

The New Localism: Re-examining Issues of Neighborhood and Community in Public Education

ROBERT L. CROWSON

ELLEN B. GOLDRING

Vanderbilt University

Introduction

There is a re-emerging interest in the role of the locality in American education. This has been occurring directly alongside a more recent emphasis upon national standards, state and federal mandates, and international comparisons of gains in student achievement. “The New Localism,” as this movement is called, is not a denial and refutation of national goals and centralizing reforms. It is, rather, a refocusing of attention upon local districts, communities, and neighborhoods in the context of national and even global educational objectives.

A nationalizing of education policy and the re-emergence of localism are closely linked. As Henig and Stone (2008) have noted, local schooling is no longer as fully insulated as in past decades from broader societal agendas and competing, even clashing, “solutions” to school improvement. Despite its eroding autonomy, the locality is still the central point of responsibility and implementation in education. In fact, the constraints of increased national and state prescriptiveness in policymaking are pulling local educators even more fully into the special details and nuances of their own particular contexts (see Henig & Stone, p. 203).

Additionally, the notion that the “schools can’t do it alone” is gaining renewed strength. A rejuvenated interest in school-community relationships, and the development of locally-based social capital, for example, are just some of the categories of refocused attention in education amid national standards (see Rothman, 2007; Rothstein, 2004).

As a catch-phrase, “The New Localism” owes much of its modern-day popularity to the United Kingdom and to policy changes announced by former Prime Minister Tony Blair in the early 2000s.¹ In policymaking in the UK, the new localism has represented a devolution of power to local governmental agencies, but only within a framework of national priorities and goals.² Of importance, and what has particularly characterized the movement as new, is the continued primacy of the central government in setting the agenda that would surround local autonomy and action.

Specific foci of localism in the UK include freedoms to meet central goals in hospital care, in education, and in improving the overall responsiveness of public services to children and family needs. Accompanying elements in the new localism are the notions that there should be reductions in central governmental approval functions, much more neighborhood governance and direct engagement in implementing national goals, responsiveness to client needs and desires, and an encouragement of local authorities to wrap multiple services around shared problems (e.g., health, police, housing, employment, education) (Powell, 2004).³

The label “New Localism” has not received attention in the United States equivalent to its reception in the UK.⁴ However, as a movement of its own, rejuvenated localism in American education has been gaining considerably in nationwide interest because of the complexity of its reincarnation and emerging debates among scholars.

At the core of the New Localism is an emerging paradox: while state and federal mandates in education are strengthened centrally, the nation’s prime attention under these mandates is *determinedly* local. School districts, and especially individual schools, are the focus of accountability pressures, of improving-achievement, and the center of a renewed search for both teacher and administrator effectiveness in instruction. The dilemmas of translating state-level policy into localized practices are receiving much consideration because, as never before, the central target in school leadership is the improvement of student learning at the levels of individual schools, classrooms and students (see Cohen, Moffitt, & Goldin, 2007).

Once again, there is an unresolved debate with a lengthy history in school reform as to whether schools can effectively improve student achievement by themselves. There are heavy pressures upon the schools in claims that they should be capable of demonstrating effectiveness, no matter their socio-

economic or neighborhood contexts. Countering claims note the critical importance of context, of community environments in learning. These critics observe that the schools cannot and should not be expected to go it alone without assistance from external supports and outside agencies. Conceptual and theoretical developments in context-oriented learning theory, social capital theorizing, pedagogies of “place,” and renewed explorations of school-community partnerships are some of the external forces under current examination.

In the Fall of 2008, for example, the Washington-based “Coalition for Community Schools” announced a drive to push for a change in federal policy, including the No Child Left Behind law, toward closer partnerships between schools and neighborhood organizations. Asking for a “Broader, Bolder Approach to Education,” the coalition argued that the schools cannot close achievement gaps in poor communities without parallel attention to such elements as better health services for children, high quality preschool and after-school programs, family and community involvement, out-of-school-time enrichment, and additional social services (Maxwell, 2008a).

Also in the Fall of 2008, there were reports from local school districts across the nation concerning plans to extend the learning time available to children through “a cross-fertilization of the education, youth-development, and after-school worlds” (Gewertz, 2008, p. 16). Earlier, in the Spring of 2008, seven urban districts (including Chicago, Oakland, Philadelphia, and New York) announced “grassroots organizing campaigns” to help build capacity in neighborhoods with historically low-performing schools serving poor and minority children (Maxwell, 2008b). And, in September of the same year, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa announced a new mayor’s office partnership with 10 of the city’s schools. Under this arrangement, management of the 10 schools was to be pulled out of the purview of the Los Angeles Unified School District and turned over in each case to a consortium of teachers, parents, and community organizations.

In addition to these partnership efforts, new localism in education also contains a renewed focus upon differing family-lifestyle considerations. There is current attention to opportunities for religious expression in public school environments, to public/private partnerships in learning (even involving faith-based organizations), debates over preferred directions in sex education, and over intelligent design against evolution. Family considerations at the local level are also reflected in the widening of opportunities for family choice, including online charter schools, or charter schools that include religion and culture, such

as an Hebraic charter or an Islamic charter as family options.

Finally, some policy analysts suggest that a localized politics of fear is pervasive throughout the educational system. Fear can be reflected in widespread concerns over school safety and discipline, sanctions because of school-site accountability, and the ability (or inability) to meet new directions in accommodating race and ethnicity, for example. Ginsberg and Cooper (2008, p. 6) note: "Fear abounds in the educational arena." The authors observe that for students it may be a fear of failing the many tests they face or of being bullied, while for teachers, leaders, board members and others it may be a more generalized fear that our very "system" of public education in America is at or near the end of its political viability (see Ginsberg & Cooper).

In summary, the new localism in the United States may well represent an array of quite disparate forces: (1) an updated approach to devolution, amid a framework of national standards; (2) a strengthened back-to-the-neighborhoods movement with school-community partnerships in learning much in mind; (3) a new appreciation of interests in family choice and expressions of lifestyle in education; but also (4) a societal expression of some increasing concerns and/or fears regarding American education, expressed most frequently at the levels of school-site and community. With this very diverse accumulation of ingredients, the concept of the "locality" in American public education is once again a most intriguing topic of inquiry.

The purpose of these essays on the new localism is to unpack and understand the perspectives, practices and implications of the concept in education. This chapter defines and discusses the new spirit of localism. We pay particular attention to the question of what it means to be local. This chapter also summarizes briefly the additional contributions that follow (both in this volume and in Volume I), including a chapter on the origins of the new localism in the UK, and other contributions that fall within two broad categories: (1) localism and learning, including community-level capacities and capabilities in the support of learning; and (2) localism as expressed anew in updated community-level insights into local educational policymaking and educational leadership in America.

Background

State and federal expectations plus strategies of oversight in public education

have been strengthened. Nevertheless, the nation's attention on many of its most perplexing problems in schooling remains predominately local. For example, what should districts do in regard to zoning policies following recent Supreme Court decisions about the use of race in student assignment? How should schools respond to community pressures for greater freedoms of religious expression in a manner consistent with the Constitution? Also, how can schools meet national accountability standards of adequate yearly progress within a local budget shortfall and calls for greater attention to the arts and music?

Indeed, the 21st century's emphasis upon national goals, federal and state standards, and student achievement rankings has had the interesting effect of focusing renewed attention upon the district, the school-site, the community, and even the family. To meet these new demands policy solutions have relied upon market forces, family choices, individuals' responses to performance incentives, and school-site sanctions as key levers for quality improvement. Another force for rediscovered localism identified by Cohen et al. (2007) is a renewed appreciation of the policy-practice dilemma: the more ambitious the changes that policies seek, the more difficult it is to know what to do at the site-level in actual practice, and consequently, the more dependence there is upon policies' fate in local practice. Additionally, the new sense of localism may very much be a product of new national attention focused on neighborhoods and particularly on neighborhood-level empowerment in social action and volunteerism, much along the lines of the now overused phrase "it takes a village to raise a child."

Finally, the neighborhood and its surrounding community are also part of a significant resurrection of public attention on key pieces in the puzzle of school improvement and enhanced student achievement. For example, place-based education proposes to "resituate learning within the context of communities" (Smith, 2002, p. 594). Investigations continue to develop into the importance of each neighborhood's social capital and capacity to improve learning opportunities for children. Scholars are attending more closely than ever to the interplay between families, communities, and schools in children's development (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Community institutions are under pressure to partner with schools in activities of neighborhood-level economic development and school improvement.

The downside of a return to the locality in education are concerns that America's schools may rapidly be re-segregating by race and ethnicity, with the

possibility of deeper inequities in the allocation of instructional resources (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2007). There are similar concerns that the old practices of voting-with-one's-feet (Tiebout, 1956) and flight away from neighborhood schools may be furthered in a society that is increasingly separated into gated communities, family-income enclaves, and isolated cultural communities. A return to the neighborhood under current accountability and performance expectations could add to the heavy pressures upon schools in low-income communities to overcome the disadvantages of poverty in student achievement on their own, without much outside help (see Harris, 2007).

Localism and the Modern-Day Community

These varied forces, ranging from encouraging to disturbing, are embedded in a first question of importance: What does it mean to be “local” in today’s social and educational environment? An informative comparison of differing localisms can be gleaned from the work of Richard Schragger (2001). Schragger examined three alternatives, each with its respective constraints and political limits. The alternatives, observed Schragger, are three distinct types of modern-day communities, with differences in description that he labels the “deep community,” the “contractarian community,” and the “dualist community.”

The Deep Community

Should parental rights, religious freedoms, and local norms achieve protection against the more universal values of the state—even if such protections result in an inadequate education for the children of the protected community? (See Macedo, 2000; Schragger, 2001.)

This is the central dilemma in the famous Amish education case, *Wisconsin vs. Yoder* (1972). The old order Amish in *Yoder* represented that which Schragger (2001) labels a “deep community,” a type of community with shared experiences, social connections, family ties, and a way of life so fully internalized that the community can become quite vulnerable to threats to its special particularity. A deep community, notes Schragger (p. 396), “often can survive only through the intergenerational transmission of a specific normative and cultural tradition.”

A deep community of persons can be laudably integrative in maintaining ties and traditions over time and in passing on its culture and its way of life across

generations. Such a community can perceive itself as extremely vulnerable, however, to anything that appears to threaten the belief system. This sense of vulnerability can be heightened if the deep community must of necessity (as in public schooling) interact with persons who and institutions which do not share their particularism.

Interestingly, in the spirit of the new localism the U.S. has appeared to be simultaneously receptive to, but also quite wary of, the efforts of deep communities to protect their belief systems. Home schooling has attracted sizeable numbers of American families, many of whom are seeking to maintain a deeply held set of parental values. Schools in some communities are increasingly a bit more receptive to religious principles, given special practices among a key segment of their particular clientele (e.g., gender separation in physical education, foot washing facilities in the rest rooms). Some charter schools are now pushing the edges of religious belief as an organizing theme for their school (e.g., an Hebraic charter, an Islamic charter).

On the other hand, the federal courts continue to rule that the public schools are not obliged to shield individual students from ideas which their parents find religiously offensive (Walsh, 2008). Furthermore, efforts across the U.S. to push certain beliefs over others, such as abstention as the centerpiece of sex education or intelligent design as a centerpiece for science education, have failed to gain widespread acceptance.

Localism in education, then, continues to walk a fine line between protecting the rights of deep communities to maintain their cultural traditions while simultaneously protecting the rights of public institutions to attempt to broaden the horizons of students and avoid the limitations of cultural particularism. This fine line or delicate balancing act is often played out pragmatically community by community.

In her discussion, for example, of Lewiston, Maine's struggle to accommodate the hijab (or Islamic head scarf) worn by Somali girls while outlawing head coverings for other students, Heather Lindkvist (2008, p. 193) noted that "the answer" for educators today is usually to "develop standards that meet the middle ground." She went on to conclude that with our nation's growing diversity a balancing of students' cultural and religious mandates against contrasting state and federal standards is more and more likely to be a central leadership difficulty for the local educator (Lindkvist).

The Contractarian Community

A contractarian community is defined in simple terms by Schragger (2001) as the product of individual acts of voluntary membership that are not too deep, but are associational. People form communal attachments or linkages for instrumental reasons, as noted by Tiebout (1956) in the voting-with-one's-feet that characterizes the decisions of individuals to move from one neighborhood to another. By choosing where to locate, individuals select bundles of services and packages of amenities which can include such benefits as good schools, better police protection, less traffic noise, more frequent trash collection and nearby parks and playgrounds. These neighborhood and community choices often result in neighborhood associations and local memberships (e.g., clubs, churches, shared volunteerism), but individuals are free to come and go voluntarily in the course of entering into, as well as breaking, associational ties.

As a central issue, the contractarian community does not struggle internally to balance protective autonomy against diversity. Instead, the central societal problem is how to open opportunities to join the community, often a question of removing barriers to associational choice. As Schragger (2001, p. 416) puts it: "The immediate difficulty with [the contractarian] account is that it assumes individuals are sufficiently mobile—that they can readily join or leave neighborhoods if they so choose—when the reality may be just the opposite." It is possible for members of a contractarian community to establish barriers to mobility, limiting the capacities of other people to contract-in (e.g., through zoning and non-affordability). A tendency of society, in the face of contractarian exclusiveness, is to attempt to widen opportunities for membership through anti-discrimination measures, opening added avenues for consumer choice, and actively (even sometimes forcibly) introducing diversity to exclusionary communities. However, beyond the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, many efforts to counter exclusionary barriers (e.g., embedded in zoning and building codes) have had tough sledding in the courts.⁵

Associational choice for contractarian communities frequently extends to the selection of schools, with the exercise of options for private schooling and the associations embedded in such schooling. These choices can often occur in the face of public schools that fail to meet the associational or quality expectations of contractarian families. The added expense of private schooling becomes an important investment in the associations attached to the school, and this investment helps to cement the "contract" that binds the associational membership.

Interestingly, one key viewpoint in the current school reform movement is the notion that a provision of access to privatized or near-privatized schooling, without added cost, can (1) open high-quality associational ties to lower-income families and (2) subject traditional public schooling to an improvement-demanding competition from contractarian communities. A rapidly expanding array of charter schools throughout the nation and a less-rapidly expanding program of vouchers or tax credits have together attempted to broaden opportunities for associational choice to families in economic and social classes that are not otherwise able to overcome the barriers to contractarian participation.

The Dualist Community

Schragger (2001) notes that the thinness of the contract community and the thickness of the deep community capture two extremes that leave a middle realm of communitarian experiences relatively unexplored. He develops a third type, which he labels “dualist,” capturing both the intentionality of the contract and the cultural intensity of the deep community.

This middle ground between the intensity of the deep and the atomism of the contractual is a category, claims Schragger (2001), that requires participation and some degree of engagement for the formation of community. Indeed, a dualist community is a community in the process of development through participation and negotiation. “The ideal,” he suggests, “is a participatory practice whereby individuals arrive at shared values by engaging in dialogue with each other” (p. 398). Some form of social space is assumed, wherein individuals can engage with one another.

There is a significant opportunity for intentionality in this middle-ground category. One increasingly attractive aspect of today’s localism is, for example a related thrust toward a new urbanism in city planning. Current strategies of city development are striving to return urban environments to tighter neighborhoods of dwellings, stores, and amenities all within close walking distance for friendliness and self-sufficiency. Schragger (2001, p. 401) writes: “...the dualist account allows the government a more aggressive role in engaging in citizen-making activities, activities [however] that may sometimes clash with other kinds of community norms.”

Localism from this perspective rests on participation and dialogue. It also rests on the idea of social space or “place” and face-to-face personal encounters. The central point here is that engagement can occur effectively and meaning-

fully only if “within the contours of some form of a circumscribed jurisdiction,” in forums where citizens can interact (Schragger, 2001, p. 402). Schragger (p. 421) goes on to caution, however, that a “geographically exclusive” notion of locality can erroneously assume that residences and one’s home, and a narrow perspective around neighborhood identification, provide the proper territorial designations for community. Rather, people live and conduct their lives in multiple jurisdictional environments every day—working in one, sleeping in another, going to school in a third, and often engaging in recreation in yet another. Each of these environments can provide place identifications and shared interests that are not solely the products of one’s “home.” Communications technologies are having a profound effect upon community-creation, with networking today that goes well beyond the confines of geographic location and even close familiarity. Indeed, Crabtree, Davies, and Randle (2007) coined the phrase “techno-localism” to describe the increased networking and the “invisible villages” approach to trends in the creation of community that are common today in the use of the Internet and other means of messaging.

Nevertheless, a traditional sense of locational “place” is not ruled out; and, indeed, shared memories of place can tie folks together and can explain communities of behavior across the miles and generations.⁶ The development of community from the dualist perspective can be an important starting point in re-exploring the roles of the nation’s schools in such arenas as: (1) creating commonality amid America’s widening population and locational diversity (see, Massey, 2008); (2) appreciating the significance of students’ cultural identities in learning and achievement (see Markus, 2008); and/or (3) constructing curricular experiences for students toward their own involvement in the intentional creation of community and in an exercise of social responsibility (see Manzo, 2008).

The New Localism and Learning

A paradigm shift over the past few decades has had a significant impact upon each level of education, federal to state to local. This shift was identified by William Boyd (2003, p. 7) as a “change in focus from inputs *to* the system to the outcomes and accountability *of* the system.” Much of the press toward added accountability has been targeted directly upon individual schools and the attendance-area locality. Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2002), identified schools can be placed on notice or watch and reconstituted; furthermore, their parental clientele can choose to send their children elsewhere and

they can avail themselves locally of freely available supplemental educational services (usually tutoring).

With the individual school as a target of accountability, there is considerable interest in understanding learning-related forces and impediments to learning in the environmental context of each school. One widely supported position has been that context does not and should not matter all that much, that schools can be high-performing academically despite any constraints of locality (e.g., constraints of high mobility or high poverty) (Carter, 2000). An alternative position is that the schools cannot and should not be expected to reach achievement for students alone; efforts to develop successful schools should also include efforts to develop successful communities, and that indeed NCLB is flawed in holding schools accountable for contextual forces they do not control (Harris, 2007; Rothstein, 2004).

In this regard, a rather elaborate and comprehensive model for a locally-based approach to narrowing the achievement gap for low-income children has been fashioned by Wilder, Allgood, and Rothstein (2008). Key components of their combined community-and-school model for improved learning (“A 19-Year Life Cycle Approach”) include provisions for: (1) adequate prenatal care and an array of continuing family supports, (2) high-quality early childhood care and education as well as continuing pediatric care, (3) high quality before- and after-school and summer programs, plus (4) a number of within-school improvements, including adequate teacher salaries, teacher incentives, and significant class size reductions.

In similar fashion, Michael Kirst (2008) has re-introduced discussion of the importance of a coordinated services approach to school improvement. Late in the twentieth century, a flurry of experimental efforts across the United States targeted the provision of added community services for families and children, as a strategy to assist the work of the schools in low-income communities. With mixed results from evaluation studies and reduced support from some key foundations, the children’s services movement lost considerable momentum by century’s end. The coordinated, full services notion is gaining attention anew, however, under an altered philosophy of “connecting services for children and families to classroom instruction in a coordinated and interactive manner” (Kirst, p. 3). The realization, increasingly, is that standards-based reforms and in-school improvements in instructional quality are still encountering an array of children’s learning difficulties that stem from conditions of concentrated poverty, poor health, inadequate nutrition, and other external forces. A very

direct linkage between the delivery of community resources to children and families and classroom learning is now the key element.

The notion of integrating community resources and classroom learning ties closely into another key topic in the category of localism and learning: capacity. There is considerable interest in assisting localities to generate assets, the capital and the capacities that schools can draw upon to support and improve learning (see Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001; Hill, 2005; Saegert, Thompson, & Warren, 2001).

Capacity comes in many forms and with a good deal of accompanying societal connotations. The capacities of families to provide a healthy and educationally productive environment for their children depend upon much that is intergenerational, cultural, economic, physical, and psychological. The capacities of neighborhoods to add their input depend upon many of the same forces, but also upon what Morris Janowitz (1967) has identified as a sense of “liability” among a neighborhood’s institutions (e.g., the schools, the police, other city agencies, local businesses, faith-based organizations). In many neighborhoods, particularly low-income communities, it is not unusual for institutions, including the schools, to take a stance of “limited liability” (i.e., “we just do our jobs; we’re not at all responsible for the problems of this community”).⁷

The most significant challenge for new local efforts to blend community capacities into national goals and objectives remains with the schools and classrooms. As Lori Hill (2005) has observed, schools serving low-income communities are often caught in the difficult position of suffering the constraints of inadequate community capacity and thus finding themselves needing to help the community develop its capacities before trying to depend upon them (see Goldring & Hausman, 2001).

Interestingly, in communities endowed with relatively high capacity to support learning, the schools tend to be quite knowledgeable about how to draw upon that capacity. Expectations that parents will help with homework, use their own resources to help educate (e.g., through travel, books, summer camps, pre-schooling), and become involved with the schools in some manner, are usually met. In communities that are not well-endowed with supportive (of learning) capacities, it is not unusual for school personnel to assume that capacity-building is just not possible. In addition, as noted by Charles Payne (2008), it is not unusual for the personnel of failing schools to become so demoralized that actions to develop capacity are beyond imagination. It is erroneous however,

note Smrekar and Cohen-Vogel (2001), to assume that low-income communities are without substantial capacities to support learning; and it is thus incumbent upon the profession, under the banner of the new localism, to discover how to tap these capacities and how to build additional strengths effectively.

Overview of the New Localism Chapters

In their chapter, Valerie Storey and Maggie Farrar discuss the gathering threads of the new localism in the UK, and present an initial definition of the term by the UK government early in the twenty-first century as “devolution from the centre within nationally agreed frameworks.” Their analysis identifies the roots of confusion surrounding the term—as the concept of the new localism has variously included notions of a devolution of responsibility within a central-local relationship, a movement toward the “joined-up” delivery of public services, community partnering relationships within the context of education action zones (EAZ), plus focused national leadership and community engagement within the “Every Child Matters” policy program. They present the idea that a new type of leadership must develop in education which can more effectively manage to balance a “national accountability framework with local ownership of outcomes.” What is fascinating about the comparison between the United States and the UK is that in the United States a deep tradition of local control must adapt to more centralized controls, while in the United Kingdom an already well-centralized system is adapting to greater local discretion.

A section entitled “The New Localism and Learning” offers broad-based examinations of the new localism’s emphasis upon learning-improvement within the framework of state and national standards. Meredith Honig, Juli Swinnerton Lorton, and Michael A. Copland report upon school district central-office efforts to transform their systems to guide and support improvements in school and classroom teaching and learning, under conditions of state and national goals. They note that central offices have typically struggled to be able to productively assist site-level learning and improvement. However, in their own study of central-office adaptations to improve learning expectations in three large urban districts, the authors found that it is quite possible to move toward a “new wave” of transformed central office participation in school improvement. Old notions of top-down and bottom-up fall by the wayside in today’s central office transformation, toward partnering and developing many within-institution bridges that help to create conditions conducive to instruc-

tional improvement.

Lore Cohen-Vogel and Stacey Rutledge turn directly to the school site, investigating how local actors “on the ground” have adapted to the post-NCLB era of tightened standards and accountability mechanisms. A comparative case study of school districts in Florida explored how individual schools align their internal structures and resources with state and national objectives. A key finding from this Florida study is that there is indeed a new kind of localism—one that situates instructional mechanisms, instructional resources, and extra attention to school and family partnerships around student achievement and school change. The newly-local arrangements can be quite uneven, however. Some “core technologies” and administrative structures in schools can remain rather impervious to standards-based pressures, while other elements of local schooling show considerable “give” under accountability pressures.

Jerome Morris discusses the school-community relationship, and particularly the concept of *communally-bonded schools*, within the larger discourse of a new localism in American education. This chapter specifically highlights the implications of bonding for African-American identity, school achievement, and issues of equality and democracy. Communal bonding can build ties and networking (social capital) among schools, families, and communities, plus the cultural capital (knowledge and skills) essential for reaching strong achievement. Communally bonded schools tend to serve as pillars in the local community and display relationships between educators and their students that are often intergenerational and culturally affirming. Research on African-American education has indicated the vitality and the importance of communal bonding in learning. This chapter raises important questions for the new localism around some of its contemporary elements of choice and state and national directiveness. Will the new localism respond to centralized expectations by concentrating resources and powers in ways that exacerbate existing inequalities? Or, might the new localism provide African-American communities and schools with opportunities to become more actively engaged in governance, more fully bonded, and stronger instructionally? In short, the combination of state/national standards and locally pragmatic adaptiveness in the new localism can still leave equality-of-opportunity questions relatively unanswered.

Hanne Mawhinney reports upon efforts to combine improved student learning under accountability policy instruments *and* strong school-community relationships in charter schooling. Her chapter examines Expeditionary Learning in charter schools in both Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Expeditionary Learn-

ing uses the local community as a prime subject and site of learning, with students and teachers engaged in the examination of community-relevant topics through fieldwork and a large-audience presentation. Although the places and spaces for learning are local, the schools involved in Expeditionary Learning must also respond to the accountability demands of Maryland and the District of Columbia. A significant test for these schools is just how much innovative flexibility is possible for local education under the choice provisions of charter schooling, the curricular practices of such ideas as Expeditionary Learning, and accountability demands from centralized policymaking. Can the new localism *really* be local?

A third section, “The New Localism and Educational Policy,” focuses on matters of local policy and governance that could help shape and define just what is fully local in educational improvement. Claire Smrekar reports upon the yet under-investigated promise of HOPE VI housing policy as a spur to school improvement. HOPE VI was enacted by Congress in 1992 to reform the nation’s provisions for public housing. From recent studies of the neighborhood effects of HOPE VI, there are reported reductions in rates of poverty, crime, and unemployment in and near HOPE VI neighborhoods. None of the reports to date, however, has explored the impact of HOPE VI on nearby neighborhood schools. From a multiple-case pilot study of potential school effects from newly revitalized HOPE VI communities, Smrekar notes the extreme difficulty that would be involved in trying to draw a generalizable “model” for an improved-achievement relationship between schools and HOPE VI environments. Parents’ economic struggles, differing family issues and demands, and the variety of social interactions in each neighborhood are part of a very complex whole. Nevertheless, the early indication is that schooling in HOPE VI environments may well be responsive to efforts toward engaging neighborhood residents, public housing officials, and educational leaders in partnered efforts toward school improvement.

Ellen Middaugh and Joseph Kahne take a close look at policymaking around the new localism from a very different perspective. The concept of social capital, with its notions of social networking and the engagements that help residents living in a shared place to become a community of people, have been dominant ideas in a belief that civic participation, shared concerns, and a sense of local commitment are all important aspects of successful schooling and achievement. Just how do these forms of localism operate, however, in the digital age? Much that is historically “local” in the networking that defines the concept of social capital is no longer horizontally distributed across a residen-

tial neighborhood; it is now, rather, captured more fully in the vertical world of the online community. This chapter discusses the new localism captured in examples of online communities, explores the relationships of online civic communities to matters of civic commitment, and discusses the challenges facing educators in preparing young people for democratic participation in the digital age.

Stella Flores and Leticia Oseguera examine the community college sector of education and the implications for understanding the new localism, particularly comparing and contrasting college-access policymaking in the states of California and North Carolina. College access for immigrant students, both legal and undocumented, has often identified the community college as the primary entryway into U.S. higher education. While federal policy dictates immigration law, new state actions since the turn of the century have begun to establish admission and tuition policies that may increase or bar access for immigrant students across the nation. Increasingly, however, individual community colleges also play a role in decisions regarding the interpretation of absent or unclear policymaking around access opportunities. In the field of higher education, there is nothing more local than the community college. Unlike the K-12 sector with its centralizing forces, the new localism as a construct for the community colleges still rests heavily upon the vagaries of state legislation, judicial rulings, and (in many states, e.g., North Carolina) the history and traditions of each locality. Immigrant groups can be quite vulnerable to non-acceptance at the community level but also extraordinarily responsive to the opportunities provided by such institutions as the community college. What is currently missing in postsecondary education is a policy context nationwide that re-frames a new localism of opportunity around the immigrant experience.

Norm Fruchter provides an in-depth overview of the new localism as represented in neighborhood-based organizing for educational improvement in New York City. New York's Community Organizing and Engagement Program (CO&E) conducted organizing efforts in a number of New York neighborhoods with poorly performing schools. Inaugurated in the mid-1990s as an effort to encourage community-based organizations to include the improvement of their neighborhood schools as key targets for organizing, the movement has since evolved into a citywide organization and a citywide coalition of political leaders, the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ). This coalition has emerged as the city's preeminent parent organization working for better schools in poorer neighborhoods. The New York effort began with neighborhood organizing and a building of trust at the neighborhood level, but found it

useful and appropriate under conditions of institutional resistance to scale up citywide. By no means is the concept of a new localism best played out politically only at a neighborhood level, especially under a standards and accountability rubric that includes national, state, and city requirements at each of the schools.

Another section of the yearbook, “The New Localism and Educational Leadership,” focuses directly on the administrative actions, flexibility, and pragmatism exercised in today’s standards-heavy organizational environments. Mary Erina Driscoll uses the cultural history of one small New England town to suggest how herring constables, bog managers, and harbor masters can teach us much about the new localism in educational leadership. School administrators who are successful in today’s educational contexts need to demonstrate abilities to be more autonomous, ad hoc, entrepreneurial, and extraordinarily able to negotiate turbulent external environments. Schools are needed that strive to meet or exceed state and national standards to be sure, but with leadership that also adapts successfully to specifically local needs by finding a niche reflecting the place (community context, clientele, cultural traditions) in which the schools are located. Leadership in these schools often engages in a new street-level pragmatism, in which there is a creative balancing of centralized goals and standards against the old primacy of “place” and community values in neighborhood schooling.

Jeffrey Henig discusses the “myth of local obsolescence” in educational leadership and politics. He notes that a conventional view of local administrative politics claims that growing state and national roles (on the one hand) and growing market and private-sector inroads (on the other hand) are leading together to an erosion of localities as sites for both pragmatic leadership political mobilization. This conventional view, however, is far more myth than reality. Rather than being shunted aside, local school districts and their leaders are being reabsorbed today into much broader and more powerful arrangements of general-purpose governance and the politics of their communities. Politics and leadership around schooling are now looking more and more like the political and administrative interactions surrounding such other local services as housing, welfare, and community development. The new localism in American educational leadership and politics is now a more dynamic and fluid activity than ever, in which broader participation and cross-sector coalitions are necessary if the supporters of public education are to hold their own.

Notes

1. The opening chapter in Volume I of the 108th Yearbook, co-authored by Valerie Storey and Maggie Farrar, reviews the beginnings and the developments of the new localism in the UK, examining particularly community partnering and the joined-up delivery of public services in meeting national objectives for education in that nation over time. Their chapter bears the title “The New Localism in the UK: Local Governance Amid National Goals.”
2. Indeed, the attention given to national goals has increasingly produced suggestions that the United States should move toward a more fundamentally structured system of national schooling, giving up local school systems and local school boards. The reference here, comparatively, is often with nations that do have national systems of control over education and are nations that typically exceed the United States in the tested academic performances of their students. Although the new localism seems at first glance to run counter to nationalizing, it is in fact not a movement engaged in rejecting centralized standards and priorities.
3. There are deeper origins in a coining of the phrase “The New Localism,” from such work as that of David J. Morris and Karl Hess (1975). Their book *Neighborhood Power: The New Localism* was published by Boston’s Beacon Press in 1975. Beyond advocating a re-emergence of local economic and social activism, their initiatives and the phrase “the new localism” became broadened over time into such areas of study as: (1) local leadership in urban regeneration (see Judd & Parkinson, 1990); (2) local political restructuring in the face of global economic changes (see Goetz & Clarke, 1993); and (3) local autonomy and democracy amid the context of centralized policies (see Pratchett, 2004).
4. A term used often in the UK but not in the U.S. is a “mutualizing” of the State. “Mutualizing” in the UK involves a rethinking of the delivery of many public services—a rethinking that provides opportunities for neighborhood authorities, community organizations, co-operatives, profits, and non-profits to self-govern and self-manage selected state programs. Identified as priorities for mutualization have been services for health, primary and secondary education, care for the elderly, childcare, employment advice, parks and libraries, leisure, recycling, housing, and youth justice (Mayo & Moore, 2001).
5. Schragger (2001) used the case of *Warth vs. Seldin* (1975) to demonstrate how difficult it is to develop legal challenges to the exclusionary practices of communities. In *Warth*, low and moderate income residents of the city of Rochester, New York challenged a neighboring suburb’s exclusionary zoning laws. Plaintiffs claimed that this close-by suburb’s allocation of nearly all of its vacant land to single-family detached housing on large lots, combined with cost-

increasing construction requirements, effectively placed the expense of housing in that community beyond the means of the petitioners. The Supreme Court ruled that since petitioners were not residents of (and did not otherwise have a “present interest” in) the excluding suburb, they could not challenge the zoning ordinance. Schragger (p. 419) closed with a notation of Justice Brennan’s dissent in the case, in mentioning the Catch-22 situation of the petitioners: if they could afford to become residents of the suburb, “they would have standing so sue but no grievance; conversely, because they could not afford to become residents, they could have a grievance, but they did not have standing to sue.”

6. Jerome Morris and Carla Monroe, for example, have written informatively about a powerful nexus of race and place (place being the American South) that much characterizes African-American identity and the influences of that geographically-shared identity upon academic achievement. Among the key influencers may be the impact of ongoing social stereotypes upon behavior, of cultural differences between students’ school lives and their homes, and a legacy of structural inequalities in the delivery of educational services (e.g., a disproportionate disciplining of African-American students). Morris and Monroe argue that the presence of the U.S. South and the nexus of race and place is “critical...in shaping the contemporary experiences of African American people nationally, across a range of areas” (p. 43) (see Morris & Monroe, 2008).

7. While the term “capacity” often communicates a hard-data message (e.g., resources, assets, capital, supports, programs of assistance), Sanyal (1994) and others (see Sabel, 1994; Yoshikawa, Weisner, & Lowe, 2006) have drawn our attention to the importance of “soft” capacities. Among these may be the amount of shared hope that characterizes a community, the ability of a community to pay attention to and even to monitor its schools, and the connective ability of a community (e.g., keeping one another informed, helping one another out when in need).

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ROBERT L CROWSON is Professor of Education at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. His research focuses heavily upon the study of urban school organization and administration. He has conducted ethnographic studies of urban principals and school district superintendents and has been engaged in nationwide studies of school-community relations, particularly in the domains of back-to-the-neighborhoods in school assignment, coordinated services for families and children, and relationships between community development and school reform. Dr. Crowson has edited and/or authored nine books on such topics as the school principalship, organization theory, the politics of reforming school administration, community development, and school-community relations. His most recent publications are a book on community development and school reform and a third edition of *School-Community Relations, Under Reform*.

ELLEN B. GOLDRING is Patricia and Rodes Hart Chair and Professor of Education Policy and Leadership. She is Chair of the Department of Leadership, Policy and Organizations at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. Her research interests reside in two main areas. One centers on understanding and shaping school reform efforts that connect families, communities, and schools. The other focuses on the changing role of school leaders as the organizational contexts for schools become more complex. The former co-editor of *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, she is coauthor with Claire Smrekar of

Magnet Schools in Urban Districts: What's Our Choice (1999), and with Sharon Rallis of *Principals of Dynamic Schools* (2000).