

## **Changing the Discourse in Schools**

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In this chapter, we are going to discuss two very simple ideas. First, if American schooling is to be transformed, its participation in the reproduction of long-term unequal social arrangements must be eliminated. Second, the current dominant discourse in schools (how people talk about, think about and plan the work of schools and the questions that get asked regarding reform or change) is a hegemonic cultural discourse. The consequence of this discourse is to maintain existing schooling practices and results. We call this hegemonic discourse, Discourse I.

If the announced purpose of school reform, to educate everyone well, is taken seriously, then a different, more critical discourse (which we call Discourse II) must precede and guide reform (Aronowitz, 1994; Fullan, 1988; Kilmann et al., 1985). It must prepare a cultural ground for change. The most serious question facing substantive school reform is how to create Discourse II in school cultures.

Schools are a major part of society's institutional processes for maintaining a relatively stable system of inequality. They contribute to these results by active acceptance and utilization of a dominant set of values, norms and beliefs, which, while appearing to offer opportunities to all, actually support the success of a privileged minority and hinder the efforts and visions of a majority. Some social scientists call this condition and its sustaining process hegemony, i.e., when a cultural set promulgated by an elite or dominant class comes to be pervasive and taken for granted in a society even when its practice is not in the interests of many others. Because of strong elements of social reproduction and hegemony in American society and its schools over a long period of time, we would assert that schools have not typically been instruments of social change, except when needed to preserve the overall hegemonic social/economic order.

Since John Dewey (1966), many educators have espoused a belief that schools in a democratic society should educate all people well. We suggest that the difficulty in initiating schooling for a democratic society flows from the strength of social reproduction in American schooling. Social reproduction as defined by McLaren (1994) is perpetuation of social relationships within the larger society. Another way to say this is that children are developed to replace their parents and/or family members in the social and economic life of a society. There are, in addition, a series of steps in an effective change process for schools that have been observed and documented. Since most change efforts falter ultimately, there must be something more to making systemic change than simply understanding and using effective change processes.

Efforts in the past four decades to change outcomes of American schooling, so that they no longer correlate highly with race, class, and gender and to provide a higher quality and level of education for everyone, have, at best, been modestly effective. That assessment is probably a kind one. How do we explain this poor record of reform? Are the programs and processes that have been offered as "school improvement solutions" poor ones? Perhaps, but let us briefly examine this history. The federal government and the private sector heavily invested in promoting school curriculum reform, beginning with the National Defense Education Act in the late 1950's. In the 1960s, curriculum reform and the retraining of teachers (for modern mathematics, linguistics, and whole language, and inquiry approaches to teaching science and social science) were massive reform efforts. When this proved to have little effect by the 1970s, research and development approaches to reform were tried through such means as the Elementary Secondary Education Act, Regional Educational Laboratories and Centers, National Science Foundation Consortia, and funding by many non-profit foundations. National dissemination systems emerged in the 1970s to allow local school districts to have access

to the newest and best educational research and development. Newly developed innovations were believed to be excellent and have potential for substantially changing the outcomes of America's schools. Many, if not most, of these new programs were superior to existing ones and could have been effective in educating everyone well. There is no lack of well-known and effective solutions. If we have effective solutions and if we know, as some suggest, effective organizational change processes, why is it so difficult to produce substantial and lasting change in schools?

We are going to suggest two possible reasons. One is that a focus upon processes of change assumed that following certain steps would promote change. The second is that substantive issues are seldom identified as the purpose of change. Focus upon the change process produces questions like: Is it top down?; Is it bottom up?; Is it renewing?; Is it vertical as well as horizontal?; Is it more or less linear or sequential? These questions are the wrong focus. Such questions generally maintain an organization's ability to reproduce itself. Some top-down changes work very well but not most. Some bottom-up changes work very well but not as often as claimed. Yet trying to follow or implement such linear change processes has seldom led to substantial change in educational settings. There are also examples of interactive and renewal approaches to change that work very well. But more often than not such efforts rarely become truly interactive and renewing, let alone establish meaningful change. Some recent school interventions like Re: Learning, Comer Schools, Accelerated Schools, and Total Quality Management (TQM) have made use of what can be identified as a general model of renewal. The renewal process makes use of collaboration, shared decision making, and a much wider involvement of people at site-based change. Comer (1988) has reported that the schools in Hartford, where he began work in the 1960s, have begun to achieve substantive improvement. He also indicates that other sites have not been able to replicate this same outcome. The evidence from the Accelerated School implementation indicates that somewhere around the third or fourth year, most schools begin to discontinue their efforts. Sarason (1990) describes these outcomes as predictable and common.

We think the "something more" consists of the second of the two factors we identified above. The purpose or reason, the substance of the thing, that is discussed as the reason for attempting to change must not be superficial. It makes a difference what is identified as needing change! Practitioners often understand and implement the mechanics of the process but not the implications and consequences of a new idea. Training and workshops are often identified as being for improved practice. This does not carry a message of changing something significant but rather of improving what is already occurring. From a beginning in teacher education pre-service programs throughout "on-the-job" learning and including staff development and school improvement efforts in school districts, teachers are trained to believe in process and methods. Techniques, methods, and new curriculum content are the stuff of improvement efforts. Learning and the effect of classroom relationships and conditions seldom if ever become a focus of improvement, unless it is a new discipline program to aid control. Teachers are seldom if ever given the opportunity to do active learning and engage in reflective discourse about the effects of their work.

Even when an attempt to identify and discuss substantive issues occurs, there are serious barriers. Existing cultural patterns, ways of thinking and accepted practice tend to conceal significant problems and contradictions. Symptoms often get identified and treated as causes and the problems persist. For example, children do not turn in their homework assignments, which drives many teachers to distraction. The homework problem will get identified as something within the student and/or home conditions. Different policies will then be employed that reward or punish doing or not doing homework. What will seldom be considered is the idea that the relationships and conditions of learning in the school and classroom are major contributors to why children do not do homework. Such things are not considered because teachers and principals are coming to school every day "doing their work" in ways that are acceptable within the culture of schooling. Thus it cannot be anything they are doing.

Giroux (1991), Aronowitz (1994), McLaren (1994), Foucault (1977), and others including Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Fullan, (1988) suggest that getting at the substance of systemic or cultural change requires demystifying the hegemonic cultures. Elites not only rule through informal consent, incentives, or even the use of force but rather often through taken-for-granted, accepted social conventions or practices' that define and constitute what is "natural," "normal," and the "way things are" or "should be." Hegemony, then, preconditions a social discourse that allows the powerful and those who use the discourse to blame outsiders and subordinates for their own oppression and "failings." It can also lead to those groups blaming themselves for their fates. Finally, it provides explanations and solutions for dealing with deviations from the natural or normal.

In order to begin to identify substantive issues involved in systemic change, it is necessary to use a critical theory approach that enables the deconstruction or demystification of the underlying assumptions and values that drive an existing school culture. Systemic change must be understood to be related to what is troubling us, i.e., the hegemony. The use of existing cultural ways promotes symptomatic issues like attendance, dropouts, discipline, low test scores, and low grades. Often in cultural organizations like schools, we exchange one cultural way for another that maintains outcomes that sort by race, class, and gender. (The new discipline policy has much the same effect as the old discipline policy.) We simply follow "the change process" and implement something adapted to the old cultural ways (how we do things here). A fundamental belief in process is part of school cultures. If we followed the process and nothing changed, then the explanation must be in the thing being implemented. It did not work. This cultural way is a major factor in allowing schools to have the appearance of responding to change without having to change anything substantive.

In another example, many local schools are conducting inservice efforts on topics like assertive discipline, discipline with dignity, positive discipline, gaining control of the learning, to mention only a few. They all ignore the substantive issue and instead view the issue as one of finding ways of controlling children. The substantive issue is the question: What are we doing in this school that alienates many of our children so that they create problems and are disruptive? For example, it is not uncommon in urban profile elementary schools to find that minority males may represent 60 percent or more of the discipline problems, failing grades and poor attendance. These young men may represent only 30 percent or less of a school population. How do we account for this disproportionate outcome? Yet, in the vast majority of cases introspection or reflection about underlying problems in the school are not considered as relevant to this as a "school effect." The problem will universally be identified as in the students and/or their families.

Similarly, children in urban type schools are viewed as "needing more structure" because they are "from disadvantaged conditions" or "from single parent families" or "working families" or "more dangerous." The problem is viewed as part of something in the children and/or their existence outside of school. Therefore, controlling or "teaching them discipline" is viewed as a solution and a precondition for learning. Such approaches have the effect of maintaining the existing cultural ways in schools and assuring that the children continue to be sorted to replace their parents in the social order.

We suggest that the effect a change will have depends upon the discourse that sustains and accompanies a change effort. Are substantial issues raised as the essential discourse for change? Is there a Discourse I or II attending the change effort? When teachers and others in school sites are confronted with efforts to change, what are their ways of deciding what is happening and how they must respond? Does the discourse engage in a dialogue about important relationships and conditions in the school settings, i.e., the hegemony? Is there a discourse of hope, of despair or of how "they" will not leave us alone, i.e., cultural oppression? Is the cultural discourse about how the students and the administrators are not competent, and, therefore, teachers are confronted with an impossible task, blaming the victim? Do the people have a Discourse I or a Discourse II colloquy?

Words like "staff development," "inservice," and "school improvement" are terms that have meaning in the existing school cultures. They have invariably come to mean that people in schools can go through a process that appears to be change oriented but, in fact, has not resulted in any substantial improvement of student learning. These processes are cultural ways to maintain the status quo without appearing to be unresponsive to outside demands for improvement (Parish & Arends, 1983). These standard processes have become a primary part of a Discourse I in schools.

Discourse II conversations tend to be about uncomfortable, unequal, ineffective, prejudicial conditions and relationships in a school. Discourse II processes create demystified schooling eventually. It is not that some of the more conventional terms could not be about substantive change. It is that they already have these other meanings and thus are difficult to consider in a different light. Is the discourse about conventional and traditional teaching and organizing or does it relate to creating a transformed school that is about learning, not only for students but for everyone there? Is the result that outcomes no longer correlate with social class, race or gender? This can be answered by asking, do outcomes continue to favor certain people and groups?

Discourse II schools create an organizational setting that is continually changing and developing because the members are continually learning. In a Discourse II school, ambiguity and change are part of a purposeful structure. The direction for change is clear. It is intended to produce schools where every student develops intellectually to high levels and the performance gap related to race, class and gender narrows until school effects are no longer correlated with those factors. How schools get there is varied and part of the human dynamics. Teachers and principals can figure it out, given time and a path to follow. This is what Discourse II becomes.

What we want to consider here is, can Discourse II schools be created? What is the substance of Discourse II and how do we get such a transformational agenda in schools? How do we get practitioners in school cultures who accept existing cultural ways to deconstruct and demystify their beliefs about their work? How do we create a Discourse II dialogue without creating anger, defensiveness, blame, guilt, and denial?

We search for answers to this question as we work in schools. In this search we have come to realize that there may only be paths to discover, not answers. The values and beliefs of existing school cultures lead to insistence upon answers. "Searching for answers," in fact, may be the first casualty of demystification. "Just tell us what to do," is a status quo value. We wish to share with you our discourse around this question.

In the twenty-first century, even now, knowledge and creation of meaning become essential for whatever life choices people wish to make. To deny a person the fullest intellectual and personal development is to deny a fundamental human right. Certainly, in our social context it denies property, liberty, and probably eventually life. Everyone will not want the same things or same paths, but to have a choice requires intellectual development beyond that to what we now provide for a select 20 percent. We are convinced that almost all of our population across all races has the intellectual capacity to reach that type of development. They have spoken a human language since the age of 3-4. That is the hardest thing they will ever have to learn. It is all they need to get smart.

In the past, the better educated you were, the more options you had or the greater chance to, at least, be in some manner in charge of your own life-to be free. That is why Western cultures have historically assured the best schooling for the privileged and limited the schooling of others as a cultural priority. It is one of cultures' ways of preserving social reproduction. That is one reason why, in this period of change, political/economic solutions like privatizing, vouchering, and other marketing strategies are advocated by conservatives for Year 2000 goals. The resources of a family determine access to quality and preparation. These "reform" measures have the effect of maintaining schooling advantages for the privileged, in the name of choice, freedom,

standards, and the American Way. These are all part of our old cultural ways. Old cultural ways endure even when their continuation threatens the very culture they are trying to preserve.

A helpful note is that cultural ways are not absolute. Such ways were part of the rhetoric of the Robber Barons of the 1880s and the 1980s as well. But, there were also persons of wealth, power, and privilege in the 1880s and also in the 1980s who recognized the hegemony for what it was and sought to dismantle it (Josephson, 1962). An intelligent view of the twenty-first century would reveal that it is important to abandon some old cultural ways in order to make new ones. It is necessary to create a new "debate" and a Discourse II. It is possible to understand a good deal of our current political turmoil as emanating from a public debate, or lack of, over these very issues. If one argues for the reduction of civil government in providing for the health, education, and welfare, does that require more civil responsibility on the part of the private sector? Are the cultural ways of American capitalism geared to such a condition?

In mercantile and industrial capitalism there were opportunities for persons to acquire meaningful work and financial rewards without extensive formal academic preparation in order to have a decent life (Hodgkinson, 1986a, 1986b). Education was a way to aid this development. Experience and on the job development were also ways to achieve some social/economic security, although much more difficult, often more time consuming and often less rewarding than formal education. It was not so important in America that the privileged received superior educations, because most believed everyone could still have an adequate standard of living. However, many are beginning to understand that to assign someone to an apprenticeship in an information-based culture has the likely effect of assigning someone to a limited/lesser life (Katznelson, 1981). America, more than any other nation, may have encouraged a higher amount of upward social mobility, but the dominance of class and especially of race still reigns in America. Those who work in schools are still enmeshed in the reproduction of a highly stratified society, whether they understand it or not. A story from Ralph Parish illustrates what we mean by the historical hegemony. Although, accounting for different generations, each of us has a similar story, with a different war.

I remember Percy, who was in my 5th and 6th grade urban school classrooms. This was during WWII. He was always a little strange it seemed to many of us. He dressed in bib overalls (only country people or lowly working people wore them). Percy did not always appear very clean and did not talk exactly like the rest of us. Yet, I had come to like him. He had a good sense of humor and if you took the time to know him he was often fun to be around. He was very quiet and never took an active role in class or school things. In my recollection, he had never been identified as good at anything we did in school. He usually only came to school three or four days a week, except in winter. Then, in the spring of our 6th grade year, he just disappeared. He, plainly, wasn't at school anymore. After a couple of weeks, I asked our teacher about Percy. She said to me, "He won't be in our class anymore." "Why not?" was my response. She informed me that he had had his twelfth birthday. This concerned me because my twelfth birthday was coming up in less than a month. When I pushed for more information, she only said that his family had decided that it was time for him to go to work with his father. I already knew that Percy's father was a "junkman."

At the time it seemed to me that Percy was rewarded and was already being treated like an adult. He worked every day and had no school. Wouldn't that be great! I asked my parents about such a possibility for me, about going to work in a store, like our family did. They responded with a conventional dialogue concerning education and school and that I "was going to amount to something." Those dreaded words. The point here is Percy. Years later when I finally understood what really happened with Percy, I tried to find Percy to see how life turned out for him. I went to the place where his father had his junk yard. It was gone and so was the old weatherworn house next to the junk yard, Percy's home. I learned later that he had gone into the Army and had been killed in Korea. We know now that there are legions of Percys in America, as there are also smaller legions of us.

Both of us started on our life paths from birth. By the time either of us was old enough or wise enough to understand that most of the choices that controlled our lives were not made by us, it was too late, especially for Percy. Percy was smart and could learn anything. "Just don't like school stuff," he said once. That was OK, I was somewhat embarrassed that I liked school anyway. "You sure do like reading," he had told me. "How come you do so much of it?" he wanted to know. I described my feelings about the adventures you could have through reading. All the stuff you could know that others didn't know, how good it felt just to know things. He looked at me in a funny way and shook his head. However, I noticed after that, he started carrying library books around more. One day I caught him reading when it was not reading time. It was Jack London, one of my favorites. I had told him one day just before he left, "You're just like someone out of Jack London."

Now I understand that while I thought it might have been great to go to work and-not have to do school work, the one who had to live that reality did not feel that way. His path was not filled with a lot of hope, good news, or joy. America's cultural ways owned him. There was no adult nor any system like school that provided him with a different construction of meaning. His path was filled mostly with, "looking for ways out," without much hope of finding any, unless he got lucky. He was trapped in the "working boys" culture described so well by Lois Weis (1990). His trap was the accident of birth. Who Percy was or could have become never became anyone's consideration, most of all not to Percy. Not even at school, where it could have been and should have been. Current authors who discuss critical theory argue that schooling should actually be a process that demystifies the cultural reproductive role of schools (Giroux, 1991; Aronowitz, 1994; Freire, 1970; Apple, 1993). These scholars assert that schools should be about assisting all students to be developed to the point where they are free to understand and make their own life choices.

The cultural path left open to me had some good news, hope, and joy available but a prescribed amount of each. I was to be a manager of something. It is what the men in our family did. It took me well into my first year of teaching before I saw that schools were a part of this sorting of people (Bowles & Gintis, 1986; Anyon, 1980; Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1986). We teachers are conditioned to be instruments of this sorting of children according to their "appropriate" condition. Nobody tells us this when we begin to learn about teaching. No one tells us as we begin our teaching careers. To the contrary, we either discover it ourselves and search for ways to understand the "why" and "how" of it, or we continue in the accepted way.

Urban schools are full of Percys, regardless of their race or gender. We blame each other, we blame "downtown," but mostly we blame the children and their families. We blame everyone and everywhere except where the problem probably largely lies-in a social/economic-cultural system that requires and "needs" to create persons of poverty to preserve a well-protected system of social privilege (Fine, 1990). Adam Smith (1776) said that in order to create persons of wealth to advance civilization, it is necessary to create persons of poverty. Six hundred to one was his ratio. In America today the ratio may be a little higher.

Those who work in urban schools will tell you all the staff are doing their work. Yet certain children are being pushed out; others do not do well, and many schools are full of stress and anger. Teachers and principals become resentful and defeated. The world of "urban type" schools, whether they are in the suburbs, inner city, or areas of rural poverty, is full of announced good intentions and poor outcomes. Most of all they are full of denial. "Not my fault. Not our fault. It's their fault." (Aquila & Parish, 1989).

Let us describe a statement recently made to us by an urban teacher. She is white, over 40, has more than twenty years teaching experience, and is very angry and insistent that we hear and appreciate her understanding and presentation of why teachers in her urban school were not effective with many of their students:

They can't expect us to do it with classes over 30 and over 150 overall. They come from unstable, dysfunctional, and non-supportive families. They expect us to teach this curriculum, and most of them can't read and aren't smart enough to learn. The administration tells us that everyone can and will learn, but they haven't a clue about how to do it, even if it were true. It's a politically correct statement. Authentic schools is a phrase our principal learned- at a recent conference. He tells us that this is a new relationship in schools. Most of us find it insulting to imply that we are somehow not authentic teachers and persons and its our fault that schools aren't. (As she delivered this group report, heads were nodding all over the room.)

This teacher and her colleagues at this meeting were in an urban school located in a suburban community. It had once, in the memory of a majority of the teachers, been an all-white community and school. Over 95 percent of the teaching staff are still white, and 90 percent of the administrative staff are white. Thirty percent of the students are now nonwhite. Twenty-six percent of all students are on free lunch. Twenty years ago there were less than 5 percent on free lunch and only two families of African Americans. In this suburban-URBAN school, as in most urban schools, the fundamental issue of race, racism, and classism could not only not be discussed but must also be denied as a factor in schools. There have developed, in these urban school cultures, code words and phrases to express their racism, classism and anger. Chris Argyris (1982) calls this the "undiscussables in organizations." Edgar Schein (1985) discusses them as hidden cultural ways in an organization. They prevent organizational cultures from changing or identifying problems that block them from accomplishing their stated purposes and becoming more authentic organizations. The code words allow for denial, or, at least, set the parameters of action. However, everyone understands what is being said. The denial is for outsiders and their own self-esteem.

It is not only the professional staff who participate in this organizational culture, so do the others who live in, around, and with urban schools. In our metropolitan area almost all of the school districts have some urban schools in them. School boards and school board elections regularly make use of the code words about preserving "standards." They regularly, in the name of some acceptable cultural value, develop policies that result in continued sorting by race, class, and gender. School boards, administrators, and teachers can thus deny any official-intentional racial practices. They practice them informally on a daily basis in terms of who they hire, who they promote, who gets suspended, who gets educated well or less well, and often who gets resources.

Some examples of these racially based cultural code words we hear regularly are: "We're a school in transition. Things have changed, students just aren't what they used to be. You just can't teach as much as you used to. We have so many single parent families. We have drugs and crack babies now that teachers didn't have to deal with before. The disintegration of the family structure makes it harder for children to learn. Children are having children." The words not only reflect class, gender, and racial hegemony in schooling but also the helplessness many urban educators feel about their ability to do anything about the conditions in which they find themselves. They desegregate school populations and then resegregate the students in buildings through programs, curriculum, and schedules. Schools sort students through teaching methods, schedules, school rules, administrators, and teachers. The right kids still get sorted or "tracked" down the right paths, including out the door.

It is not just majority Euro-ethnic teachers who use these code words and follow cultural ways. These code words are sometimes said by some non-Euro-ethnic principals and teachers, who have become white middle class by adoption and preference. It is not a new story in America's racial history. An urban school leader recently told us, "Some of the most biased teachers in my school are middle class non-white teachers who have moved to the suburbs and teach in the inner city." She continued, "It is how they show they belong." We must somehow find ways to help our educators confront this system of schooling that continues and maintains the hegemony and sorting (hooks, 1992a; Shor and Freire, 1987; Parish et al., 1989). When all the

rhetoric regarding school reform and restructuring is said and done, it is this hegemonic culture of schooling that must be transformed.

Discourse II must be about transformational issues (Bennis, 1984). The work of those in schools must become learning: this applies to teachers, principals, students, and others who come to the school as volunteers and helpers. Schools must develop into and promote what we and others have called "learning organization cultures." Learning organizations are those that provide intellectual and character development and a desire to become lifelong learners for all. There are schools where the discrepancies in development and learning are eliminated by the time students graduate from high school. Anything less leaves America behind in a world where intellect is the medium of exchange and power.

There is available knowledge that will allow us to move towards developing these learning organization cultures (Sergiovanni, 1991). As a society, all we lack is the will to do so. By this, we mean that those with power have not decided to share it. If history is any judge, they probably will not voluntarily do so. Some are concerned that if we create a nation of smart people, hegemonic culture will no longer be accepted. Those who support/promote American cultural ways do not trust just anyone to be smart enough to create a better, more equitable society. Those who rule fear the creation of a new set of losers out of the old winners. It is a fundamental cultural hegemonic belief of capitalism and racism that if those who have little get better, then those who have much will get less. It is the Adam Smith model. Everything we have learned about change so far tells us that until high intellectual development for all becomes the common cultural purpose/discourse of schooling, the reforms that can change schooling will never be implemented. This is the "stuff" of Discourse II.

What we must also recognize is that "hegemonic cultural ways" work in hidden and oblique ways to maintain themselves. The ways of school reform and change that most of us know about and practice are basically those ways we have learned from our teaching and school cultures. These are the hidden ways that maintain Discourse I ideas: the code words that promise but do not deliver change. In Missouri, we have identified seventy-five academic benchmark standards that will enable us to compete economically with Europe and Japan. World class standards is the language. This is essentially a Discourse I paradigm. The only thing being changed is the number of benchmarks. There will probably be no meaningful Discourse II reform in such a schooling agenda.

The challenge before us is how to go about changing the work of schools. How do we change so that the work and convenience of the adults, i.e., Discourse I, takes second place to learning, for everyone? How do we help those in schools cut through cultural myths without making them feel defensive, guilty, or at fault?

Administrators with whom we work invariably come back to talk to us about this issue. Their conversation often begins something like this: "Well, what we studied and talked about regarding sorting is true. We hear it and see it every day. What we want to know again is how do we change it? We get so frustrated. How do I change the discourse in my school?" One recently said, "Most of our discourse uses adversarial ways to identify personal blame when things don't go well." They often continue, "Some (teachers) still want to call me boss and have me decide things for them. If I ask them what do they think, they respond in various ways, 'that's not my job.' They do all sorts of things that demand that I be in charge and then complain because they are not consulted. In other words, the discourse is about adult work and work relationships, not essentially about the learning and how it is going." (While this note is taken directly from one conversation, there have been over twenty similar conversations.)

As our conversations continue and as we explore together what has to occur, a look of unease begins to appear in their faces. Eventually, we and they agree that Discourse II is what has to occur and that somehow the Discourse I picture of reality must be broken. Then these administrators almost universally say, "But this is going to take a long time. The teachers where I work do not want to be free, except free to do whatever they



want in their room. What can I do Monday?" When we say "start," there is a long silence. Then they most often say something like, "They'd never let me." The belief among most practicing school leaders is that they may not have that much time. Five to ten years is the minimum time required to get started down the learning path. This is a long time for leadership positions in today's schools, especially if we are asking them to challenge and dismantle strongly held schooling ways. "Not having time" is part of the sorting way of Discourse 1. If I (we) never have time to reflect, to consider, to question, then what prevails is how we do it now.

The length of time in leadership roles is decreasing in America's schools. If people have to keep starting over, they never get very far. Changing leadership regularly is one way to keep starting over. Part of the dynamics that maintains the sorting machine is that urban type schools are often not allowed any continuity when they do get good leadership. The mean term of service for urban superintendents is two and a half to three years. Organizations do not get very far when they are continually required to start over all the time.

It is necessary to deconstruct (Foucault, 1977; hooks, 1992b) these sorting ways so that educators can no longer accept the existing system of schooling. We are convinced that once educators understand they are part of maintaining the hegemonic culture, they will reject such behavior. We believe it violates the basic reasons most of them became teachers and principals. We must learn to ask different questions and to question everything we do in schools from a perspective of effects and consequences. There needs to be a focus upon creating learning conditions and relationships that do not sort and also provide high levels of intellectual development for every student.

So we argue very strongly that any real effort to make substantive (systemic) change must begin with a Discourse II dialogue in schools, one that blames no one and deconstructs what is really going on (Smith, 1994). It must have leadership that asks smart questions and leadership that creates discourse so there is sufficient dissatisfaction with what is, among not only the staff, but the community and students as well. Once that Discourse begins they can all move forward together to implement changes that will transform their school.

Discourse II paths are full of land mines and ambushes. It takes courage, intelligence, guile, determination, sensitivity, patience, caring, and time. We do not fully understand how to develop, prepare, cajole, or entice the type of people to lead and carry out a Discourse II agenda, especially in urban schools, but we are looking and trying to find these ways because we are convinced that anything else is just Discourse I window dressing.

This is our issue and dilemma: Where are the people who are willing and committed to engage in the struggle? The ones who will find joy in Discourse II paths to Discourse II schools? That is, people who will claim Discourse I as their terrain of contestation. Given the contest, Discourse II becomes an overriding project of possibility and hope for change. If, as Alice Walker (1992) suggests, resistance is the secret of joy, then we seek the joyous people.

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