ABSTRACT
        In two parts, this paper discusses the role of crisis
and "textmaking" (text writing) in a school and university
partnership, otherwise labeled as "co-invention." Co-invention
facilitates curriculum improvement, active learning strategies, and
teacher talk reduction. Methods of co-invention frame the discussion.
The work reported in this paper derives from a project of
co-invention now in its third year involving Brown University and
Hope High School, Providence, Rhode Island. Part one focuses on the
Hope High School Project's experimentation with the following methods
of co-invention: (1) the use of crisis as a way to crystallize
commitment to princ: ~les of school reform and curriculum development;
and (2) the use of documentation or textmaking as way to keep track
of the work of co-invention. Part 2 centers on two texts actually
used by the Hope Project to keep track of curriculum development
generated by school crises and student incompletes. The discussion
concludes by indicating that textmaking and co-invention are powerful
tools to be implemented in school reform endeavors. (JAM)

Beyond Collaboration: The Role of Crisis and Textmaking in a
School-University Partnership

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Much more commonly than it is now, school reform was once regarded as a product line developed by the university in the style of post-dustbowl agricultural innovation. Instead of hybrid seed, a particular school reform product might be a certain curriculum like New Math, or a teaching technique like Programmed Instruction. Its development at the university or university-dominated laboratory was followed by effective diffusion -- connoting smooth and pervasive penetration of the market, then by school-site adoption -- connoting crisp decisiveness and finality (Berman, in Lehming & Kane, 1981).

Of course, some effort still follows this model. That is because it can be profitable, as, for example, when it results in the production of new textbooks, technology, software, etc.; or when it creates a market for new training schemes to improve "teacher effectiveness" and the like. But it is also because it is so much cleaner and less likely to turn dispiriting than the obvious alternative, which is often to follow one's cherished innovation past the point of adoption only to watch it dissolve in contextual muck. Then one is left to rail at the incompetence of school people, and to seek absurdly to insulate the next innovation from their influence.

Yet many in the last ten years have braved the muck, and not fallen easily to railing. They have been fortified by several influences. These include an increasing tendency, following

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Coleman's sobering 1966 report, to study schools intimately and even to find them "effective" beyond idiosyncrasy; a widely cited Rand study (1974-1978) of the Federal role in school reform, which held that schools are more likely to <u>adapt</u> than to <u>adopt</u> externally devised innovations, but that such negotiated change can be nonetheless real change; and some diminution in public policy circles, following the Viet Nam War, of trust in central authority and rational control, with a corresponding growth in the feeling that muck may be just another name for democracy.

In fact, for much of the last ten years, smart university-driven school reform schemes have tended to be <u>collaborative</u> ones. In the collaborative model, school reform is the consequence of a process rather than simply a product, a process in which university-based and school-based people work together. The process may be regarded as predominately political (House, 1979; Lipsky, 1980), or predominately cultural (Sarason, 1971; Wolcott, 1977), but it is in any case time-consuming, messy, and far more complex than the hybrid seed scenario: muck by any other name.

One excellent depiction of collaborative school reform is Hall and Hord's (1987). Drawing upon more than a decade of research, they portray a collaborative change process that at its best takes many years, thousands of interventions by the agents of change (whether university- or school-based), and a continual and systematic effort to ground these interventions in a clear

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understanding of teachers' and other participants' points of view. The great virtue of their portrayal is that it points out ground while also acknowledging muck. It helps collaborative change agents do their long, tiresome, and often disheartening work by giving them a place to stand: a solid substratum below the messy negotiation and apparent fitfulness of change. When I first discovered their work, I was joyous for the ground it gave my own efforts as a university-based agent of school reform.

Hall and Hord claim that participants in school reform projects, like the one with which I am involved, can be expected to progress through predictable developmental levels in their concerns about the change underway, and in the levels of their use of whatever constitutes the innovation. They also claim that any given innovation at any given time and for any given participant is apt to have a distinct configuration, and that part of the work of change agents like me is to coax these various configurations into some kind of workable match-up. In this regard, however, they utter a warning which I quote here because of its relevance to an argument I will later make. "All too frequently," they say, "Change processes are carried out with no clear and concrete description of what the innovation is. This lack of specificity increases teacher frustration and informational and personal concerns"(p. 125). The word concerns is a key one for Hall and Hord, who term their entire model for successful school reform a "concerns-based" approach. They

suggest that change agents should gear their work closely to the answers they receive as they continually ask change participants three questions: How do you _feel_ about the innovation? Are you using it? What _is_ it?

Their advice to focus first on feelings has helped me enormously to understand and approach my daily work, and their suggestion to use questions simultaneously as gauge and spur has been very helpful to me. But there is something about the'r third question that bothers me, and my bother is my chief motive for writing this paper.

True to contemporary good common sense that school reform must have its local character, that it is unlike hybrid seed, Hall and Hord's third question -- What _is_ the innovation? -- invites and expects a wide variety of response. On the other hand, it is not wholly an open question. Hall and Hord reveal in the examples by which they illustrate their theory, and in the taxonomy of interventions they lay out, that they expect the good change agents who ask the question to have an ideal answer in mind -- some platonic sense of what the innovation might be beyond context, politics, culture, and all other practical constraints. In short, their theory is really about the ways in which schools can be helped sensitively and effectively to implement change; but it is not about the ways schools can be helped to _invent_ change.

But why should this bother me? Why should schools need to

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Invent change, rather than simply implement the already invented?
I have two answers. First, as Sarason (1971, 1983), Goodlad
(1970, 1984), Wolcott (1977), Cusick (1983), and others
demonstrate, schools are too complex to accomodate most
prefabricated change. And, second, because university expertise
cannot prefabricate in any case the kind of change that schools
need most: change designed to keep changing. Schools do not need
new curricula, for example, so much as they need a new attitude
toward curriculum, one which views it as more like a conversation
about knowledge than a repository for it. Certainly the
university must be a party to such a conversation because of its
preeminent role in generating the conversational terms, but it
cannot tape the conversation in advance so that teachers may
simply replay it for their students. The 1986 Carnegie Report, A
Nation Prepared, argued that only teachers who think for
themselves, who are capable of acting independently and
collaboratively, who are keen in the powers of critical judgment,
can produce students with the same traits -- and that only such
students are fit for the twenty-first century(p. 25). Obviously
such teachers cannot be concocted in federally funded research
centers -- or, I would argue strenuously, in even the best
teacher education programs -- but rather they must concoct
themselves within real schools by freely and continuously
inventing change.

Anu so, in my view, university-driven school reform faces a

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great challenge: how to go beyond collaboration to what might be called co-invention. The challenge requires first that we in the university get much closer to particular schools and stick with them long enough to understand what I fear we can never otherwise manage to understand: namely, that the complexity of their problems exceeds our singular capacity to devise solutions. Then we can turn the energy we save by giving up prefabrication to the work of devising and enacting new methodologies of co-invention..

The work reported in this paper derives from a project of co-invention now in its third year, involving Brown University and Hope High School, Providence, RI. The project is part of a larger network of high school reform projects, sponsored by Brown, and collectively known as the Coalition of Essential Schools. The Coalition derives from A Study of High Schools reported in Sizer (1984), Powell, Cohen, and Farrar (1985), and Hampel (1986). Current reports include those t. Wiggins (1987), Chion-Kenney (1987), and by Hope project teachers Aronoff and Toloudis (1987). The work of the Coalition hinges on the commitment of member projects to a set of common principles which are meant to guide fundamental structural change without prescribing its exact shape (Prospectus, Coalition of Essential Schools). The principles propose a series of deliberately vague substitutions: a curriculum based on essential questions for cne based on broad coverage; an insistence on active learning by

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students, replacing an emphasis on the delivery of instruction by teachers; award of diplomas upon exhibition of mastery, rather than upon completion of seat time; a single and high set of expectations for students, rather than expectations varying by social class, perceived ability, etc. The principles are vague insofar as they do not specify essential questions, advocate teaching methods, or suggest specific policies and structures. In fact, they are typically expressed in common Coalition parlance by even vaguer aphorisms: "less is more", "student as worker", "teacher as coach". The vagueness itself conveys a principle, however, and constitutes part of the Coalition's response to the challenge of co-invention: it offers vagueness in order to leave to its school partners themselves the work of clarification. It expects such work to be carried out in sustained policy conversations in which teachers are key participants, and to which university-based consultants sometimes contribute.

There is a huge methodological problem inherent in this strategy, however, and it is the one to which this paper is addressed. Vague principles, though they may be necessary to school empowerment, are nonetheless insufficient to spur action, to focus action, and to inform an evaluation of progress. How can vague principles succeed where direct regulation has failed? How precisely can a teacher teach less but more science? How is one image of "student as worker" or of "essential" mathematics

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better than another? Why should teachers risk the practical

upset of significant change? In short, how can a school reform

project hold itself seriously to a principled commitment without

relying simply on its university partner to prescribe every step

and to monitor compliance?

This paper will examine an emerging response to this

methodological problem in the work of the Hope High School

Project. It will focus specifically on the Project's

experimentation with the following methods of co-invention: (1)

th. use of self-imposed crisis as a way to crystallize commitment

to principles of reform and to generate the invention of

innovation; and (2) the use of documentation or textmaking as a

way to keep track of the work of invention.

Part II of the paper consists of two texts actually used by

the Project to keep track of inventions generated by its "crisis

of the incompletes". In Part II, therefore, the reader must

maintain a double focus in his or her reading: on the crisis

itself -- its circumstances and inventions; and on the

methodological question at hand -- the potential usefulness to

any school reform partnership of crisis and of the documentation

of its effects.

I must add that such usefulness is not substantiated in Part

II, which is intended to describe a technique not validate it.

Validation must await further research in this and other

settings. In fact, to say that the Hope project is experimenting

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with a methodology of school reform, as I do above, may be quite misleading. Actually we are mucking around in school reform, which is what we must do to have real school reform. In the process of mucking around, however, we think we may be discovering some new ground, and I wish to point it out in an anecdotal way so that we and others may later explore it more systematically.

I will also say, however, that as this paper is being written, the policy struggle depicted below seems to be nearing settlement, and that there is evidence that the texts reprinted here, and other texts made by the Project's Head Teacher, have had an influence on the movement toward settlement. There is less evidence available yet that the crisis itself has been instrumental in maintaining commitment to the project's principles of reform. Nevertheless, as a project participant, I believe such to be the case. At the same time I believe that the crisis has had an unforeseen salutary effect on our school-university partnership: It has enabled me as a university-based participant to shake off all illusion about my singular capacity to invent good solutions to school problems, and has enabled to recognize the practical necessity of co-invention. It strikes me that this alone is worth something -- that all university-driven school reform projects might be better to the extent that their university-based participants gained a touch more humility.

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Part II

TEXT 1: THE CASE OF THE INCOMPL.TES: An Exercise in Professional
Decisionmaking(1)

[The following text was created as a means of tracking the crisis

underway for the benefit of Project participants, but also as a

means of gathering feedback on this crisis from outside parties.

Thus it was presented by several Project participants as a thinly

disguised case study at a workshop in professional

decisionmaking, held at Wheelock College, Boston, in March 1987.

The reactions of workshop participants were then fed back into

the Project's owr struggling and growing policymaking apparatus.

In a larger sense, both this text and the second are about

policymaking much more than they are about the particular crisis

at hand.   In this sense, they attempt to encourage the kind of

change touted above: change that keeps on changing.]

Past

The Pilot Project at Bright High Scnool is among a number of
efforts underway in this once exemplary urban high school to
restore its pride and excellence. The symptoms and catalysts of
the school's decline include a low attendance rate among students
and a high drop-out rate, a poor image within the community, a
history of brief tenure among administrators, a neglect of the
school by the central district administration, a deterioration of
the physical condition of the building, a profound morale slump
among the faculty, and a great waning of teaching and learning
energy within classrooms.

With the financial support and advice of a local university,
the Pilot Project entrusts 100 Bright High School freshmen to the
care and exclusive teaching of an interdisciplinary team of 5
teachers, who will work with these students through at least
their sophomore year. By agreement of the School Board and

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teacher's union, the team officially has very few organizational or curricular constraints beyond the following severe one: it must focus its teaching on what is "essential", and must accept joint responsibility for ensuring that students learn. However, team members feel residually constrained by district and school policies and by their acquired sense of how high school is supposed to be. On the other hand, they feel the pressure of an expectation, reflected in the name Pilot Project, that their work portends schoolwide change of significant dimensions. In this regard, they expect to be joined next year by a second team of teachers who will teach an additional group of 100 students, then a third team in the third year, and so on.

Last year, during several months of paid leave, the team members planned an "essential" curriculum in math, science, English, and social studies; and they revised a schedule providing them double teaching periods, and two periods per week of additional and common planning time. Finally, they agreed to continue sharing policy power under the chairmanship of a lead teacher, and even established several policies -- including one which particularly relates to the problem of this case: in order to ensure students' mastery of the new essential curriculum, the Project will award only A's and B's. Any student who deserves less must receive an I for incomplete-- whether on a particular assignment or as a quarterly grade, until such time as he or she makes up whatever deficit exists.

The Project's Advisory Council first greeted this policy with great skepticism. Its members, including parents, a university professor, and the president of the teacher's union, felt that its likely consequence would be grade inflation. As one parent put it, "Sure, the kids will get B's but not real B's. " In fact, the consequence has proved quite different, though equally troublesome: teachers have held the line on "real" B's, producing a massive number of Incompletes. The specific record is that at the end of the first quarter 78% of the students earned I in at least one subject, with 24% earning I in 3 or 4 subjects: at the end of the second quarter, these figures changed to 71% and 41% respectively.

In early November, the team reacted with relative calm to the first wave of I's. The year seemed then still new; the kids would come around. The Advisory Council was even pleased: this proved that there had been no grade inflation. The teachers were only worried then about how they might cope with the problem of dealing simultaneously with second-quarter work while keeping track of overdue first-quarter work, and about how they might ever manage to motivate students to complete homework assignments overdue by as much as two months.

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That is when a university consultant suggested that they
declare a moratorium on first-quarter make-up, and rely on
"exhibitions" as the means for wiping out I's. By "exhibition,"
the consultant meant an evaluative activity package in each
subject, designed to reflect the key elements of the first
quarter's curriculum. She envisioned something lean but not
minimal, neither harder nor easier to pass than the accumulated
body of first-quarter assignments, perhaps even something
designed to instruct as well as assess. She offered to design
such exhibitions herself in close consultation with the teachers.

The team accepted the suggestion, with most members relieved
by its prospect of a fresh start combined with a quick but
honorable means of resolving past business. But other members,
while endorsing the "experiment", cautiously reserved judgment on
its ultimate workability and honorableness.

Present

So far the exhibitions have worked neither quite so well as
the consultant envisioned, nor quite so poorly as some team
members feared. Now, in the middle of the third quarter,
somewhat more than three-fifths of the first-quarter incompletes
remain on the books, as do almost all of the second-quarter
incompletes. Yet many students are still working on exhibitions,
and almost every day one or two manage thereby to eliminate a
first-quarter incomplete. Discouraged by the slow track record
of first-quarter passing-by-exhibition, however, and for other
reasons that emerge in the conversation below, all but one team
member chose not to construct second-quarter exhibitions. To
make up second-quarter deficiencies in three of their four
subjects, therefore, students must make up all missing
assignments and earn at least B on all graded work.

As spring looms, so fades the optimism of the fall which had
anticipated an eventual dispatch of the problem of the
incompletes. The problem now seems the central issue of the
Pilot Project -- even its albatross, and dominates the
conversation of every planning meeting.

We are about to eavesdrop on one of these meetings in order
to gain a closer sense of the various ways in which members of
the team view the problem. But before we do, a word on how the
Pilot Project students feel about it: a recent poll of student
opinions, conducted by the Student Leadership Committee, reported
greater dissatisfaction with the A-B-I grading system than with
any other facet of the Project. Several students have
vociferousl demanded that the Project "bring back the C. "

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Team Meeting

Tim: The problem is these incompletes just defe reality.

Simon: That's right, they defer reality.

Tim and Simon seem to agree, but actually each has a different reality in mind. Tim's reality is failure. The incompletes, he thinks, are not working well as incentives because the students do not anticipate that they will ever have to do anything about them. The majority of the incompletes, he says, have been earned by kids, otherwise able, who simply refuse to engage themselves in the learning process. And despite all the powers of their craft, he argues, teachers cannot force students to commit themselves to learning. Tim wants to announce therefore that all incompletes will turn irrevocably to F's at the end of the year if those who received them have not taken the necessary steps to erase them by then. Moreover, he thinks an F in even one subject ought to result in termination from the program. If after a year of support and exhortation, such kids do not manage to find the personal energy and courage to wipe out these incompletes, he says, then the program ought to find other kids to take their place. "Besides, what's the alternative?" he continues. "Are we going to let them make up an F in summer school -- which everybody knows is a joke? Or are we going to let some kids take one or two or three of their subjects outside the team next year so they can repeat the course that's incomplete? What's the meaning of a team in that case?"

In support of his position, Tim cites the complaint of one student's psychologist who urged the staff to spell out what would happen to his client if he failed to make up his incompletes by the end of the year. "Josh has to know what the ultimate limit is," declared the psychologist as he met with the whole team one day. "Otherwise he will keep testing until he finds it. and somewhere down the line, that limit has to involve continuation in the program."

Simon, on the other hand, is strongly opposed to telling any student that he or she may not continue in the program. He thinks that many of the students in the program are now as they are because so many other programs and teachers have given up on them before. He feels that he has given his personal assurance that this will not happen in the Pilot Project.

"Maybe the Joshes need these warnings of termination," he says, "but remember that they have psychologists and parents to ensure that our program is not their last and only option. What

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about Corinne? If we tell Corinne that her incompletes will turn to F's next summer, it won't bother her at all. It will just confirm what she's always known -- that she's going to be a drop-out. It will just seal her doom."

Yet Simon agrees with Tim that a dangerous illusion is loose in the Pilot Project: to let students proceed with third-quarter work though they have not completed second-quarter assignments strikes him as a message to these students that they are not accountable for work they decline to do. The reality which he wishes to defer no longer is the reality of assignments left undone. That is why he has undertaken an experiment in his own teaching to hold students back from new work until they have completed old. So while his student teacher teaches new material to students who are caught up, he works with laggards in the library.

"But I don't have a student teacher," Tim points out. "How am I supposed to teach different things to different people in the same room?"

"Why Not?" Simon asks. "Teachers are doing it right now in elementary schools. With the double-period schedule, we've got the time. Why can't we figure out how to individualize our teaching?"

This implication of Simon's experiment makes Laura nervous. She is worried that it may lead to an effort to have the whole team adopt mastery learning techniques or what Simon calls a "continuous-progress" curriculum. In such a system, students progress individually and at different rates, demonstrating mastery at interim "gates". The design evokes for Laura the bad memory of her experience as a special education teacher trying to tailor her teaching precisely to the specific needs of individual students.   One of the reasons she transferred to the English department was to work with whole classes rather than with one or two students at a time. She enjoys engaging a large group in discussions or activities related to a piece of literature or to a common writing assignment. The energy she gets from such teaching is what she missed in what she recalls as her reductive and overly technical special education work.

Yet she agrees with Simon's aims. She knows it is counterproductive to ask students simultaneously to tackle new work while they make up old, and she accepts Simon's argument that the program has promised students as much time to finish high school as they may require, within a structure not bound by standard age-grading. But why, she asks, does this have to mean postponing third-quarter work in order to make up second-quarter

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assignments? "Why not postpone the make-up instead? In other
words, when you have a kid like Steven who has suddenly started
working for the first time in his life, it's not fair to hold him
back from the rest of the group. He needs the group to give him
the motivation to keep going. If I tell him, 'No, you have to
wait until you catch up,' he'll give up again. Why can't he wait
until his fifth year of high school, if necessary, to do the
second-quarter work on folk tales or first-quarter work on
mythology?"

"In my subject, though," Tim interjects, "you can't do one
thing until you've done the prerequisite. That's just the way
math is."

"Maybe math's that way," suggests Nancy, "but maybe it's
less that way than you think. I remember when a bunch of us
biology teachers went to talk to some biology professors about
what they thought we ought to be teaching. They said we should
forget most of what we thought was important. The things they
thought were important were not the sequential stuff, like what
is a cell, but the attitudinal stuff, like how do you conduct a
proper experiment."

"But," counters Warren, "I am not just teaching a subject.
I am teaching kids. And I am trying to help them acquire
responsibility and self-discipline. What kind of message am I
giving these kids if I somehow let them think that they can take
a quarter off in history -- even if I could arrange my teaching
in that way? Is that any kind of message to give kids? Isn't
that the shopping-mall high school that says that you don't have
to go into this store or that --- you can just pick and choose --
nothing is really essential -- at least not now? And,
realistically, do you think Steven is going to wait around 5
years to get a diploma?"

"Come on," Emily, the University consultant, retorts, "lots
of Bright High students take 5 years to get a diploma. But it
might just happen that Steven won't have to if we can get this
exhibition thing to work. I mean if every subject had 4 or 8 or
whatever number of exhibitions required, then Steven could knock
them off whenever he felt ready."

"Theoretically that makes sense," Simon responds, "but it
overlooks the reality of how kids interpret our saying that you
don't have to do the work after all -- you just have to do this
one thing at the end of the unit. Why then would anybody do the
homework or the readings or anything else but the exhibitions?"

"What's more," adds Warren in a rising voice, "I happen to

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know that Letitia is absolutely furious that she did all the work first quarter to get her B_+ and Sean got his just by doing an exhibition. I'm sorry, but that's just not equitable."

"One thing I noticed with the exhibitions we tried," adds Nancy, "is that even when we construct them around what we regard as essential questions, the kids just go for the most superficial response. And let's be honest: it's just human on our part to want them to succeed on these exhibitions bad enough to go too far -- to help too much, or to settle for a mastery that's not quite mastery. On the other hand, I know what I said before about the biology professors, and I think they're right -- that we can get too hung up on the little things that we require kids to know. But I also think that these kids just don't have the experience to help them get close to an essential question on their own. The homework and other assignments we give them are like scaffolding around these questions, and they really need that scaffolding."

Simon closes the meeting with the following observation: "It's now nearly April. It's about time that we woke up to the reality that these incompletes -- plenty of them -- are going to be with us well into next year. Should we keep pushing on with our teaching as if everybody was up to speed, should we have some kind of continuous-progress system, should we have different tracks next year, or what?"

SIMON'S CONCLUDING QUESTION IS THE KIND OF POLICY QUESTION THAT TEACHERS ARE SELDOM CALLED UPON TO ANSWER. IT IS THE KIND OF QUESTION TYPICALLY ANSWERED BY ADMINISTRATORS ONLY. AN IMPLICIT PREMISE OF THIS CASE, HOWEVER, IS THAT ADMINISTRATORS LACK SUFFICIENT INTIMACY WITH THE SUBTLETIES OF SUCH A QUESTION TO BE THE ONLY ONES INVOLVED IN ANSWERING IT.

YOU ARE CONSULTANTS TO THE TEAM OF TEACHERS FACING THIS PROBLEM. YOUR TASK HAS TWO PARTS: (1) IDENTIFY THE SPECIFIC SUB-PROBLEMS OR THREATENED INTERESTS THAT COMPRISE THE OVERALL "PROBLEM OF THE INCOMPLETES"; AND (2) PROPOSE A RESOLUTION THAT SATISFIES THESE INTERESTS OR AT LEAST PROVIDES THEM WITH A FRESH MEETING GROUND.

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TEXT 2: CASE STUDY OF THE INCOMPLETES: Chapter Two, Year Two (In the Form of a Dramatic Dialogue)

[The following text was originally presented as a dramatic

reading within a meeting of Beta Team teachers (Team Two) of the

Hope High School Essential School Project, with teachers and

university consultants taking the various parts. The dialogue,

though somewhat rearranged chronologically, was taken verbatim

from a transcribed tape of an earlier meeting of the Project's

Alpha Team.]

Dramatis Personae:

Narrator (speaks opening exposition and all heads)
Critic (speaks boldfaced -- upper case -- lines)
Simon (Lead Teacher of the Pilot Project, Bright High School)
Laura (English Teacher, Team One)
Warren (Social Studies Teacher, Team One)
Nancy (Science Teacher, Team One)
Tim (Math Teacher, Team One)
Emily (University Consultant to the Team)

     Lead Teacher Simon seemed determined at the close of chapter
one to find a comprehensive solution to the problem of the
incompletes, but he was not able to build a consensus for one.
And his colleagues worried that a comprehensive solution which
lacked a consensus of support might prove worse than the problem
it addressed. Yet they weren't sure how to build a consensus
either. This is understandable, since they had little experience
wielding collective power, or coping with the interpersonal
stress it tends to generate. On the other hand, they had plenty
of experience with autonomy (at least of the unsanctioned sort)
-- having taught their own way behind their own classroom doors
for many years before joining the Pilot Project. For the most
part, therefore, they continued to identify power with autonomy,
and felt threatened by Simon's policy gestures.

     The University consultant, Emily, cautioned against
precipitous policymaking for a different reason. She hoped that
the pressure of the incompletes would drive the Team to
experiment with new structures and new styles of teaching. In
fact, she regarded the crisis of the incompletes as the best

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available evidence that the Project had gone beyond Bright High School business as usual. "Sure," she said at one meeting, "there's no crisis of incompletes in the larger school; kids just fail -- massive numbers of them." (It is important to note that she was never a fan of the A/B/I grading system to begin with, but by this point had come to regard it as emblematic of the Project's whole innovation, and thought the loss of it might prove catastrophic.)

The Team, meanwhile, felt as uncomfortable with Emily's laizzez-faire advice as they did with Simon's policy urges. As one might expect who knows how schools work and how teachers teach, they decided to try to seize the optimistic middle ground: they would do something, but not so much as Simon wanted; and they would trust that the problem would go away under assault by small measures, hard work, and time.

At a meeting near the end of the summer, timed to coincide with one of Emily's trips out of town, the Team made two policy changes. First they changed A/B/I to A/B/C/I, as the students had once petitioned. Then they demoted slightly more than one-tenth of the latter -- those judged to have fallen impossibly behind (though including many who had passed one or more quarters of one or more subjects). These students were to be "moved back" to start their freshman year all over, in the teaching care of Team Two -- the incoming staff of the Pilot Project's second round.

Simon was satisfied for the moment, particularly insofar as the demotions signaled accountability, though he was under no illusion that this was a comprehensive solution to the problem. Emily, for her part, was momentarily upset by what she regarded as regressive measures, but felt soon inclined to take heart from a sense she shared with Simon that the new adjustments would leave the crisis pretty much intact. Meanwhile the Team had bought some time and room for fashioning autonomous solutions, and they did -- all of them, including Simon.

Thus when the second year of the Project opened, Team One had in place eight relatively separate solutions (including the demotion solution, and three solutions authored by Nancy). One might think of these eight as eight experimental solutions, each capable of feeding interesting data to a collective effort to devise a comprehensive solution in the form of a single model backed by consensus, or a policy framework integrating different models. The problem, however, is that no one, including Emily and Simon, seemed to realize that the Project had eight solutions rather than no solution. The pity of this is that nearly half the year elapsed before anyone was able to tell Team Two that this

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was so, or before any data from the eight experiments was shared among any of the parties to the Project -- indeed before they were thought of as experiments rather than as autonomously devised and relatively secret solutions.

Even in the meeting that we are about to re-live, which occurred on September 10, in the second week of school, no one sensed that eight lively, informative, and valuable experiments were undergoing initial reporting and collegial review. The reader of the following, however, will benefit from the editorial hindsight that has enabled a labeling of the reports, and has added boldfaced critic's comments on the original text. The critic's principal purpose is to raise to the surface certain tensions in each solution -- those which do not become salient in the meeting's give-and-take. He will also point out some commonalities in the solutions, some important differences, and ask a few leading questions. Some of these questions can be answered by reports on subsequent events, which will be provided after the reading.

Although the critic may be as boldfaced as his words, he does not pretend to be smarter than the team members; it's just that he knows the future -- namely the subsequent events. His assessment of the tensions in each experiment, integrated with the text here, are actually based on gleanings from conversations with Team members that occurred months after the following one:

Solution #1: Laura's

Laura: The kids who are incomplete can read, they can write, they can think. They're on their own. If they don't do it by the time they graduate, it's their problem -- they don't graduate. But I'm not going to keep the rest of the class back, and I'm not going to baby them every day. They're either going to do it or not.

Simon: Do what?

Laura: The exhibitions are in the office. That's it. Jonah Talis doesn't need to stay back, and he doesn't need me to hold his hand. If he wants an exhibition, I'll give it to him.

HAS HE ASKED FOR ONE YET? HAVE OTHERS? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY DO? DO THEY NEED HELP, SUPPORT, PRESSURE WHILE WORKING ON THESE EXHIBITIONS? WHO GIVES THEM THESE THINGS?

Warren: And they have the alternative to fail and say "I'll do the exhibitions"? Wasn't that the point last year that ome kids said "Why should I do all of the work when I can do the

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exhibition?"

Laura: That's not even the point anymore -- they already failed.
And really, for us in English, it's almost the same work. In
order to do an exhibition, they have to do activities that are
like a compilation of all their homework assignments. So I don't
think that's a problem. It's also true that we worked with
enough kids for the kids to know and for us to know that nobody
has an easy time with those exhibitions. They're time-consuming.
They got them bounced back to them once or twice. It was a big
hassle.

        Besides, It's crazy at this point. I want to teach. I
could sit there with a copy of the exhibitions all day, all year,
but I'm not going to do that. Everything will be fine, Simon.
Don't worry. Trust me.

Emily: Success is going to depend on a good systematic
record-keeping system. We need to have those exhibitions going
back to the first year, first quarter. And they need to be very
clearly labeled, so that if, two years from now, somebody has to
go back and do first-quarter English, it will be there. And
we'll have clear records of who's complete and who's incomplete,
and where, and no kid will ever graduate without having completed
every one of the quarters -- and no kid will ever lose out for a
quarter they did pass, even though they didn't pass another.

Simon: That's a good _theory,_ but I think each person on the team
has to take the responsibility to follow through and track these
kids and see that they get their work done. And you really need
to consolidate your information within your classroom -- if it's
something that gets spread into my office, it will be a
nightmare.

BUT DOESN'T THIS ENCOURAGE AUTONOMOUS SOLUTIONS RATHER THAN A
SYSTEMATIC ONE? IS IT POSSIBLE TO TRACK INCOMPLETES
SYSTEMATICALLY WITHOUT THE INFORMATION SYSTEM BECOMING A
MANAGEMENT "NIGHTMARE"?

Laura: We're just saying that the kids who did not successfully
write a myth in the first quarter must write one, demonstrate
that they can do that before they graduate. And we've got a
clear record of who did it and who didn't do it, and we've got a
simple way for them to do it -- in the exhibitions. It's all
there, and I don't have to come up with a whole bunch of homework
assignments and other stuff, rummaging through my files two years
from now.

BUT IN SAYING SIMPLY THAT "IT'S ALL THERE," DOES A TEACHER

20.

ABDICATE RESPONSIBILITY TO BRING IT CONTINUALLY TO THE FOREFRONT
OF KIDS' AGENDAS?

Solution #2: Simon's

S...ion: In my U.S. History class, no one in the class has yet
finished Western Civ., but I've already given them the U.S.
History pro...cts which I'll tell you about in a minute.
Meanwhile, I'm finishing up Western Civ., but technically the
course is called U.S. History. . . .

HAS THIS BEEN DIFFICULT FOR THE KIDS TO CONCEPTUALIZE?

In Western Civ., I'm not relying on all the assignments from
last year. We're taking them and trying to compress them, so that
kids will work on what looks like a new assignment, but it works
on the same themes, same skills -- though in some cases, skills
that weren't originally part of it, but that I really should have
plugged in. At most there are five assignments, performances,
whatever you want to call them, from the French Revolution right
up through the final exam. That way they don't get caught up in
all the little work that they had to do last year to finish the
course. . . .

ALTHOUGH SIMON DOES NOT CALL THESE 'EXHIBITIONS', IT IS IMPORTANT
TO NOTE THAT THEY ARE LIKE LAURA'S EXHIBITIONS IN CERTAIN
RESPECTS OF FORM AND FUNCTION. THERE ARE TWO IMPORTANT
DIFFERENCES, HOWEVER: SIMON'S STUDENTS DO NOT "MOVE ON" UNTIL
THEY FINISH THEM, AND THEY WORK ON THEM DURING CLASS TIME.

Now in U.S. History, we've got seven projects -- I say we
because I'm doing this with Emily's help. By the time the year
is over, we'll have not only the seven projects, but all the
exercises and skills that are needed, and criteria, and they too
can sit right in the file cabinet, and anybody who has to do
project 5 or 7 or whatever it happens to be, all the stuff will
be right there.

DOES HE MEAN THAT HE WILL NOT ROLL OVER HIS INCOMPLETES IN
AMERICAN HISTORY THE WAY dE ROLLED OVER HIS INCOMPLETES IN
WESTERN CIV.? IF SO, WHAT INCENTIVES AND WHAT OPPORTUNITIES WILL
HE PROVIDE STUDENTS TO RETRIEVE THESE FILES THAT ARE "RIGHT
THERE"?

MEANWHILE, NCTE THAT THESE EXHIBITION-LIKE PROJECTS IN AMERICAN
HISTORY ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE IN ENGLISH AND WESTERN CIV. IN
THAT THEIR EXISTENCE PRE-DATES THE RUN OF THE COURSE.

FINALLY, HOW ARE THEY WORKING OUT?

21.

Solution #3: Warren's

Simon: What do you plan to do, Warren?

Warren: I think I have about 20 kids or so who are incomplete. They're at various stages of either Western Civ. or U.S. History, and I feel as Laura said, I want to teach. I told them that: "During the class time, you are in Current World Events with me and that is your first responsibility. Now during the EHS period, you will have a chance to work on your past work. . . .

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN EHS IS ABOLISHED? [Several weeks after this meeting -- as a result of a teachers' union grievance -- these "EHS periods", or structured study halls -- were abolished. They were held to be in violation of the teachers' contract in that they constituted an additional teaching duty. The grievance was filed by the Team One teachers, including Warren, over Simon's strenuous objections.]

"There may be times that I will stop for, say, one period" -- meaning one hour, not a double period -- "and give you time to work on old assignments, whether in Current Events or in History."

But, after all this, I am afraid that I have to report that some of those who failed to complete their work, mainly because of their attitude, are exhibiting the same attitude. They come to me privately and say, "Mr. Novotny, I want to do this, that, and the other thing," then they go up to the classroom and they turn around and they want to do this and they want to do that. So I really have to question the sincerity and the desire, and I feel very strongly that this is the way I'm going to do it unless there is a better way: "If you are really honest about your work, you'll do your work and I am here to help you, but these are the conditions. I'm not going to play any games."

Simon: So what do these kids have to do to pass -- or whatever you want to call it -- your Western Civ. and U.S. History?

Warren: They have to complete the work they did not complete. That's what they have to do, and they know it. . .

NOTE THAT WARREN MEANS THE ASSIGNMENTS IN THEIR ORIGINAL FORM. HE HAS NOT REPACKAGED THEM AS SIMON AND LAURA HAVE.

But the point I'm trying to make is you do that work during EHS period. When you are with me, I may give you an hour a week -- maybe one week I'll give you an hour, the other not.

22.

HAVE THESE IRREGULARLY SCHEDULED SESSIONS PROVEN PRODUCTIVE?

Emily: I think your system is a workable one, but I think it
requires very careful back-up in files somewhere -- very clear as
to what you need to do to pass quarter one, quarter two.
Otherwise there are dangers down the road.

Simon: One of the dangers down the road is that it assumes that
the kids who were not working in the past and were irresponsible,
that they're going to have a spontaneous change. There's nothing
built in, as I hear it, for them to change, to start doing the
work when they haven't been doing it before.

Warren: Well, the change of attitude -- they have to change the
attitude, not I. They come to me and I make myself accessible.

IS THIS ENOUGH? IN A MARKING SYSTEM WHERE FAILURE NO LONGER
EXISTS, HOW DOES THE TEACHER DECIDE THE DIVIDING POINT BETWEEN
HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO MOTIVATE, AND THE KIDS' RESPONSIBILITY TO
ACT? ON THE OTHER HAND, HOW MUCH "MOTIVATION" IS TOO MUCH --
WHEN DOES PUSHING AND WAITING BECOME INDULGENT?

Solutions #4, #5, & #6: Nancy's

Nancy: Two of my classes have probably a total of now fewer than
5 people who haven't finished Biology, and those students are
working on their final paper themselves. About 5 kids have given
me their final papers sir ? school began.

AGAIN, THOUGH NANCY CALLS THESE "FINAL PAPERS" RATHER THAN
EXHIBITIONS, THEY ARE ACTUALLY QUITE LIKE LAURA'S EXHIBITIONS.
ONE DIFFERENCE, HOWEVER, AS WE ARE ABOUT TO HEAR, IS THAT IN TWO
OF NANCY'S CLASSES, STUDENTS MAY WORK ON THESE PAPERS IN CLASS.

     The other two classes -- one of them is just as if there are
two separate classes in the classroom: half is working on
Biology, and half is working on Chemistry, and I'm the
split-personality teacher. Then, in the fourth class, everyone
is studying the same thing -- We're doing the park project, a big
ecology project, and the Chemistry students are learning the
chemistry necessary, and the Biology students are concentrating
on the biology necessary, but in a way that makes up for last
year's incompletes. Actually, everyone is learning all of it.
It might be the most successful group.

HOW DID THE SPLIT CLASS TURN OUT? IS IT STILL SPLIT? AND HOW
ABOUT THE INTERDISCIPLINARY CLASS? DID THE BIOLOGY KIDS FINISH
BIOLOGY? AND WHY IS NANCY RUNNING THREE EXPERIMENTS ANYWAY?

23.

<u>Solution #7: Tim's</u>

Tim: My A & B groups are in secondary math, starting from the appropriate place, and other people are picking up where they left off last year in Algebra I and Geometry, and some people are starting Algebra II, and some people are starting Geometry.

But, I'll tell you what's happened to me, and believe me, nobody -- <u>nobody</u> -- heard me say Algebra I was over all last year, but Delphina came right into Simon's office, and said basically, "Hey, I passed so I passed." But never once did I say you have completed Algebra I.

Laura: But that was our fault because we called it Algebra I, and the year ended.

Simon: If it's called Algebra I and they have four quarters and they're not done, then the last quarter should be an incomplete.

Tim: In other words, Algebra I according to all definitions is four quarters of time? Well, not to my eye.

Simon: No, it doesn't mean that it's four quarters of time; it means that the course is incomplete. Maybe the course is not Algebra I, maybe it's Algebra I-a, then they get a B for that, and now they go on to Algebra I-b. But if it's called Algebra I, and they haven't finished Algebra I, then there would be an incomplete there.

Emily: I'm confused. Did she pass four quarters?

Tim: She got passing grades for four quarters.

Emily: But you're telling her she's not done with Algebra I.

Tim: She's not!

Emily: But that's confusing.

Tim: It's confusing, and she took advantage of a confusing situation and put it into her own terms so that she could weasle her way out of something into something else.

Now in my morning classes, groups A & B, I've got no resistance whatsoever. My big problem is group C, where I have four preparations in one class. . . .

DOESN'T A CONTINUOUS-PROGRESS MODEL, WHICH TIM HAS ADOPTED, LEAD

24.

INEVITABLY TO GROUP C SITUATIONS? HOW DOES A TEACHER HANDLE
THEM?

    The big issue is that the grades are issued on a time frame.
But when people are progressing and making an honest effort and
doing a good job, and they're progressing at an acceptable rate,
I would much rather have given grades on the portion of the
curriculum completed, rather than with a reference to time taken.
. . .

IN FACT. AS REPORTED ABOVE, HE DID THAT LAST YEAR, AND HE
CONTINUES TO DO SO.

    What we're doing here is experimenting, doing new things,
id then jamming them into a traditional box -- making everything
look like it's supposed to. I wou'd very happily call my math
courses anything. As a matter of fact, I didn't intend initially
to call them Algebra I, Geometry, and so on. But they had to be
fit into the traditional framework.

Emily: Who said they did?

Simon: Emily, you can say what you want, but the simple fact of
life is -- if you want kids to be in the program who are planning
to go to college, you better damn well offer courses called
Algebra I, Algebra II, and so on.

Emily: I disagree. You can stand up to those pressures very
successfully. There are good school systems out there that
organize math differently.

Laura: Do you mean that we would call our math courses one, two,
and three, but tell everybody that they covered Algebra I,
Algebra II, and Geometry?

Emily: Yes, and if we used some kind of exhibition system, we
could demonstrate that the kids have those skills.

    But, of course, Tim's point is that we didn't do that last
year, because we thought we couldn't, and so the question is What
do we do now?

Laura: Well, I think we need to do something.

IF HE HAD IT TO DO OVER AGAIN, WOULD TIM FOLLOW HIS INITIAL
IMPULSE IN THE NAMING OF COURSES? WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD IT HAVE
MADE?

Solution #8: Doreen Green's, et al.

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Laura: Can I ask a question about a particular student? Doreen Green?
I don't remember why we moved her on, but is it too late to call her mother and recommend that she not be moved on? Can't we say we made a mistake?

Warren: She had all incompletes for me.

Tim: I think the make-up she did for me was only because she was in my EHS period.

Simon: She completed two quarters of math, two quarters of science, and one quarter of English.

DOES ONE LOSE COMPLETED QUARTERS IF ONE IS MOVED BACK?

Laura: And none in social studies? I think she should be moved back. I'd hate for it to go on much longer. I think she'd be better off. And you know what? The other kids I've seen who were moved back, like Elena and Arthur -- they look happy. They don't look miserable. I see them in the hall -- they're smiling.

ARE THEY STILL SMILING?

Tim: I'm sure it's a more uncluttered way to take care of the problem for somebody who is far behind.

UNCLUTTERED FOR WHOM?

Coda

Simon: I'll talk to Mrs. Green. But it seems that what the consensus is here for the group is that you plan to pick up with the leaders and expect the rest of the kids to take care of the work at some other time.

Laura: I think you're missing the point.

Simon: I'm concerned about saying "OK, we're going to go on." It solves the logistical problem of not having kids spread out all over the place -- you can teach; but my concern is also the one of accountability for those students -- communication that they have to complete the work. These kids didn't succeed in doing that last year. To me it's like, OK, we're going to carry them on again. At some point. those kids are going to turn around and say, "Well, you let me pass, you let me carry on," or they'll say, "I handed that in, but you lost it."

26.

IS THERE A WAY TO "CARRY ON" IN VARIOUS FASHIONS AND STILL HAVE ACCOUNTABILITY? WHAT DO THE EIGHT EXPERIMENTS TELL US ABOUT THIS?

Emily: Maybe there are two parts of the problem. One is moving on, and having somebody to let them know that they haven't finished yet, even though they're doing other work. . .

THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROBLEM.

And the other part is making clear to them that Algebra I or whatever has a certain amount of work, skills, content, whatever it is, that you need to complete. In order to do that, the teacher needs to know what that is before the course begins.

THE CURRICULUM PROBLEM. AND WHAT DO THE EIGHT EXPERIMENTS TELL US ABOUT THIS?

[The dramatic reading within the Beta Team (Team Two) meeting was followed by a report on the progress of the eight experiments, which were then several months past the point at which they are described in the text. The report was based on interviews of Alpha Team (Team One) members, and was designed to highlight the strengths of each experimental solution as well as its costs.

At the time this paper is being written, both teams are still grappling with the policy implications of the problem of the incompletes, but their policymaking process is far more collaborative than it was at the junctures documented in the texts above. For example, there is a good deal of negotiation going on now both within teams and between teams; that is, there are many more efforts to understand and accomodate various interests, to envision a policy framework that avoids stark and divisive options, and to document emerging agreement in the form of memoranda. Whether these negotiations will be successful

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remains to be seen, but there is little doubt that the teams are

growing daily in their capacity to operate collegially.]

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Part III: More About Crisis and Textmaking

Crisis

As I see it, crisis in school reform is like conflict in
narrative, or tension in architecture: it is key to the whole
enterprise, but can be more or less powerful depending on its
originality and its organic fit. In fact, the crises that
typically drive school reform often work like borrowed plots or
used designs. They do not originate on site, to begin with; then
what is worse, they do not adapt to the peculiarities of site.
Such school reform crises as the political one posed by Sputnik,
the legal and moral one posed by desegregation, the economic one
of Our Nation at Risk, or the moral one of Children at Risk, may
storm a school with great energy but effect only superficial
change: new textbooks, new admissions policies, new course
requirements, the establishment of a Drop-Out Prevention Team --
prefabricated solutions, all. Yet occasionally, someone on site
manages to seize such a handed-down crisis and redefine it in
local terms -- terms powerful enough to kick aside business as
usual, to create incentive for new inventions, ones not
previously fabricated. This is what Schon (1983) calls
problem-setting, and what Leavitt (1976, 1986) calls
problem-finding or path-finding; for both authors, it is the
crucible of imaginative action, without which any amount of
problem-solving or implementation skills must be lost to the
muck(2). It is, according to Leavitt, an essential skill of the

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entrepreneur. Thus one way to regard the crisis of the
incompletes at Hope High School is as a collective effort by a
group of teachers to become entrepreneurs of school reform.

I cannot say yet, of course, whether their entrepreneurial
efforts will generate better, practical, and enduring conditions
for learning and teaching at Hope High School. Leavitt (1976)
warns us about excessive optimism:

> There is no suggestion in all this that everything will be
> more harmonious if we try to educate people into more
> imaginative routes and to take their imaginings more
> seriously. Indeed the divergent aspects of problem finding
> almost guarantee that many of the problems that will be
> found will turn out to be duds. It is useful to look at
> prize-winning designs in old architectural magazines in this
> regard (p. 4).

I can say, however, that the crisis of the incompletes has three
things going for it that other school reform efforts often lack
to their great peril. First, it was collaboratively devised on
site, not imported -- concocted by the chemistry of theoretical
principles and teachers' autonomous policymaking. Thus its
tensions are self-imposed and not easily set aside even in the
face of immense practical burdens. Secondly, it provides a
continuing single focus and accelerator for all the practical and
theoretical energy available to the project. Thus the crisis
itself becomes the target of school-university collaboration,
rather than more delicate and more diffuse things like teachers'
behavior and attitudes, curricula, school structures, and the
like; though the target is really a mask for all these things at

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once, which are then affected as it indirectly. Finally, this particular crisis has already proved itself a great generator of valuable inventions, including some that are detailed in the texts above, and others that are not. It has also generated much stress as well, and ironically much yearning for an escape from collective policymaking. But with the help of Hall and Hord (1987), one can take such yearning for what it is, namely a predictable response to stress -- not simple obstructionism, nor inveterate conservatism, nor burn out, nor fear of power.

Textmaking

First, an apology for the awkwardness of the gerund, but I want to emphasize that this part of the "experimental" methodology is as much about process as product, as much about questioning and the habit of questioning, as about answers. Sometimes, as in the process that produced Text #1 above, the practical purpose of textmaking is to impose structure on a situation that threatens to become too diffuse -- to problematize a situation, as Freire (1970) might say, in order to force closer seeing. At other times, as in the process that led to text #2 above, the practical purpose is precisely opposite: to open up a collective narrative that threatens to become too tight, too orthodox -- in order to force wider seeing. In either case, texts inscribe particular versions of reality so that in the process of inscription these versions can gain recognition and clarification; and so that, later, in their inscribed state, they

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can be consulted more attentively, and ultimately criticized more effectively. I am not using Eisner's (1979) term, criticism, however, but rather the more semiotic textmaking, because I want a term that will cover not only work that is theoretically rich and subtly perceptive, but also work that is neither of these things, but contributes nonetheless to the resolution of a crisis by illuminating even a single viewpoint, or by making even a small empirical contribution to a dialogue that might otherwise stay in a rut.

Textmaking has its symbolic effects as well as its practical ones. In fact, the biggest single documentation effort within the Hcp. Project, the ethnography-in-progress of Patrick McQuillan, has had, to date, very little practical but much symbolic impact. For one thing, the fact that anyone would take the time to undertake such massive textmaking is a powerful signal that this high school, grown used to neglect and disdain, has become notable again. And the time it takes to do ethnography is a powerful signal that the school change which is the subject of that ethnography takes much time too, and is as complex as culture -- which, as everyone knows, is as complex as can be.

There are important symbolic effects of smaller textmaking efforts too, such as when the Head Teacher makes a text that analyzes grade or attendance statistics, or when he lists policy options and tirelessly updates these options as they are

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discussed over many weeks by two separate teams; when I tape meetings or interview teachers in order to devise texts like those above; when teachers and parents meet in order to explore solutions to the crisis, and in the process take testimony from students and teachers. Symbolically, these textmaking efforts signal that the reform struggle at Hope is real and important; that there are great complexities at stake which no palliatives can reach; that human imagination and intellect, given time and patience, will be sufficient to the struggle; and, finally, that there is no need to give up on this school, these kids, this community.

Note

(1) I am the author of Text 1 and of Text 2.

(2) For a more extensive treatment of this idea, and additional citations, see D. H. Kerr (1987).

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