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ABSTRACT

Findings of a case study that examined the evolution of a mentoring relationship in an elementary school are presented in this paper. The collaboration to implement a school improvement project developed between a new female elementary school principal and a male external change agent/school researcher. Data were derived through participant observation and interviews with the mentor, mentee, 20 faculty members, and 2 staff instructional specialists in the school during 1990-92. The principal attempted to develop a change model based on: (1) goals that are set and shared; (2) indicators that measure success; (3) leadership that supports and pressures; and (4) assistance by capable others. Both the mentor and mentee identified the following incidents as critical to the development of a collaborative relationship: the mentor provided an analytic and supportive solution to the principal's emotional response of feeling overwhelmed; and the mentor provided a broader perspective. Results included a more positive, cooperative school climate and the unanimous faculty decision to pursue school restructuring activities and funding. (Contains 25 references.) (LMI)

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Contexts and Processes for Effective School Change: Case Study of an External Change Agent [1] [2]

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Although external expert assistance is often a crucial element of successful school improvement projects (Loucks-Horsley & Mundry, 1991; Cox, 1983; Crandall, et. al., 1982), we lack a clear picture of the expert assistance provided, how it was organized and how the professional and personal relationships were formed. The literature describes several examples of effective external assistance, but only in a general way, after the fact.

In a study sponsored by the National Diffusion Network (NDN) Cox (1983) describes the help outside assisters gave to school improvement efforts: informing them of new instructional practices, helping school staff choose practices appropriate to their needs, working with school personnel to develop commitment to new practices, arranging and conducting training, providing materials, assisting teachers to implement and continue the practice, evaluating the new practice and analyzing data as well as providing follow-up help. According to Cox's interviews, the most helpful activities for teachers were *"the efforts to actually work through the specifics of using the practice in the classroom"* (p. 12, italics mine). Because most outside assisters worked at the school rather than the individual teacher level, the central office staff often filled this role for the district teachers.

Loucks-Horsley & Mundry (1991), in their review of the technical assistance function, state that in addition to the assister's skills such as "cognitive abilities, intrapersonal competencies, work-related characteristics...and personal qualities...*the process the assister uses also greatly influences outcomes*" (p. 115, italics mine). In this process they identify six critical elements: "understanding and awareness of context, building support, establishing goals and plans, allocating materials and resources, problem solving, installing the change permanently or transferring responsibility

(institutionalization)." (p. 115) In discussing these elements within the three assistance models they describe, the authors emphasize the need for "continuing the external assistance role through several cycles of implementation and phasing out gradually," (p. 119) in order for the planned changes to be sustained.

While these can serve as helpful guidelines for external change agents, we are still left with several critical questions: What is successful assisting? How does it occur?

One answer to these questions has been mentoring. This concept has been experimented with in several states--California and Conneticut are two examples--on the basis of its "mutual benefits": teacher induction and professional enhancement (Zey, 1984). As mentors, experienced teachers enjoy the challenges, responsibilities and the promise of career development. Additionally, the novice teachers, or those new to the district or subject matter, receive the mentors' assistance, support and professional skills garnered from accumulated classroom experience. Quite naturally, when the term mentoring is mentioned, we tend to think of an idealized mentor, even though few can recall the details of the original Mentor, who, at Odysseus' request, was assigned the responsibility for guiding Telemachus during his father's absence. This historical ideal guided the intentions of those who wanted to ensure "mutual benefits" to those states and districts experimenting with mentoring in school practice.

In her review of the mentoring phenomenon, Little concludes, "Even narrowed to occupational socialization...the concept of mentorship promises a great deal (Little, 1991, p. 299).....teacher induction programs provide the main setting in which the promise of mentoring has been tested. In all of them, however, the logic of help-giving dominates" (Little, 1991, p. 340). However, many uncertainties exist as to whether mentoring can be incorporated into formal arrangements at a school site, and whether the advantages of a natural mentoring relationship can be replicated in cases of planned mentoring without trivializing the process for both mentor and mentee (Little, 1991). In addition, much ambiguity exists over the meaning of mentoring (Little, 1991).

despite the existing conceptualizations of the term (Healy and Welchert, 1990). Other reviews and analyses of mentoring emphasize the importance of mentor and mentee relationships (Flaxman, et. al., 1988) and of the mentee's readiness, the mentor's developmental approach, the context where the mentoring occurs and the need for both parties to benefit from the mentoring process (Healy and Welchert, 1990).

All these analyses, whether they refer to mentors, external change agents, or expert technical assistants, refer to what Little describes as the "logic of help-giving." Relationships, contexts, the helpers' approach to those they are attempting to help, the perceptions of those receiving the help--all these delicate elements can become major obstacles in any environment because they imply that the recipients and the providers are required to change in some way, or else the whole question of help never would have arisen in the first place. School organizations are not arranged, in terms of space or time frames or participants' expectations, to easily accommodate giving and receiving assistance. An egg-crate physical setting, where each teacher is enclosed in one classroom with 20 to 30 children who receive 30 to 50 minute lessons on several subjects throughout the day, permeates the mind sets of most school staffs, simply because that is the typical physical school environment. These practical realities affect how the assistance process--i.e., the help giving or mentoring process--is analyzed, organized at actual school sites and understood by those involved with it. These same practical realities also explain the need for a conceptualization of the assisting process: how it comes into being, how it continues and what means mentors use to foster positive mentoring relationships and bring about desired changes in school settings.

Such a mentoring conceptualization was presented by Gallimore, Tharp and John-Steiner (1992, in press). Rooted in developmental and cultural theory and exemplified by, among others, educational research and development (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), Gallimore et. al.'s mentoring concepts incorporate the external change agent's tasks and skills listed in the literature cited above, as well as critical assisting

elements, such as the relationship, the social context, the questions of readiness and developmental approach, and the mutual benefits, which reviewers on mentoring have raised.

According to Gallimore, et. al., a mentoring relationship develops when the mentor identifies activity settings where he or she can assist and work together with the mentee(s) in a goal-oriented, joint productive activity. Collaborative activity toward goals jointly evolved and mutually agreed upon creates the necessary reciprocal trust and respect--the attachment or bonding, if you will. This bonding fosters the mentoring relationship and the intersubjectivity which make it productive. The mentor takes responsibility for creating opportunities in the school context to arrange everyday activity settings, such as meeting times with the mentee, where planning or feedback can occur. Alternatively, the mentor and mentee co-chair a teachers' planning group or present information at a faculty meeting--any everyday school setting where the agreed upon goals are worked out in practice with each other or with other appropriate staff members. Some of these activity settings exist already while others are specifically constructed, which brings us to some of the more subtle and artistic qualities of lending expert assisttance.

Whether the activity setting is already functioning or is newly created, it serves a two-fold purpose: to accomplish a task by such means that the participants can share their concerns about the task, its goals and their role in the process. Making this happen requires someone who can establish trust and understanding from the participants throughout the activity, while simultaneously guiding the participants toward productivie results. At the same time the expert assister cannot give help in any meaningful way until the participants are ready to accept it. This is why the expert assister's role demands artistry and discernment in arranging and conducting joint productive activites in the activity settings and in the one-on-one interactions that occur during the activity.

For example, in activity settings, the "objective features of the participants, their words and actions, viv-a-vis their goals, are united with the participants' subjective features--their experiences, motivations, intentions and meaning" (Gallimore, et. al., 1992, p. 21). The joint productive activity in these everyday work settings is the crucible where the mentor seeks to assist by offering "developmentally sensitive, face-to-face interactions" (Gallimore, et. al., 1992, p. 21) with the mentee, and then gradually diminishes assistance when the mentee develops experience and skill. During these exchanges the mentor uses several means, such as questioning, giving feedback and/or explanations, modeling, applying reinforcement, instructing and structuring tasks.

One of the positive results accruing from these exchanges is the intersubjectivity between mentor and mentee(s) in terms of values, affect and motivation. "To the degree that intersubjectivity is present, values are alike, goals are alike, then more cooperation is possible, and thus more harmony." (Gallimore, etc. al., 1992, p. 25). This shared ground of values and goals creates a mutual professional identification of the mentee with the mentor during their initial collaborative efforts. In this space, this identification, the mentee develops the trust, confidence and the experience to act in ways that produce the results which achieve the desired goals. When the mentee becomes more skilled and no longer needs as much assistance as in the beginning of their collaboration, the mentor gradually withdraws support. At that point the mentee can implement the goals independently. So skill, artistry and experience in the construction of activity settings--these qualities more than any others are the keys to aid the expert assister.

In this paper I present a case study of just such a mentoring relationship. The study documents how the mentoring relationship evolved and how the mentor assisted the mentee. After summarizing the methods used to collect the data, I describe the background information about their mentoring relationship and narrate several critical incidents which identify the context of their joint productive activities, their agreed upon

goals, the means the mentor used to develop and sustain their relationship and the extent to which they arrived at intersubjectivity.

Method

Data for this case study were collected through participant observation and interviews conducted over a two-year period from 1990 through 1992. I visited the school, on the average, twice a week (8-10 hours per week) for 30 of the 40 weeks of the school year during a two-year period. I interviewed the external change agent weekly; the principal I interviewed once a month. With both the mentor and the mentee I discussed their professional relationship history, the elements they believed were involved in mentoring, how the mentoring began and how it was sustained, the means the mentor used to effect change in the mentee, and what each of them had learned and benefited from their mentoring relationship.

In addition to interviewing the mentor and mentee, I attended the regular faculty meetings, grade level team meetings, teacher work groups, faculty inservice or other important committees whose work was a part of the school's change process. During these meetings I had an opportunity to see both the mentor and the principal lead staff groups and observe their influence on teachers. In order to understand and document teachers' reactions to the principal's changes and to the mentor's activities, I interviewed twenty of the 30 faculty members and the two staff instructional specialists at least twice during each school year; several were interviewed weekly. Each teacher participated in a formal or structured interview, which permitted content comparability on critical information and dimensions (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973). The contact with informants, however, was primarily through informal conversations in the teachers' lounge, the cafeteria or on the playground.

Across all interviews and conversations, every effort was made to capture accurately each participant's point of view (Erickson, 1986) with respect to ongoing school events. In instances where data and interpretations were particularly critical for

understanding what was happening, informants were asked to verify summaries of interview information and their interpretation. Written field notes were prepared for each week I visited the school. These notes consisted of 1) an objective narrative of the events or interview statements by informants, 2) my comments on the affective climate at the school, and 3) reflections on or analysis of the meanings and patterns revealed in the interviews and events. To derive conclusions, data was examined to define major categories and patterns and answer ongoing research questions (Yin, 1985).

Results

Background History. Before describing some critical incidents in their mentoring relationship, it is essential to describe briefly how this relationship evolved. In 1983 Gene (a pseudonym), who later became the mentor, began a research project at Benson Elementary School to study children at risk for reading failure in first grade. During part of this time he worked there as an administrative intern. When the study and the internship ended, he taught first grade at the school from February, 1985 through June, 1988. Throughout this period Sally (a pseudonym) worked as a vice principal and then as principal of the school, from 1985 through June, 1988.

As a first grade teacher Gene wanted to try out in the classroom some of the strategies he had identified in his previous study--such as parent meetings--which would assist those children at risk for first grade reading success. To do this meant he needed the principal's approval. Because Benson's students performed significantly below grade, Sally welcomed his ideas and have him her full support. Gene explained:

> "I specifically remember during my second year of teaching I was going to have a parent meeting one evening, and I had to okay this with Sally. She offered to come and say a few words of support for what I was doing, which I thought was very gracious of her. And also, since I was one of the teachers to receive a Stull evaluation, she was in my room from time to time to observe me, to check on my goals and objectives. So we interacted a lot...she started to take an interest in what I was doing. She was also quite supportive when I was just trying to get my

sea legs as a teacher, learning to write lesson plans and manage the classroom. That was hard, harder than writing a dissertation.

"One time, I remember, I was doing some stuff in reading and she came in to observe, to check it out so we could talk about it later. I had a little group that was supposed to be working independently and as soon as they were finished they came running up to me saying, 'Teacher, teacher we're finished. What do we do now?' And Sally pointed out to me that it would probably be a good idea if I gave them something to do when they were finished so they'd know what to do and wouldn't come running over to me and interrupt whatever I was doing. Details like that make a difference as far as running a classroom. She was able to provide me with that kind of advice, which with experienced teachers is just common sense, tricks of the trade you pick up. But Ph.D or no Ph.D, I was oblivious to it."

Sally agreed:

"I met Gene when I was a vice principal at Benson....He had started teaching first grade, just after he'd completed his dissertation on reading. I think at that time I was more of a mentor to Gene than he was to me--I showed him how to shorten his lesson plans and I gave him help with classroom discipline when he was a classroom teacher.

"I remember getting interested in what he was doing in his first grade reading class. That was seven years ago. He'd come in and talk to me about ideas--and we'd brainstorm easily with each other...He was excited about stuff that he had done or read and he'd come to me to talk about it."

He also began teaching his students a strategy for picking out the correct title or main idea of a passage. This skill was always on the end-of-book tests which all students had to pass in order to move on to the next book. To find out if his students had benefited from his specific instruction, he approached a first grade teacher to find out how her students had done on the same test. "My colleagues at the school were always very cooperative; they knew I was collecting data on how the kids were doing," he recalled. Comparing the test results showed his students had performed significantly better than the other teacher's. When she asked him how he'd gotten those results he told her he'd showed the kids how to choose a title.

She acknowledged she'd never actually taught her students this skill and asked Gene about this and other strategies he used. She began targeting more comprehension objectives with her students. The next year when her students were

tested on their end-of-book test, her students' scores had improved dramatically. She was elated. When they both went to the principal and showed her their students' tests, the principal was impressed also. She asked Gene to show their results and demonstrate his strategies at the next first grade level meeting. He continued sharing the results of his experiments with the principal, who continued to urge him to share them with the faculty. Teachers responded enthusiastically and began incorporating his strategies into their classroom lessons. This pattern was repeated many times over:

> "I didn't want to come in as some blooming expert," said Gene, " because first of all, I wasn't, and secondly, I tried to keep a very low profile. Sally really played an instrumental role in drawing attention to the results, placing them in a proper perspective, in a good context so they were seen in a constructive rather than in a competitive way."
>
> Sally confirmed this:
>
> "I created opportunities for him to share his results, his research, with the staff. We'd strategize together how we could persuade the faculty to adopt some of the practices he'd found so successful and I'd give him ploys to get on the faculty meeting agendas...
>
> "In a sense, Gene needed me and I needed him," said Sally, the principal. "It was a natural working relationship...Gene needed me for political advice regarding district policy and politics...And I needed him because he had more experience about changing teaching so kids can learn better. 'Here's what kids can do,' he would say, 'and how they can learn more.'"

Several outcomes and characteristics of the research which emerged from Gene's project at Benson have been independently documented (Goldenberg and Gallimore, 1991; Goldenberg, 1988; Goldenberg, 1987.). This research had an impact on Sally as well:

> "As I became more acquainted with what Gene was doing, he got me excited and challenged about raising academic achievement at Benson. Trust developed...Something caused me to recognize his strengths. By the time he got the postdoc research grant he was a full-time researcher at the school. I probably helped him a lot to get started as a researcher because I got excited about what he was doing..."
>
> Gene describes his version of this time period:

> "As drafts were coming out of that research," Gene continued, "I would give them to Sally to read, not only for her information...but as an important validity check. We'd talk about them and I think she found them very informative and important... that on her watch this was going on, that we can identify with some degree of certainty what the key factors were. These were not just things that were happening at random...they might be replicable; you could go somewhere else and do it again. So I think Sally saw the value, of not just doing stuff, which is real important, but also trying to figure out what you've done and how it fits in with other things, and the extent to which that gives you information and you can then try in another context to achieve comparable results, not that these can ever be directly transferred."

By the summer of 1989 Sally and Gene both looked back on a positive professional working relationship they shared at Benson over the years. The trust, the exploration of professional concerns that led to shared understandings and shared goals about school change--all these created intersubjectivity between them. In addition, creating an academic focus in the school and raising the students' reading achievement levels had produced successful and effective results which encouraged them both. At that time neither considered the other a "mentor" or "mentee". However, their successful collaboration grounded their professional relationship in mutual trust and respect.

This background of trust led Sally to seek Gene's advice when the school began in 1989. Although Gene was still working at Benson on the teacher change research project, Sally had just begun her principalship at Freeman, an elementary school a few blocks away but in the same district. She had finished the course work for her doctorate in education and she called Gene to talk about her literature review paper which would be the basis for her dissertation proposal. This started their joint productive activity in earnest. Gene describes the event:

> "That was where the work at Freeman really began, that was really the beginning. From our many discussions, what eventually emerged over a period of time was that she realized she was interested in improving kids' achievement...and that pacing might be one way to go about it. That was one of the things that I tried to help her see--that you're not interested in pacing in and of itself, but because you think it's going to link to something you are interested in, which is learning. So why not focus on what you're interested in, which is the prize out here, and then think what kinds of things feed into that? Pacing is

> probably one of them, but it's probably not the only one. So, separating what she was really interested in--the end, the purpose--from the means of getting there...and linking what she was interested in with the hoops she had to go through to get her doctorate--that was a major undertaking, an important contribution, to make those links."

During one of their discussions on her paper Sally acknowledged to Gene her dissatisfaction with the student achievement at Freeman. She wanted to do something about this, something substantive: "I really want to turn this place around." Immediately anxiety and conflict set in. Committing herself to upgrade instruction and the general student performance, while simultaneously figuring out a dissertation topic, amounted to placing herself on overload. Gene gave her an idea:

> "Well, I suggested the radical notion that they be one and the same...that in turning the school around she could use that as her dissertation topic. She could do a case study of herself and her school, looking at how she does it.....Over the year I think what happened is that...what she needed to do for her dissertation and what she wanted to do professionally as a principal merged into one."

So during the year '89-'90 school year they continued their discussions and Sally decided to follow Gene's suggestion. Gene recounted how they began:

> "We started thinking, 'Well, let's develop a plan.' I brought her articles, the one I wrote about Benson, the stuff on accelerated schools, the process of change, achievement and how to conceptualize it. At the urging of her advisor, Sally wrote a pre-proposal outlining a conceptual model of how school change occurs. At first Sally didn't see the links (between the literature and her contributions to the achievement success at Benson). We had many discussions...."

Sally describes her version:

> "After Gene read my paper, which had those four change elements in it...he said, 'This would make a good dissertation topic.' I had my doubts because I'm more practical. But with Gene I never felt intimidated. He's humble and unpretentious; he's not threatening. I like Gene because he's a gentle, kind and supportive person."

After reviewing the staff development, educational change and effective schools research, Sally hypothesized that "educational change can be brought about as a function of these four change elements, each acting in concert with the others"

(Goldenberg and Sullivan, p. 5). These four elements constituted the model used now for the research project at Freeman to document the school change process:

1. Goals that are set and shared
2. Indicators that measure success
3. Leadership that supports and pressures
4. Assistance by capable others.

None of these elements is new. Strong leadership, clear goals and monitoring student success have long been classic tenets of effective schools (Davis and Thomas, 1989). Other researchers (Loucks-Horsley & Mundry, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Fullan, 1985; Cox, 1983) have concluded that assistance by capable others is required to create a context for change. When these elements were adopted as concrete actions at a similar school intervention project, the school climate as well as student behavior and achievement improved (Comer, 1988).

By May 1990 when Sally's advisor approved her proposal and her work with Gene, he agreed to work with her as an external change agent/school researcher and to change his research focus from teacher change to school change. During their weekly planning sessions through the end of that school year, Sally and Gene discussed how to turn the change elements into successful actions. They explored strategies for assisting teachers to improve classroom instruction and persuading them to set schoolwide student academic expectations. Gene suggested Sally establish a committee, with one teacher from each grade level, to write these goals. Sally agreed. This became the Academic Expectations Committee, which constituted a teacher support group for school goals. At Sally's suggestion, Gene agreed to conduct an instructional conversation seminar where teachers could learn how to promote children's oral language and reading as they talked about the stories they read. When he introduced the topic at a faculty meeting, teachers expressed an interest; this became the first teacher seminar/work group for the fall of 1990.

These joint productive activities, the plans discussed at their weekly meetings, laid the groundwork for actions which Sally implemented during the following two years, from 1990 to 1992. She asked the resource specialists to work in the teachers' classrooms and to organize quarterly pacing conferences with each faculty member. She also initiated shared decisionmaking among the faculty and set up organizational structures to put this in motion. She supported several teachers who wanted to have single-language classes, those who wanted to teach an integrated thematic content and a math teacher who offered math help after school to all interested students. She and Gene arranged inservices on parental involvement and on homework, teacher seminars on cooperative learning and writing process, and an after school Homework Club and Homework Liaison. During the second year, he and the principal co-chaired the Academic Expectations Committee meetings, where twice a month for all-day sessions they met with resource specialists and teacher representatives from each grade level to refine the schoolwide academic goals and identify new ways to assess the students' goal achievements.

Throughout these discussions about the planned actions Sally subsequently implemented--and the repercussions arising from them--Gene encouraged her to arrange activity settings where she and the teachers, or groups of teachers, or he and Sally together, could work collaboratively on goal-directed, joint productive activities. Behind this purpose was his belief that in face to face discussions the principal and the faculty could create a supportive context for school change; they could problem-solve those obstacles blocking school change and gradually the staff would be persuaded to make the changes happen. The theory appeared particularly relevant to school situations, where teachers work in isolation much of the day with little or no opportunity to observe or talk with fellow colleagues.

Planned activity settings seemed particularly appropriate at Freeman, because when she accepted the principalship, Sally confronted several problems typical of many

urban schools: a discouraged staff and students who were unsuccessful learners. Freeman, which had been a middle school until 1987, had had two principals in as many years. The state and the district were concerned about the low-level of student academic achievement; over fifty percent of the children in kindergarten through fifth grade were below grade level in basic skills. The school served a Hispanic neighborhood where most of the student population qualified for free lunches and breakfasts, the community's families worked and played against a backdrop of gang activity, poverty and drug dealing.

Teachers coped as best they could and assumed the students were doing their best. From the teachers' perspective the children's needs seemed insurmountable in the face of their best efforts. Among many teachers this situation produced a hopeless cynicism and a sense of overload. Often they vented their frustration and negativity by pointing fingers and backbiting at their fellow colleagues, accusing them of not having their students' best interests in mind.

Because Freeman and Benson belonged to the same general community and shared similar student populations, Sally believed she could initiate the same changes at Freeman that she had at Benson. The faculties differed drastically, however, and their faculties had different histories. So, when Sally tried implementing her plans in the fall of 1989, she was totally unprepared for the result. Gene described it:

> "When Sally went to Freeman, this is where--from her story--she initially ran into trouble, because she didn't really take seriously the notion that the results which worked in this one particular context at Benson do not mean you can just pick up the package, abstract it from its context and then apply it to this other setting, even though it's five blocks down the street, and expect it to have the same effect. She was part of the transformational process at Benson, and she thought, 'Well, I want to do the same thing here...put in pacing conferences and exhorting everyone to do it just like we did it at Benson.' And what happened was, she ran into a buzz saw."

Sally explained the buzz-saw. At Benson she'd been a vice-principal and then principal; she knew the culture of the school and she had learned things naturally, little by little. Coming to Freeman was like "a hundred times harder, like a culture shock":

> "I wanted to create an environment for professional growth and shared decisionmaking to occur, a supportive, nurturing environment where teachers are concerned about improving instruction and raising academic expectations. I wanted to maximize the strengths and establish a strong Academic Expectations Committee...but I've had to back pedal. Some teachers were resentful toward me. The grade level chairs didn't know their roles. Winifred (a teacher, a pseudonym) helped me to understand this. I came down too hard too fast. I gave the wrong impression, the wrong message, from the time of the first staff meeting here."

On many occasions during that first year Sally felt the teachers' words and actions as if they were a buzz saw, so much so that by the end of that first year--in June, 1991--she was deeply frustrated. She talked with the superintendent and she talked with Gene. She credits Gene with her decision to continue her work at Freeman:

> "Gene helped me make it here at Freeman. When I felt there was no way to win, Gene saw a bright light. Gene validated me and helped me with my insecurities...He's so involved with the school, with our goals and our vision for the school, yet he's also neutral. Because of these qualities he's very supportive and his support means a lot...I'd say to him, 'I just can't go on. I just can't take another good idea.' And then he'd say or do something to relax me or inspire me and get me back on track again. I can't think of anything I don't feel safe in telling Gene....but most of all, I trust him. He wouldn't even have gotten his foot on this campus if I didn't feel I could trust him implicitly. And that trust has come from our past history, from working together at Benson."

She decided to stay. During the following two years, 1990-1992, the face-to face collaborative work among teachers, between teachers and administration, and between Gene and the teachers, gradually changed the school climate from negative to positive. Discussions and interactions at various activity settings allowed faculty members to work through--or at least share--their ideas, conflicts, disagreements and doubts about the changes they were considering. They had to do this many times, until they could reassure themselves that school goals and assessments as Sally presented them, posed no threat to them as teachers, and they could advocate the change as a positive

good for the students. The faculty adopted schoolwide academic goals and assessments; they decided to combine their efforts and apply for a State Restructuring Planning Grant, which they received, as well as to apply for a State Restructuring Demonstration Grant. Throughout this period Sally clearly acknowledged Gene as her mentor. The mentoring process could not have occurred without their past history of mutual trust and their joint productive activities that produced successful results.

Thus, at the end of the two-year period from which these case materials are drawn, there is evidence of the school improvement project's success; from the same project the principal's effectiveness and the effectiveness of the change agent's role have both been documented (Goldenberg and Sullivan, 1991, 1992; Goldenberg & Hamann, 1991).

Critical Incidents. While the preceeding background information highlights the context surrounding the mentor and mentee, the following critical incidents show the process Gene used in working with his mentee. These incidents also demonstrate the importance of context, both in terms of the school situation and the mentee's professional development.

When asked to describe critical incidents which could have jeopardized the school goals they were trying to implement and where the mentor's influence made a difference in the mentee's actions, both the mentor and mentee identified the same ones. The incidents they selected also illustrate the mentoring process.

Both the mentor and the mentee identified the following incident as critical to implementing the school goals in the future. After confirming Gene's assistance with her dissertation proposal, Sally described an incident which occurred in the summer of 1991, after the district informed her that Freeman had won a State Restructuring Planning Grant:

> "When we got the planning grant I was basically overwhelmed. I thought, 'Oh now that I've gotten it I want to give the money back; it's just too much work.'

When I told Gene my decision, he said, 'Now, Sally, let's stop to think about what we can do to make your job easier.' That's when he met with me over the summer and we talked about different jobs I could give the counselor to do. He also told me that when it came to running the sessions for Academic Expectations Committee, instead of my chairing the sessions as I had done last year, that he basically would take them over, which he has...In terms of his mentoring he's given me feedback but also he's actually done a lot of the work for me, too. In writing the first draft of this grant proposal he's taken a lot of pressure off of me, and had he not agreed to write it, I promise you we wouldn't have done it. Because...with all the stuff for my dissertation, I would never have written a proposal. And beyond that, proposal writing is a separate skill in and of itself and I never would have had the expertise to write one that would have been funded..."

By her account Gene helped her most by reducing her sense of feeling overwhelmed, suggesting how she could distribute some of her tasks and taking on some of these tasks himself. Gene described this same incident:

"(During) one incident...I was very aware I was trying to engage her in a joint productive activity...to identify the problems here, line them up, see what's underneath them and see if we could generate a couple of alternatives as to how we might go with them, rather than just plunking them off one by one, which really wasn't going to deal with some of the underlying issues...

"(That incident occurred) last summer (1991) when we found out we'd won the planning grant. I talked to her about how we could proceed for the coming school year. She was overwhelmed with having to deal with the planning grant and all the other district cutbacks. I could see her anxiety rising past her eyeballs, so we sat down...and (I listened to her tell me) all the things she had to do (that made it impossible for her to accept the planning grant). The district was not going to replace her vice-principal; she, along with other principals, had to take on the orientation training for all the teachers new to the district. So I said to her, 'Why don't we look at your list of jobs and prioritize them. Maybe you could let go of some of this stuff and delegate some of it to the counselor...He could do some of the vice-principal type things, especially since he's going to have some counseling assistants. You can keep tabs on things but give him more responsibility...so you can keep focused on more substantive things related to the larger plan, the vision of improving achievement...I offered to chair the sessions with the Academic Expectations Committee..."

"I'd like to believe she tries to take a broader view of things, that she sees the school operation more coherently...where the day to day things are seen as part of a larger framework, a bigger picture, rather than as a million separate, fragmented things. A lot of what she has to do is totally fragmented. Stuff comes up and she has to take care of it, just plant management stuff....I'd like to think that she's trying to take a more comprehensive view of things rather than accord everything equal priority, that maybe she's more analytical about what's going on, seeing the pros and cons, the options and the constraints...Whether she has

internalized some principles for trying to deal with problems at a deeper level, and generalize them to new situations, I don't know..."

Basically the two accounts are very similar. Sally speaks of being "overwhelmed", and that is how Gene characterizes her. Facing so many problems she often feels as if she wanted to relinquish the planning grant. He acknowledges her response to the problems as well as the problems themselves. He listens; he suggests a possible solution; he offers to take on part of the responsibility for carrying out the grant. They also acknowledge each other's strengths and areas of weakness. To this extent they have intersubjectivity.

While their basic facts are similar, their individual accounts illustrate two entirely different perspectives. She sees her situation as a series of particular tasks that create an emotional response, the feeling of "being overwhelmed." From Sally's perspective Gene is a positive supporting force in a demanding and difficult situation. He understands her problem--the tasks she faces, her "overwhelmed" feeling, the reasons for her decision and her desire to keep the grant if the problem were not so onerous. He offers specific help which reduces her "overwhelmed" feeling and reduces the tasks so the problem becomes manageable.

From Gene's perspective he is working with her, guiding her through an analytical, structured approach which she can apply to solve other school problems. While fully acknowledging her "overwhelmed" feelings in their discussion, he models an intellectual solution which addresses both aspects of the problem: her emotional responses to the tasks facing her as well as how to deal with the tasks themselves. By working through the problem in this way and by offering to share some of the work, he reduced her anxiety about proceeding with the grant and still fulfill the daily demands of being a principal. He knows she is not yet ready to carry out on her own the additional responsibility of managing the grant as well as managing the school. With his assistance, however, she is able to do this. In their work together, their joint productive

activity, he operates within her zone of proximal development, the developmental area where a mentor's assistance is most effective, namely, where the mentor's assistance helps the mentee to perform at a higher level than the mentee could perform alone. At this time the challenge of managing the school, finishing her dissertation and moving the school forward to realize the school goals--all these activities are sufficiently formidable that she describes in particulars how her mentor assists her and how she needs his assistance.

A second incident which both mentor and mentee cited also illustrates the complexities and demands of simultaneously managing a school, persuading the school staff to adopt an academic focus, and "keeping one's cool" as Sally described it, in the face of daily problems. The incident involved her relationship to the staff and represents many similar incidents. After her initial frustrating efforts to "turn the school around" and continuing throughout the two-year period, Sally struggled with her feelings about the faculty. She perceived that they did not care about the students or value her efforts to create a positive, collaborative school climate and raise students' academic achievement. This perception permeated her discussions with Gene and fueled her responses to and plans for the actions she implemented at the school site. She related her sense of isolation and the importance of Gene's perspective:

> "He is my support system.....He has helped me keep to these, especially when I get so discouraged I want to throw them all out...I can talk out problems with him, talk ideas through with him, looking at the options and the constraints...When I'm angry and frustrated with what I think is unfair criticism, he's objective, and he'll say, 'Well, is there something we need to learn from this, something we need to pay attention to?'...When I'm at my lowest ebb, he'll give me a positive reinforcer and make me feel I'm not a total failure, or he'll offer to help. With him I can always tell it like it is and feel safe...He always manages to lower my level of concern..."

Gene confirmed her feelings about the faculty and how he dealt with it:

> "She perceived the teachers as non-supportive. I tried to get her to see that a reservoir of good intentions exists on the staff, toward her and toward the

students, and to persuade her to capitalize on this knowledge in her dealings with the teachers' problems and issues..."

The specific critical incident they both cited occurred in the fall of 1991:

"I want to play the role of assister to the teachers, but I do or I don't depending on what's flying by. Like Leticia (a pseudonym), for example. It's been the same song and verse from her all along. Leticia is an outlier. When I play the assister in pressuring and supporting, then Leticia harangues me for not being tough enough. 'You could be tough from your office,' she says. Leticia went on and on about teachers who take PE too frequently and just let kids play in the yard. She accused me of not knowing what was going on. I got so upset I decided to let the teachers have it. Here, after all I've done for the teachers, they don't even care about the kids. So I decided to call a faculty meeting and let the teachers have it for taking so much extra PE time and not keeping kids on grade level.

"After I talked to Gene about this situation, I decided that's not the way to go. I really can't be a chief law enforcement officer for the teachers. I don't believe in that; I'm not comfortable in that role. Instead, when I saw that Leticia was having an unscheduled PE break, I went out on the yard to where she was sitting on the bench correcting papers while her kids were playing. I said to her, 'Now Leticia, I could really get after you for taking a PE break, an unscheduled one, but I know you're been pushing your kids hard and you need time for a break. That's what I mean, Leticia--I don't want to be the indiscriminate top sergeant who bosses everyone just to set an example, which is why I'm not getting after you now even though I could.'"

Gene described his version of the incident:

"Well, there was the time when she was about to blast the faculty, because Leticia had complained to her about the faculty's lack of effort to improve student academic achievement. Sally's so terrified of Leticia that she was about to blast them all to kingdom come. Of course I saw 'Torpedo! Torpedo!' flashing in neon before my eyes and I kind of headed her off at the pass. That was a critical incident. And again I don't know to what extent she then inferred some principle from that which she could generalize to other situations--like, 'Hold your fire!' I don't know...I've often talked to her about building a positive school climate, a team spirit and how essential that is for getting the staff to work on school goals, and on pushing the kids to achieve..."

Again, this incident illustrates that Sally accepts and conceptualizes Gene's advice but that she does not yet apply it seamlessly without his assistance. She has, on many occasions, implemented much of his advice successfully on her own as school issues arose. However, she still relies on his advice and support to help her keep the bigger picture--the school goals always in the forefront. He continues to be responsive

to the assistance she needs at this point in their mentoring relationship. She acknowledges he has helped her understand the importance of school climate in implementing the project goals and the school restructuring process:

> "What have I learned from Gene? That we have to develop a team spirit at this school, we have to stop these accusations, this fingerpointing and backbiting. We have to create a feeling among the staff that we're all in this together, that we need everyone's support, everyone's help. Without that positive team spirit we'll never get our school goals off the ground. Gene talked to me about that last year, and he keeps reminding me about it this year.
>
> "You heard Amy (a pseudonym) at the meeting, saying 'I don't want teachers accusing me of not teaching any of these math goals.' So I would say, in working with the faculty, with the counselor and the resource specialists, that Gene's advice about reducing the backbiting and fingerpointing has been the main guideline I've tried to follow. I've tried to create a positive school climate, a feeling that we're all working together to improve students' learning. A positive school climate is the foundation we need to build school goals and students' achievement.
>
> "And believe me I know how difficult it is to change that attitude because I know I've wanted to point fingers, to blame the faculty. It's such an easy way out. And Gene has helped me see that even though I feel that so-and-so is to blame, accusing and criticizing won't build teacher morale. It won't build active support for the school goals.
>
> "From everything that's happened at this school during the three years I've been here I've found Gene's advice about establishing a positive school climate--as a prerequisite for implementing school goals--to be painfully true. That's why I believe it's the most important, the most critical thing I've learned from Gene."

How does Gene describe the mentoring process he uses with Sally? He explains:

> "In terms of the means I've used in working with Sally, I've given her feedback. I use questioning. Mostly, however, I try to model problem solving, to structure cognitive tasks. I try to find out from her what is going on, to lay out all the problems, to see them with as much clarity as possible in terms of the large framework, the main purpose. Then I try to get her to outline the desirable options and the existing constraints."

Conclusions

Gene has also assisted Sally in organizing activity settings such as teacher work groups and the Academic Expectations Committee, in planning and modeling how to conduct these meetings so that everyone has an opportunity to express ideas, (including the controversial and difficult ones), so that the meeting focus stays on target to produce consensus and results, and so that no one person or group can dominate or sidetrack the committee from the task at hand. Gene's assistance process grounds joint productive activity and the activity setting into real world problems which need to be resolved, such as the meaning of student academic expectations and assessment and how these can operate with Freeman's teachers and students in their classrooms. In these one-on-one interactions of the assistance process, the expert assister or technical advisor helps the principal keep her "eyes on the prize," on the larger goals of the enterprise. To do this he employs patience, insight, timing, discrimination, a heightened awareness of what the others are feeling and thinking and a responsiveness to them--in short, all the skills we associate with counseling, diplomacy and art.

Their collaboration has produced results and positive, substantive changes in the school: a more positive, cooperative school climate which both teachers and administrators have observed and the adoption of schoolwide academic goals and assessments by the faculty (Goldenberg & Hamann, 1991). In addition, the faculty voted unanimously to work collaboratively on a proposal for a California Restructuring Demonstration Grant in the spring of 1992. When this grant was denied in August, 1992, the faculty decided to pursue their school restructuring activities on their own, without additional funds from the state.

Considering the formidable obstacles confronting a principal whose agenda is to improve faculty morale and students' achievement, it is not surprising that assistance is a necessary requirement to accomplish this task. For both administrators and teachers at schools such as Freeman, just maintaining--getting through the day--is sufficiently

stressful that little energy is available for anything else. To take on the additional agenda of "turning the school around" so the students improve their academic achievement, is the equivalent of "taking a second job," as Sally phrased it. For these dual tasks, assistance is critical:

> "I probably would have gotten derailed along the way without Gene... I would have taken a fatalistic approach and wouldn't have kept my positive attitude...He supports me tremendously and his support has made all the difference."

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