before MS's arrival. Group #2 is comprised of those teachers who "are open to new ideas, but who don't necessarily take each new idea and run with it" (MS's words). These teachers have always been considered to be exemplary teachers by MS, by parents (parents request placement in their classes), and by informed outsiders.¹⁵ Although they do not challenge the new ideas permeating the school (they may even claim that they have been implementing these "new" ideas for years), they also do not openly embrace them or march under their banner.

The third group is comprised of teachers who have slowly begun to improve based on a hesitant, but unmistakable embrace of the school's philosophy under MS. These teachers, who have been teaching for 20 - 30 years, need to make a difficult transition to a new set of practices within the school-level community *and* within their own classrooms. Although they have reservations -- in one case, because her previous traditional style of bilingual teaching was recognized and honored decades ago -- they are slowly trying to change their practices.

The fourth and final group consists of teachers who, like those in the third group, were at PS 1 long before MS's arrival. In this case, however, the teachers have remained resistant to changing their instructional practice and becoming involved in the school-level community. Although

¹⁵ One of these teachers was requested as a cooperating teacher by a professor at Pace University as I was sitting in the principal's office. The Pace professor claimed that she was the best placement that she had ever had to offer student teachers.

MS and others are not satisfied with the kind of practice occurring in these classrooms and continue to press for change, there is no indication that this group has internalized the need to change.

Just as the district must negotiate with school principals who bring very different sets of constraints and resources to the table, so too does MS need to negotiate with teachers who bring different constraints and resources to the table. She has already stated that she will not negotiate based upon type of student (regular, bilingual, dual language), so what remains as potentially negotiable items will relate to the variability contained within her 29 classroom teachers -- teachers who fall roughly into the four groups described above.

Figure 5 presents a matrix of items that, in our judgment, could hypothetically fall within the realm of negotiations. The items all pertain to professional development, teacher participation in school work practices, and teacher-principal interactions; the reader will note that none of the items pertain to student learning. As noted above, all students achieving to standards in not negotiable in this school

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Insert Figure 5 Here

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As shown on the figure, items in the first four columns are not negotiable. These are considered to be mandatory practices at PS 1; all teachers are required to participate.

In the next four columns, one sees differences across the four groups in terms of their participation and the degree to which they are urged to participate in various other forms of professional development. The reader will note that teachers in Group 1 appear to both need and

want the many resources that are available through the school and district. Not only do they eagerly participate in activities regardless of whether they are mandatory or not, they also go out of their way to request certain kinds of training, to volunteer to present at a Friday breakfast meetings, or to invite MS to their room. MS's visits are characterized by discussions regarding what is going well, what isn't going so well, and how MS can assist the teachers. Teachers view MS as their ally, and readily share problems and concerns with her.

The teachers in the second group, on the other hand, appear to have developed a different kind of understanding with MS. They do not always participate in all of the professional development; although always invited by MS, the agreement seems to have been *implicitly* reached that their absence from these meetings is okay as long as they keep up their excellent teaching practices and keep producing good students. On the other hand, they continue to be a part of the PS 1 community in many other ways. They will invite MS to their classrooms and MS often takes visitors to observe their classrooms.

Teachers in the third group receive the greatest amount of urging to participate in professional development. With coaxing, they often do. The progress in terms of actual change in practice is slow, but definitely in the right direction. MS's visits to these classrooms are more formal and directive, as she works hard to ensure that these teachers are applying what they've learned in professional development to the improvement of their daily teaching.

MS relates to teachers in the fourth group in yet a different manner. These teachers do not participate in the Friday Breakfast Talks (although invited), but MS does request that they attend certain staff development programs which she feels will be especially useful to them. These include

both district-sponsored staff development and working with in-house staff developers. MS visits their classrooms regularly, although she is the one who always needs to initiate these visits because these teachers do not voluntarily seek her out. The classrooms visits are the most formal and evaluative. MS will often ask to see student work and request that changes be made in practice based on her review of the work. Written evaluations are sometimes necessary.

If one looks across these four groups of teachers, one sees that MS has negotiated a different style of interaction with them surrounding some, but not all, of the work practices characteristic of the PS 1 community. By mandating participation in some school practices, MS ensures that all teachers are kept in the loop and provided perspectives on what the community stands for and cares about, as well as their commitment to children's learning. In other areas, however, MS is selective with respect to how hard she pushes and how directive or evaluative her tone is.

Conclusion

In this case study, we set out to fulfill two main objectives: to describe the learning community for adults at PS 1 and to discuss the ways in which standards have been introduced into this community. Our interview and observational data suggest that the learning community that exists is anchored by a focus on students and their learning. The ways in which adults learn within this community is by interacting with one another around this focus and around a common set of literacy practices. The organizational strategies that MS employs to maintain the PS 1 community include a variety of practices, many of which involve bringing an organizational perspective to activities which are commonly thought of "one teacher at a time." In addition, many of these

strategies have a strong interface with District 2 philosophy, goals and activities. In our judgment, PS 1 under the leadership of MS would be characterized as one of the district schools which is “with-the-drill” (Elmore & Burney, 1997).

PS 1’s movement toward standards has been detailed in a fairly elaborate way. The conditions that enabled them to undertake standards work in the first place as well as the specific ways in which standards were seeded into the school were described. Our intention is not to suggest that this is the only way in which to approach standards, but rather to provide one example of how it has been done along with enough contextual details to allow others to judge the similarities and differences between PS 1’s situation and their own.

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Figure 2	60-70	70-80	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90	90-91	91
FXM (PK)													
E2D (PK)													
FX (PK)													
MF (PK)													
KM (K)													
DMM (K)													
MK (K)													
XF (K)													
I2 (1st)													
FT (1st)													
TU (1st)													
DU (1st)													
NL (1st)													
EP (2nd)													
LM (2nd)													
FD (2nd)													
BH (2nd)													
SC (3rd)													
HM (3rd)													
TT (3rd)													
ON (3rd)													
TS (4th)													
QD (4/5)													
TO (4th)													
CH (4th)													
TM (5th)													
DL (5th)													
LX (5th)													
NQ (5th)													

Figure 2. PS 1 Teachers and dates of hire. (MS was hired in 1990).

Note. The dates of hire were determined by teacher self-report in an interview setting. There may be slight inacc interpretation.

Appendix A

Sample Pages from a Grade-Level Portfolio Book

Figure 2	60-70	70-80	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86	86-87	87-88	88-89	89-90	90-91	91
Louie (PK)													
Chan (PK)													
Wong (PK)													
Eng-Lopez(PK)													
Lin (K)													
Leung (K)													
Joe (K)													
Genet (K)													
Yu (1st)													
Sansone (1st)													
Tsang (1st)													
Tang (1st)													
Kaminski (1st)													
Oxman (2nd)													
Lee (2nd)													
Chan (2nd)													
Grosdorf (2nd)													
Beck (3rd)													
Lueng (3rd)													
Sheng (3rd)													
Mattis (3rd)													
Roberts (4th)													
Chin (4/5)													
Ng (4th)													
Gustafson (4th)													
Lum (5th)													
Kong (5th)													
Wong (5th)													
Posner (5th)													
Amy													
Jeanette													
Roberta (UFT)													
Lau(Good Jean)													
Christian													

Regular 6/10 Bilingual 3/5 Dual 4/6

Appendix B

Sample Entry Slip from New Standards Portfolios

Mary Kay Stein