

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 335 001

IR 015 168

AUTHOR Norris, Catherine A.; Reigeluth, Charles M.  
 TITLE A National Survey of Systemic School Restructuring Experiences.  
 PUB DATE 91  
 NOTE 13p.; In: Proceedings of Selected Research Presentations at the Annual Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology; see IR 015 132.  
 PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; \*Change Strategies; Curriculum Development; \*Educational Change; \*Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; National Surveys; \*School Restructuring; Student Responsibility; Teacher Role  
 IDENTIFIERS Indiana State Department of Education

ABSTRACT

The major purposes of the School Improvement Resources Inquiry USA project (SIRIUS-A project) are to identify schools throughout the country, that are restructuring; to identify the kinds of structural changes being implemented; and to identify the kinds of change processes being used to plan and implement the restructuring. Some of the 62 schools identified that have initiated systemic restructuring seemed to base their restructuring on a connected, underlying theme. Descriptions of restructuring experiences in five schools focus on their systemic and theme-based elements: (1) The Saturn School of Tomorrow (St. Paul, Minnesota, grades 4-7), "High-Tech, High-Teach, and High-Touch," and mastery learning; (2) Skowhegan Area Middle School (Skowhegan, Maine), a "collegial/team approach to change"; (3) Narragansett School (Gorham, Maine, elementary), the school as a center of inquiry and children's development as learners; (4) Mark Twain Elementary School (Littleton, Colorado), "The Peak Performance School," with major changes in curriculum and assessment, the organization of teacher teams, and use of differentiated staffing; and (5) Bloomfield Hills Schools (Bloomfield Hills, Michigan), a Model High School with extensive changes in the use of time, the role of teachers, and assessment. General trends in restructuring based on the nationwide sample include teacher collaboration; heterogeneous grouping; continuous progress/ungraded curriculum; integrating disciplines/integrated learning; personal student development; mastery learning; building a democratic school community; and linking of schools, homes, and community agencies. Three differences between systemic restructuring and past reforms are noted: systemic change, integrating themes, and changes based on the needs and values of the community. (3 references) (BBM)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
 \* from the original document. \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
  - Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- 
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED335001

**Title:**

**A National Survey of Systemic School Restructuring Experiences**

**Authors:**

**Catherine A. Norris  
Charles M. Reigeluth**

1R015168

**BEST COPY AVAILABLE**

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael R. Simonson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The idea of restructuring schools, which gained the attention of educators in the middle 1980s and calls for fundamental structural change of our educational system, is now becoming a reality for some schools across the country. These schools, some individually and some with the aid of supporting networks, have undertaken the challenge of reassessing and redesigning the way they think of and do schooling. This article summarizes a project to identify and analyze as many of those schools nationwide as possible.

The School Improvement Resources Inquiry USA project (SIRIUS-A project) is a study funded by the Indiana Department of Education. It has analyzed the accounts of 62 schools' restructuring experiences from across the country. The major purposes of the study are to identify schools throughout the country which are restructuring, to identify the kinds of structural changes being implemented, and to identify the kinds of change processes being used to plan and implement the restructuring. This article will not address the change processes.

## Background of the Study

The study is using a case-study approach in order to characterize the uniqueness of each school's restructuring effort and the uniqueness of each school's contextual conditions. Other reasons for using the case study approach are to receive as much information as possible for compiling a holistic description for each school, and to provide a description of the restructuring effort in the school participants' own words.

Because a goal of the study is to identify and survey all the schools in the country that are restructuring, the study utilizes a criterion-based sampling strategy.<sup>1</sup> In criterion-based sampling, all cases are included in a study if they meet the established criteria.

For the SIRIUS-A Project, schools which meet the criteria for restructuring are those which have initiated (not just planned) systemic restructuring. Systemic means that the changes in the school are interrelated rather than piecemeal, and that change in one part of the school requires changes in other parts of the school. These changes build to a holistic, integrated restructuring effort. The researchers have not included schools that simply used the label of "restructuring."

When restructuring is systemic, all parts of the school are likely to be changed or affected. Examples are the use of "time, talent, and technology,"<sup>2</sup> where time includes periods in the day and grade levels as years, talent includes the roles of teachers, administrators, assistants, and students; and technology includes facilities, equipment, and instructional resources.

One of the participating schools in the study, Linda Vista Elementary School in San Diego, provided an apt definition of systemic restructuring: "School restructuring appears to be most successful if it is a pervasive, systemic change--it affects each student in the school and it does not attack only one aspect of the school program."

## Process of the Study

The study began with a search for the population of schools nationwide which may be restructuring. Criteria for systemic restructuring were established, and relevant organizations were contacted. The major sources of contacts for the search were the state departments of education (43 of the DOEs responded). Other major contact sources included the Coalition of

Essential Schools, the National Education Association's Mastery in Learning network, and the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory's Accelerated Schools Action Project. Names of schools were also acquired from the media, current educational publications, and word of mouth from schools participating in the study. The search resulted in an initial data base of 531 schools.

These schools were contacted and given the option of answering an open-ended questionnaire, sending existing information describing their restructuring efforts, or both. Of the 531 schools, 137 (26%) have responded to date (November 1990). The information from the 137 schools was then analyzed to identify examples of systemic restructuring. Those schools which satisfied the criteria of systemic restructuring comprised a final sample of 62 schools, which form the basis of the findings for this article. The remaining schools fell into the categories of "still in the planning stage," "uncertain if systemic, based on their information," or "not systemic, based on their information."

### **Findings: Not Just Systemic, But Thematic**

In the analysis of the 62 schools' information, many schools seemed to have a unified theme in their descriptions of their changes. In contrast, other schools listed changes they were implementing without a readily apparent emphasis connecting the changes. Their nonthematic changes are still systemic in that they appear to affect other changes in the school, are interrelated, and form an integrated system, but they do not seem to be connected by a theme, or at least do not seem to place a strong emphasis on any theme.

For example, the following is a description of a restructuring school that does not appear to emphasize a theme. This school appears to have two general focuses: higher-order learning for students and teacher collaboration. The changes reported by the school include peer tutoring, interdisciplinary team teaching, and presenting parent seminars on thinking skills. The school's changes are systemic in that interdisciplinary team teaching requires teacher collaboration, and peer tutoring and parent seminars on thinking skills are used to facilitate higher-order learning. Yet the portrait of the school does not appear as unified as do the portraits of those schools whose descriptions reveal stronger themes.

While analyzing the schools, it became striking how the systemic descriptions often included an underlying theme explicitly relating the changes. In fact, it appeared that the more a school's changes built upon a theme, the more extensively systemic the restructuring effort seemed to be. The schools with strong themes reported changes that appeared deeper and more interrelated than the changes reported by schools without strong themes.

Thus, perhaps the most significant finding from the SIRIUS-A study is that *some schools seemed to base their restructuring on a connected, underlying theme, which appeared to result in more systemic changes in the school.*

### **Examples of Theme-Based Restructuring Experiences**

The following descriptions of restructuring experiences focus on their systemic and theme-based elements. The descriptions of the schools presented here are not comprehensive; discussion of all the implementations by the schools is not possible in the available space.

## *Saturn*

The Saturn School of Tomorrow in St. Paul, Minnesota, based its design on two major themes: High-Tech, High-Teach, and High-Touch; and mastery learning. The school serves grades 4-7. As an example of a school that explicitly implements its theme, Saturn School reports that its students spend one-third of their time with technology, 1/3 of their time with teachers, and 1/3 of their time working with other students on cooperative learning projects.

The High-Tech component includes the computer-based Integrated Learning System and extensive video-based instruction, especially in reading, writing, and math. The school also uses the Discourse (TM) System for group-based instruction.

High-Teach is the commitment to the belief that students, parents, educators, and the community are instructional resources who can "ensure the success of each student." Some of the ways "High-Teach" is realized are through on-site learning in the community (the St. Paul Public Library, the YMCA, and the Science and Art Museums), through parental involvement, and through a differentiated staff that is not grade- or classroom-level based.

The High-Touch component is described as meeting students with sensitivity and concern on their level. A teaching team stays with a group of students throughout their 3-4 years at the school. All students are also in an advisory group for their full time at the school. In addition, heavy emphasis is placed on letting students follow their interests in what they learn, both in choosing individual activities and in taking heterogeneously-grouped courses which last eight weeks.

Mastery learning is heavily emphasized at Saturn School of Tomorrow. Many of the school's activities are designed in a way that students learn by reaching mastery, rather than by earning grades or passing time in a subject area. Some of these activities are:

- Students and parents develop Personal Growth Plans.
- Students choose much of how they use their time in the school, in order to work toward mastery.
- Mastery learning is monitored through the Integrated Learning System and the Personal Growth Plan process.
- Mastery is assessed through a Portfolio of Proficiencies, a record of teacher comments from courses, Personal Growth Plan documents, and CAI records.

Saturn School's implementations may at first glance seem varied and unconnected, yet the components and the changes within them are interrelated in working toward achieving the High-Tech, High-Teach, High-Touch and mastery themes. For example, the computer-based learning system links a technology component with a mastery component--the technology allows the students to work at their own pace, it monitors the students' attainment of mastery, and it provides records of mastery to be used as assessments.

The differentiated staffing (High-Teach), gives students the individualized time to work toward mastery, and facilitates cooperative learning (High-Touch) in the courses.

Thus, systemic restructuring is demonstrated in Saturn School through the interrelationships among features of the school. These interrelationships permeate the entire school, and present a holistic picture of a fundamentally transformed school. Furthermore, Saturn's two integrating themes of High-Tech, High-Teach, & High-Touch and mastery learning contribute to the extensiveness and depth of Saturn's systemic characteristics.

## *Skowhegan*

Skowhegan Area Middle School of Skowhegan, Maine, has chosen to restructure based on a theme of a "collegial/team approach to change." The school's staff have organized themselves into five teams, each of which decides and implements its own plans each year as schools-within-a-school. Each team creates its own plans for meeting the needs of its students, tries the plans out for a year, and, based on the trial implementations, revises, extends, or drops its various changes. The students with each team are multi-grade and stay with their school-within-a-school throughout their years at the middle school.

Just some examples of implementations within teams are an individualized reading program with daily sustained silent reading for all students, flexible scheduling and multi-grade grouping in one team's math program to meet varying student needs, and a homework monitoring program for "at risk" students. The school also pursues a school-wide action plan, not only to address the needs of all students, but also to address certain goals that all teams need to address at the same time "to provide for a cohesive forward movement."

In order to sustain the multi-grade organization of teams which is Skowhegan's restructuring emphasis, the teams maintain heterogeneous grouping within the classrooms. To address individual student needs at the different grade levels, cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are used in the classrooms. Other key features to enable the team approach are common team planning times, flexible scheduling, peer tutoring, and the use of four para-educators assisting in classrooms to meet mainstreamed students' needs.

## *Narragansett*

Another school in Maine, Narragansett School in Gorham, is an elementary school whose two major themes are for the school to become a center of inquiry and to focus on children's development as learners.

Toward its goal of making the school a center of inquiry, Narragansett has implemented several activities. One of them is developing and carrying out research projects. The school utilizes collaborative decision making. A teacher leader position has been established for each grade to help guide the decision making, and teacher assistants are used to give teachers more release time for peer conferencing. Finally, the school added a teacher-scholar position to observe and facilitate teacher reflection processes.

Narragansett implemented several changes to focus on children's development as learners. Multi-age teacher teams stay with children for more than one year. Parents choose the students' placements with their teachers. Differentiated staffing with teacher assistants is used, and parents volunteer in the classrooms, with some working on teacher-volunteer teams. The students learn with a variety of materials, and are evaluated through alternative forms of assessment, including a multi-media portfolio project. In a second correspondence from Narragansett, we learned that the school is also focusing on helping children in their metacognitive development. In essence, Narragansett has based its restructuring on its two themes by implementing changes that extend directly from them.

## *Mark Twain*

Mark Twain Elementary School in Littleton, Colorado, restructured based on a theme of "The Peak Performance School," coined by the school's principal, Monte Moses, who authored a book with that title.<sup>3</sup> According to Moses, peak performance schools have a clear vision and purpose, seek to actualize human potential, and surpass expectations. He believes that

becoming a peak performance school requires first creating a visionary perspective, and then from that vision, establishing a mission for the school.

The vision created by Mark Twain Elementary resulted in a mission to foster human growth. This resulted in three major new features of the school. First, Mark Twain changed its curriculum and assessment from being organized around a body of information to being organized around a small set of tasks and critical knowledge that have utility in a variety of contexts. The restructuring effort established several performance assessments: a Peak Performance Profile (a checklist of character traits, critical thinking skills, reading, writing, and scientific problem solving), a Fifth Grade Research Performance Assessment, and portfolios of projects, which include a self-improvement goal and a service goal. Furthermore, students move at their own pace within grade levels.

Second, the restructuring effort reorganized the teachers into teams that stay with the same students for two or three years. This helps teachers better respond to student needs and differences; as the school contends, students will grow more with teachers who know a lot about them.

Third, Mark Twain now utilizes differentiated staffing arranged in a professional hierarchy of a Lead Teacher, professional teachers, interns, undergraduate aides, and classroom teacher's aides. The larger number of staff gives teachers more time to educate in a professional manner, thus serving the growth needs of students. In addition, there are 15 parent volunteers in the school daily and over 20 more in the school regularly.

### ***Bloomfield Hills***

Bloomfield Hills Schools, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, is creating a Model High School with extensive changes, through funding from RJR-Nabisco. Its major themes are 1) utilizing community involvement in what the educational process should provide as a basis for designing education, 2) being inquiry-based, 3) using mastery learning, 4) fully integrating disciplines and employing an encompassing theme (such as "How have humans dealt with the question of whether to live in harmony with or dominate nature?"), and 5) giving students a high degree of responsibility and choice.

Students have choice and responsibility for what problems they will study, how to study them, how to use their time to study them, and how they will demonstrate mastery of core competencies in studying them. They decide how they will be assessed for the core competencies, who will assess them (who will serve on their Student Assessment Panel), and even whether they will spend all or a portion of their day at Model High School (with the other part of the day at their former high school in the district).

To create a school that accomplishes these ends, Bloomfield Hills Model High School has implemented major changes in the use of time, in the teachers' role, and in assessment. It has restructured time by offering two 2-hour, interdisciplinary instructional blocks daily, a 25-minute student advisory program daily, and a 2-hour period for students' independent projects (e.g. individual or group, research or internship). The school day also provides one daily period each in common team planning time and in individual planning time for all teachers.

The Model High School restructured the teachers' role in that they are truly co-learners and facilitators with the students. Because the teachers are creating the new thematic curricula based on community input and on their own and their students' explorations of how disciplines interrelate, they are investigating along with the students. They are also collaborators with each other in creating the new curricula and in helping the students undertake responsibility. Finally, they coach the students for their mastery performances before the Student Assessment Panels.

The teachers from Model High School do not serve on the panels, so they serve an advocate role rather than an evaluator role.

Because students at the Model High School demonstrate mastery of learning through performances instead of through traditional grading procedures, the school established an Administrative/Liaison Counselor position to help coordinate students' courses and transcripts with the other district high schools and with colleges.

### **Implications of Thematic School Restructuring**

Of the 62 restructuring schools which fit the criteria of systemic restructuring, these are five examples whose restructuring is based on one or more major **integrating themes**. In all 62 schools, the structural changes are systemic (pervasive and interrelated), but the changes in the schools with **integrating themes** appear deeper and more interrelated. The schools with integrating themes also presented a more complete picture in the information they provided, compared to the less theme-based schools.

This finding suggests that a systemic restructuring effort will be easier and more effective if the new design is based on an underlying, integrating theme or two. From early indications of these schools' efforts, we hypothesize that building a restructuring process on an appropriate theme or vision may facilitate the planning and implementation of systemic change, and consequently may contribute to the creation of a more lasting, fundamentally transformed system.

### **General Trends in Restructuring**

A second finding from the study is that a few new structural features are emerging as central to restructuring efforts across the country. We have not found universal features of restructuring; rather some general emphases of restructuring seem to be surfacing. Hence, we use the term "central features."

In presenting these central features, however, it must be cautioned that not all schools are emphasizing any of them in their restructuring efforts. In fact, some of the schools that focus heavily on an overall theme appear not to focus on one of these features because their overall theme is more idiosyncratic. Other schools may be using one or more of these central features, but only on a superficial basis. They might be implementing a feature as one of their changes, but not as one of their central restructuring emphases.

The central features are restructuring *emphases* (hence the term central) occurring fairly frequently in our nationwide sample. They are not based on a tally of *all* the schools that are implementing that feature--for example, all the schools using team teaching. They are based instead on a count of the schools whose primary restructuring focus appears to be on that feature--e.g. team teaching--based on the information we received.

**Teacher collaboration.** The most frequent central feature that emerged from the study is teacher collaboration. In the information sent by schools, many schools emphasized teacher collaboration in general. In addition, two large subcategories emerged within the emphasis of teacher collaboration: site-based management and team teaching. In other words, the schools in the study which reported an emphasis on teacher collaboration appear to be focusing on teacher collaboration in general, on teacher collaboration in site-based management, or on teacher collaboration through team teaching.

**Site-based management.** The schools in the study emphasizing teacher collaboration through site-base management used such terms as "shared decision making," "participatory management," and "shared leadership" in describing their site-based management practices.

Although some schools are restructuring this type of collaboration to teachers, most are emphasizing collaboration among all groups, include the community, parents, and administrators. And some include students and staff. Many mechanisms and structures for making decisions and for determining various governance responsibilities were reported by the schools. One unique example was presented by Sweeney Elementary School in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A team comprised of a facilitator, three co-coordinators, a secretary, and two parents replaces the principal. The first four positions are teachers, with the facilitator a teacher who is on leave of absence and is responsible for the school's day-to-day management. For their peer evaluations, each teacher is observed by two other teachers and the facilitator.

**Team teaching.** Many types of team teaching were reported by schools as the major emphasis in their school restructuring effort: interdisciplinary team teaching, schools-within-a-school, teacher teams that stay with multi-aged groups for more than one year, teaching teams for at-risk students, and teaming of regular and special teachers. These schools are emphasizing teacher collaboration through the creation of teams within a school. For example, in some schools' information it appeared that facilitating teacher collaboration was their major purpose for using interdisciplinary team teaching, rather than their major purpose being to integrate the disciplines.

**Heterogeneous grouping.** Heterogeneous grouping of students is another central feature of restructuring efforts among schools in the SIRIUS-A study. For some schools, particularly middle and high schools, non-ability grouping (eliminating tracking) is a major emphasis. Multi-age grouping is a common restructuring feature for elementary schools.

**Continuous progress / ungraded curriculum.** Students progressing at their own learning or developmental pace also seems to be a central feature in restructuring efforts. This is implemented in a variety of structures, such as no grade levels in the entire school, continuous progress within two or three grade levels, and continuous progress within one grade or classroom.

**Integrating disciplines / integrated learning.** This central feature includes interdisciplinary team teaching where the emphasis is on providing an integrated, holistic view of the curriculum for students. Some schools have emphasized specific integrated learning theories. Guggenheim Elementary School in Chicago emphasizes integrated learning, which integrates the arts, kinesthetic activities, social and personal learning skills, and memory enhancement processes in the curriculum.

**School as a center of inquiry.** Another central feature for schools that are restructuring is the school as a center of inquiry. Examples of inquiry themes reported by schools in the SIRIUS-A project are: "Developing a culture of learning and professionalism for educators," "Creating an ongoing critical dialogue about all aspects of the school," "The process of learning," "A community of learners," "A community of learners and leaders," and "Thinking."

**Personal student development.** The "middle school concept" seems to have become an important influence in middle schools that are restructuring. The middle school concept focuses on meeting the developmental needs of the young adolescent and restructures many aspects of the school to meet those needs: time, grouping of students (usually in schools-within-a-school with teacher teams), and the role of teachers.

A major component of "middle school concept" schools and other schools from the study which focus on personal development is the "advisor/advisee program," in which students meet with small advisory groups as a regular part of the school day, either weekly or daily. In addition to helping meet students' personal and academic needs during these periods, some schools have adopted a theme of helping students develop social and group decision-making skills in these regular group meetings.

**Mastery learning.** In several examples of schools with strong themes or theme combinations, mastery learning is one of the major elements of the theme, and seems to make a large contribution to the extensiveness of the schools' total changes. The mastery theme seems most often to be combined with other emphases rather than being a stand-alone emphasis, although it is a stand-alone emphasis for a few schools in the study. Thus, mastery in some form is another central feature for school restructuring.

Mastery alone appears to be the central feature for restructuring in South Tama County Community School District in Tama, Iowa, and Natchez-Adams School District in Natchez, Mississippi. South Tama, whose theme is Outcome-Based Education, gives only the grades of A or B for demonstrating mastery or I for Incomplete. At Natchez-Adams, whose emphasis is mastery by objectives, all students test for mastery before moving to the next level.

**Building a democratic school community.** Another central feature which seems to be emerging in restructuring efforts is one of creating a "democratic community." Examples of such themes from schools in the study are "Student participation and governance in a 'Just Community,'" "A partnership approach to governance structure between students, parents, and community," and "Partnership among children, parents, staff, and community."

A proximal feature to building a community in the school is one of utilizing the outside community as part of the school. The Saturn School of Tomorrow is one example. Another is the School Without Walls in Rochester, New York, a high school where all students spend part of their day in the community in an internship with a community mentor.

**Linking of schools, homes and community agencies.** An emphasis of meeting the social needs of the family also seems to be emerging as a central feature of restructuring efforts. One example is Garfield Elementary School in Olympia, Washington, which focuses its restructuring on this theme. Garfield offers family support through the community mental health agency; home visits; transportation; parent classes; and medical, food bank, clothing, housing, and employment referral services. The school devotes one day per month for staff to conference with professionals from a Project Coordinating Council, which plans and implements interventions. The staff also conferences with students and parents on that day.

Another school, John Glenn Middle School in Bedford, Massachusetts, uses a Case Study Review Team of police, social workers, and juvenile probation workers to share information on problematic student and family cases.

## **Common Changes within Restructuring Efforts**

The SIRIUS-A study yielded a wealth of information on the very large number of changes being implemented in school restructuring efforts across the country. Figure 1 lists the major categories of changes being implemented. This list represents a quantitative count, that is, those changes that seem to be most common across the country.

Curriculum

Learning / Instruction

Management/Admin

Community Service

	Mastery learning		
	Continuous progress		
	Student involvement		
	Student projects		
	Cooperative learning		
Advisor/advisee programs	Peer tutoring		
	Advisor/advisee programs		
	Individualized instruction		
	Heterogeneous grouping		
	Differentiated Staffing	Differentiated staffing	
	Staff development	Staff development	
	Teacher roles		
	Team teaching		
	Interdisciplinary		
	Schools-within-a-school		
	Learning centers/sites		
Student choice	Student assessment		
Early childhood education	Student choice		
	Early intervention programs		
	Technology		
Integrating disciplines	Use of time		
		Governance structures	
		Site-based management	
		Teacher team planning	
		Business involvement	
		Community involvement	Community outreach
		Parental involvement	Parent outreach

Figure 1. Types of Changes within Restructuring Efforts.

## **Conclusion: Differences Between Systemic Restructuring and Past Reforms**

Much money has been spent on piecemeal reforms over the past 25 years, yet the quality of education has declined significantly over that time. Society is changing in ways that make our educational system obsolete and therefore ineffective in meeting the needs of children and society (Banathy, 1991). As we evolve deeper into the information age, it seems likely that this trend will not only continue, but accelerate. Does restructuring represent a different enough approach from reforming to reverse this trend? The SIRIUS-A Project is helping to answer that question by identifying some important differences between restructuring and past reform movements.

First, true restructuring involves systemic change in a school, including the district-level administration. Most past reforms have been piecemeal. They changed only one or a few aspects of a school, without taking a holistic consideration of how the changes will affect other aspects of the school. Systems experts have found that the parts of a social system evolve to fit well with each other. When you try to change just one part of a system, other parts will work to change it back to what it was. This explains why most educational reforms, which have thrived when external money flowed, have disappeared when the external money stopped. And similarly, it indicates that for any fundamental change to be successful, other parts of the system must change to fit well with it and support it. Consciously taking a systemic approach and making systemic changes appears to offer a much greater chance of significant and lasting improvement of education.

Second, the schools reporting the most extensive and fundamental changes have based their structural changes on underlying integrating themes. It would appear that the themes help to unite the changes being implemented throughout the various parts of the school by giving more meaning and direction to those participating in the restructuring. This seems likely to contribute to more cohesive and enduring change.

Third, in most of the schools, the people involved in planning their school's changes chose their themes based on the needs and values of their community: students, staff, parents, teachers, and other community members.<sup>4</sup> This required open conversations, negotiations, and real commitments from stakeholders in the school. Few past reforms have been so widespread in involving members of a school community. Such involvement is likely to contribute to more lasting and permanent change because the participants are designing the changes themselves, based on a theme that has meaning to them, which gives them ownership in the changes.

These three characteristics unique to restructuring--systemic, thematic, and stakeholder-based--distinguish restructuring from past reform movements. Systemic means the change will be pervasive and holistic, thematic means it will have meaning, and community-based means those who are affected by it have bought into it.

With systemic, fundamental change that is meaningful and that the school community itself has worked to create, restructuring appears to hold great promise for more lasting change that can result in a quantum improvement in meeting the needs of students and society in the 21st century--a radically different, post-industrial, information age.

---

<sup>1</sup> S.B. Merriam, Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Indiana Curriculum Advisory Council, Indiana Schooling for the 21st Century (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Department of Education, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> M.C. Moses, The Peak Performance School: A Reason for Restructuring (Westbury, NY: Wilkerson Publishing Co., 1990).

<sup>4</sup> This information emerged from an analysis of the change process data, which is not reported in this article.