ABSTRACT: This article addresses school reform and the challenges presented to educational leaders working toward social justice which is not limited to only academic achievement. Social justice as used here is education for emancipatory social change resulting in freedom to, that is, the opportunity for individuals to pursue work they value, and, ultimately, to discover and create a life of worth for self and community. To examine such reform and the implications for educational leadership, I use Freire’s (1989) concept of conscientization, possessing a conscious understanding of one’s lived reality, as a framework by which to analyze two particular reforms, Success for All and Professional Development Schools. From that analysis, I suggest that educational leadership that seeks to liberate students to make social changes creates space and spaces for trust; and nurtures participatory, equitable and just relationships rather than simply managing programs and services, and facilitates “the opportunity for empowerment rather than ‘delivering it’” (Grinberg as cited in Larson and Murtadha, 2001, p.8).

Administrators, internationally, and particularly in the United States, have embraced various whole school reforms (WSR) since the 1980s as a way to assure students, particularly those in poor, urban districts, of academic success. Not all schools with WSR are poor and urban, however, a vast majority are. Although I discuss WSR from the perspective of the United States and particularly analyze two WSR in a elementary school in New Jersey, I believe that school leaders internationally will benefit from the discussion of school reform and social justice. Urban schools internationally have significant populations of students not of the dominant culture who present new challenges, based on race, ethnicity, culture, and religion, to educators. Like the U.S., standardized, high-stakes tests also play a major role in what is considered student “success”. My intention, therefore, is to consider the goals of school reform, how Freire’s (1989) methodology of conscientization, and caring power can enable leaders to guide schools in a socially just manner.

Introduction: Whole School Reform and Market Goals

In the past several years, WSR has been the watchword for better schooling in economically disadvantaged districts. Unlike previous reforms that tinkered with individual aspects of the curriculum, pedagogy, or governance, WSR implies systemic change within a school. Ideally, the result is transformation—re-thinking teaching and learning that encompasses strategies to enhance children’s academic progress, and, depending on the particular reform, emphases on professional development for pre-service and in-service educators; curriculum articulation; community building, within and outside the school; creating and maintaining relationships built on trust; collaboration with the university; and a governance structure that supports those modifications.

Whole school reforms in many cases, however, have not reached—nor are they necessarily reaching for—the ideal. School reforms are driven by a “preoccupation with academic quality” (Mintrom, 2001, p.615), and build “on proposals to bolster the economy and promote ‘traditional’ values” (Toll, 2001, p.1). They, as such, do little to advance the function of social justice, and continue to pursue academic quality as a means to ensure economic efficiency. Without denigrating school reforms, Mintrom (2001) and Toll (2001) examine them, respectively, from the perspective of a need for education for democracy, and emancipatory social change. In both analyses, the authors explore the goals of the reforms and ask whether different questions regarding purposes and outcomes should be asked, questions that get at the link between schooling and social change that offers freedom to individuals to pursue work they value,
and, ultimately to discover and create a life of worth for self and community. They question the current reality of public education that is valued primarily from an exchange perspective. That is, the driving force of schooling is to teach individuals to participate in the market or market-related activities. The result is reproduction and maintenance of current socioeconomic classes (Bowles & Gintes, 1976), with some being privileged and many not having access to the knowledge and power that would advantage them in the larger society.

Economic exchange models play out differently, depending upon the perspectives of the culture in power and the individuals/groups exercising that power. Whole school reform established on a free market approach emphasizes the honing of academic skills for the brightest students, and “back to the basics” and “functional literacy” programs for children of racial and ethnic minorities in low socioeconomic status (SES) schools and districts (Toll, 2001). The curricula for children living in poor areas tend to be “overtly utilitarian” (Lankshear, 1993, p.91) and based on the assumption that the students are less able and need to learn how to become incorporated into the “established economic and social values and practices” (Lankshear, 1993, p.91) of the dominant society. The goal for functional skills programs is for students to become employable and to integrate into and adjust to the norms of society, while programs for students of the dominant culture encourage them to develop the abilities and skills needed to develop the standards that will direct and power the social and economic order.

Other economic models of WSR stress excellence rather than equity of access and opportunity, and individualism over the common good. School choice that includes private and religious, as well as public schools, and ability tracking are among the WSR models that illustrate those goals. Both often militate against the children the reforms were intended to serve.

There are efforts affecting WSR that blend the free market approach with government intervention that set the direction for schools, yet continue to have exchange value at their core. National standards and high stakes testing provide the framework for increased expectations for all students, but do not take into consideration that not all students have the same background advantages that privilege children in school. Testing and national standards limit teacher control of content and curricula, advocate uniformity among schools and students, and, most importantly, reduce the attention given to difference, tolerance (Toll, 2001), and valuing the Other.

Mintrom (2001) and Toll (2001) speak to issues of democracy and social justice that must be more than rhetoric; they must form the foundation that will not only improve teaching and learning, but also will contribute to significant changes for the public good. Those concerns and topics form new—and necessary—ways in which the purpose and any discussion and analysis of WSR require examination. Among those concerns are the lack of respect and value for difference, equity of opportunity and access to the same knowledge, and focus on “emancipatory social change” (Toll, 2001, p.4). Finally, Toll and Mintrom do not denounce the importance of the exchange value of education. They call attention, however, to the failure of current reforms to connect economics and education “to the empowerment of the individual to create rewarding work” (Toll, 2001, p.4), and to the value of “communitarian1 benefits that derive from civic engagement” (Mintrom, 2001, p.618).

Nevárez-La Torre and Sanford-DeShields (1999) note that school reforms often do have aspects of social justice as their focus. Achieving equity in education for all students, especially, racial and ethnic minorities, is a goal in virtually all school reform efforts. However, the concentration is on participation and/or access “without facilitating a process [emphasis added] to support effectively the academic performance of participants” (p.245). Without a process for taking advantage of the opportunities for access and of participation, there is limited improvement in academic success, thereby, limiting the exchange value, education for economic advancement, of poor and minority students. The ultimate result is that students’ learning to question and challenge the current reality of their lives, and to know they have the freedom—and the abilities—to make liberating changes in the social structure does not occur. Despite equal opportunity for and access to the same education for all students, without a course of action to support students’ learning, schools continue to maintain and reproduce social and class hierarchies based, in large part, on difference in cultural values, beliefs, and traditions.

Leadership that questions the purpose and goals of WSR will consider success not solely from an academic perspective, but also from the viewpoint of school as a microcosm of a socially just society and what that entails. Academic excellence, accountability mandates, and integration into, and adjustment to, the norms of society are just
the tip of the proverbial iceberg of WSR. Leadership that seeks social justice in order to liberate students creates space and spaces for trust; and nurtures participatory, equitable, and just relationships rather than “managing programs and services [whole school reform models] within a mere and colonizing public relations approach...[T]he role of leadership is, therefore, that of facilitating the opportunity for empowerment rather than ‘delivering it’” (Grinberg as cited in Larson and Murtadha, 2001, p.8).

In the next section, I describe the ways in which I use the concepts of social justice, conscientization, and power relations as those terms relate to WSR.

Social Justice, Conscientization, and Caring Power

Social Justice

WSRs generally promote more than academic success, having as goals improved parent-school-community relationships that not only enhance students’ academic progress, but encourage collaboration for the well-being of the community. Those latter goals, combined with academic success, have the potential to achieve social justice, which I interpret as emancipatory social change through which students learn the concept of “freedom to,” that is,

the relation between freedom and the consciousness of possibility, between freedom and imagination—the ability to make present what is absent, to summon up a condition that is not yet....to seek out openings in their (students’) lived situations, to tolerate disruptions of the taken-for-granted, to try consciously to become different than they are” (Greene, 1988, pp. 16-17).

In order to experience “freedom to,” school leaders need to determine how to put WSR into practice so reform will benefit students who, in turn, will improve society by working for equity, cultural understandings, and placing value on all persons because they are human beings (Kant, 2003). Too often we, as educators, get caught up in teaching a static curriculum to students whom we view as bright, privileged, disabled, part of a minority, non-English speakers, poor, average, Muslim, or having behavior problems, rather than as the human beings with minds, hearts, and souls who need to be educated to live in and work with a continuously transforming society, world, and galaxy.

Social justice is not equality, but equity, allowing more to some and less to others depending on their needs. It is not a deficit model, in which non-hegemonic students are considered “in need” rather than having different knowledge. It is not patronizing students whose first language and culture are not American English. It is not limiting gifted and talented classes to only academically successful students. It is acknowledging one’s own biases and prejudices and how they affect teaching and learning. It is teaching what is “expected” in order to be successful in society, and dialoguing with, not inculcating, students regarding their perspectives on those expectations. It is educator’s belief that they have much to learn from all students. It is caring for each student.

Social justice requires school leadership to challenge the “interiorities of school” (English, 2005, p. 7) and of WSR. Leaders question the legitimacy of goals dealing with knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be successful in adulthood; learning that is research-based and, therefore, is “thorough and efficient” (New Jersey Educational Standards); the idea of a safe environment for students and staff; and a vision that is “shared and supported by the school community” (English, 2005, p. 6) as lacking for they do not provide the moral strength and support from which to make the necessary changes to achieve a society in which people are willing to listen to and learn from one another; to view compromise as owning together rather than giving up; to live in harmony, not necessarily in unity; and to transcend the self through a synthesis of self and other. Or, as English (2005) suggests, school leaders need to concern themselves more with the exteriorities of school, the assumptions, the institutional biases ingrained in the general society.
Conscientization

Children who live in poverty and/or who are minorities racially or ethnically need more than a “banking” education (Freire, 1989). They need to learn for liberation and freedom, that is, they need to question the answers, not answer the questions, in order to take control of their own lives.

Conscientization is the possession of critical consciousness, that is, understanding and addressing the reality one lives and, simultaneously, one’s consciousness of that reality (Lankshear, 1993). Fundamental to attaining critical consciousness is dialogue, for it opens the spaces for free, creative exploration of complex and subtle issues (Senge, 1990), thus, requiring critical thinking. It is this dialogue that is necessary to address the exteriorities of schooling. It is not telling the community what is needed in schools, but it is the deliberative dialogue that Gutmann (1987, 1999) notes is essential to dealing with the various beliefs and assumptions people have about one another and that affect the ways in which we school our children. Without a leader’s willingness to deal with dialogue, assumptions, and biases, differences continue to be ignored. The power structure, hegemonic and hierarchical, continues as is; schools, despite the rhetoric of vision, researched pedagogy, and community-shared and -supported educational goals, remain the same.

Shor (1993) explained conscientization as having four qualities: power awareness, critical literacy, desocialization, and self-organization/self-education (I will use these qualities later in the paper to structure the discussion and analysis of two WSRs: Success for All and Professional Development Schools).

Power awareness. Shor (1993) described power awareness as “knowing that society and history can be made and remade by human action and by organized groups; knowing who exercises dominant power in society for what ends and how power is currently organized and used in society” (p.32). As schools and districts consider reforms for the liberation and freedom of students, teaching them to use their power positively is a critical component. “…Power is a necessary and positive feature of social relations that allows human beings to attain a degree of sovereignty and control over their lives” (Wartenberg, 1990, p.194). Power often is thought of as negative, as control or “power over.” However, “if power is in everything, as Foucault advocates, then power per se isn’t bad…” (Grimshaw, 1993, p.55). Leadership for school reform must embrace the positional power that affords opportunities to guide the education of students to an understanding that they have the power to take control of their lives, and to the development of skills that enable them to use their personal and collective power to benefit them individually and collectively.

Power used in social justice leadership transforms people and schooling; it does not dominate. The issue is not who has power, but what are the patterns of the exercise of power. The basis of transformative power is trust, and the heart of trust is vulnerability (Wartenberg, 1990). The school leader is key in establishing a climate in which taking risks and feeling exposed can occur without fear. Teachers need to trust that an administrator will support their work to teach students to question and challenge the givens of society and the place of minorities in it, and to question the answers, not answer the questions (Shor, 1993). Faculty put themselves in a vulnerable position when they challenge the hidden curriculum, or when they expose the oppression in a whole school reform model. As important, is the leader’s inviting, seeking, not only community input, but the questions that challenge everyone to look beyond the externality of societal policies, rules, regulations, and goals, to the realities of who benefits from them and why.

Administrators and teachers need to risk credence in order to attend to the externalities of schooling. They need to attend to knowledge that is not valued, that is, they appreciate the importance and worth of the learning that students bring to the classroom. They are willing to hear them outside the framework of some “true knowledge,” and, therefore, are willing to suspend truth as a possible concept (Shor, 1993, p. 92). Teachers further their risk-taking by choosing the standpoint from which they view the students. That is, they acknowledge their political choice to change the site from which traditionally they have viewed the generation of knowledge to put themselves into the students’ sites so they can share that place with the students in order to know the students (Cain, 1993, p. 93). School leaders, therefore, provide the support and facilitate this process. By so doing, they challenge the accepted norm.

Likewise, students need to trust teachers to accept their challenges to schooling and society. They also need to trust that faculty, staff, and administrators will use their power to help them in fundamental ways. If knowledge is
empowering as well as power over, then students must be provided with and have access to more structured forms of knowledge. Not acknowledging or explaining that to students can be construed as failing to provide resources for empowerment that some have and some don’t (Grimshaw, 1993). Students’ experience of acquiring new types of consciousness may be disorienting, as old guidelines for behavior and practice become open to question and old interpretations become subjects for students’ deep-seated doubt (Bartky, 1990). Trust requires that students, those in subordinate positions, allow themselves to be in control of teachers and administrators, those in stronger positions, believing that the latter will use their control to enable them to grow in strength and positive use of their own power. The challenge is to engender that trust. To do so requires educational leaders to deconstruct who they are, to be willing to engage in conflictual dialogue with teachers, community members, and politicians. It will necessitate leaders to lead, not simply to comply, in order to deal with the "elephant in the room."

Trust requires dialogue, the free, creative exploration of complex and subtle issues (Senge, 1990). In all schools, but particularly in those with minority and poor students, communication that indicates concern for and interest in the students and their community is paramount to any reform effort. Deep listening to students by school staff and the ability of staff to suspend their own views are vital to understanding the buried truths so that there can be negotiation of shared purposes within a diverse community. Dialogue is essential, for power that transforms cannot be required; it can only be accepted (Wartenberg, 1990). Power that transforms ultimately is necessary for building trust that is fundamental to students’ liberation and freedom.

Critical literacy. Shor (1993) explains critical literacy as analytic habits of thinking, reading, writing, speaking, or discussing which go beneath surface impressions, traditional myths, mere opinions, and routine clichés; understanding the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter; discovering the deep meaning of any event, text, technique, process, object, statement, image or situation; applying that meaning to your own context (p.32).

Critical school leadership2 is that which enables educational communities—teachers, students, parents—to pursue justice and equity for children who are economically poor, and who may be different in race, ethnicity, gender preference, religion, physical, or mental ability. Social justice leaders provide guidance when embarking on curricular or whole school reform models by asking the questions: Who benefits? Who dominates? Who defines how the organizational re-structuring that needs to occur accommodates the changes necessary to successfully implement the reform efforts? How must caring actions ultimately come about as a result of improved teaching and learning, that is, how will the educational community exceed the demands of efficiency in order to generate acts of caring (Noddings, 1992; Sernak, 1998; Shields, 2001)?

Freire (1989) advocated that education for poor children should be about human and community development, about understanding who the children are, personally, culturally, and socially. It is about becoming visible to self and others. David Whyte (2001), poet, eloquently illustrates this sentiment: “To be human is to become visible while carrying what is hidden as a gift to others” (p.190).

Social justice leadership seeks whole school reform that bases teaching and learning on students’ creation of knowledge that will liberate and free them from the ways in which they “have already been classified and identified by dominant discourses. This means discovering new ways of understanding [themselves] and one another, refusing to accept the dominant culture’s characterizations of [their] practices and desires, and re-defining them from within resistant cultures” (Sawicki, 1991, p.44). Through problem posing and solving, students learn to question which knowledge is valued and why; they examine their access to opportunities for intellectual, economic, and social advancement; and they learn to reach an understanding of knowing that they know.

As the children learn and grow in understanding of self and society, so does the community. Critical leadership, therefore, emphasizes schooling that addresses the needs, interests and concerns of the children and parents. Incumbent upon the critical school leader is facilitating choice by focusing discussion of the reform models on the children’s lives and values, the school personnel’s understandings and perceptions of the values of the school and children, and the gaps between and among their own, the school’s, and the children’s cultures. In other words, to improve teaching and learning, difference must be acknowledged, accepted, and respected in order for students to be liberated and to experience freedom, for as Whyte (2001) reflects, “In freedom is the wish to belong to structure in
Although it is important for educators to reflect and advocate their own and the school's values, it is of equal importance to support the values of the community and to see that the curriculum and policies are consistent with those values (Power & Makogon, 1996). If they are not considered, or only peripherally noted, the response to Who benefits? would be, "Not the children," for their needs and concerns would not dominate. "Freedom," as Sawicki (1991) notes, "lies in our capacity to discover the historical links between certain modes of self-understanding and modes of domination" (p.44). The school reform implemented would aid in that discovery and liberate students to develop knowledge about themselves and their place in society that provides them with the freedom to—to access what has traditionally been denied to them, deny the categories into which they've been put, celebrate the values and knowledge of their own cultures, and achieve. Leadership needed to interpret and implement school reform for social justice outcomes would facilitate reflection for teachers and students so that students learn to act with intentionality toward the world, that is, they would engage "in action upon the world informed by their reflection upon it" (Lankshear, 1993 p. 96). Reflection resulting in intentionality would become the basis of teaching and learning for individual and collective liberation. In order for that to happen, however, educational leaders must be willing to open the doors to contentiousness and conflict, to risk being viewed as not nice, to deal with their own and others' ingrained biases which have become beliefs. Change in schools that liberates cannot come about without dealing with all that keeps certain groups in chains.

Critical leaders direct educators to reforms that open the spaces for school personnel to question not only why students don’t read at home or why parents don’t read to their children. They encourage teachers and staff to ask, "What are the social circumstances behind the limited or lack of academic success?" Rather than determine the feasibility of what might be done, social justice leaders focus reforms on what should be done, that is, educational change becomes the framework to diagnose the deprivation in order to establish what ideally should be done if the resources were available. The leaders then use the reforms to guide teachers not simply to improve the achievement of the students, but to provide the freedom for children to achieve (Larson & Murtadha, 2001).

Such leadership creates space and spaces for trust; nurtures participatory, equitable and just relationships rather than "managing programs and services [whole school reform models] within a mere and colonizing public relations approach….the role of leadership is, therefore, that of facilitating the opportunity [italics added] for empowerment rather than 'delivering it'" (Grinberg as cited in Larson & Murtadha, 2001, p.8). Such leadership asks the why questions behind the facades of equity and oppression. Then there is action to change, which is a continuous process of dialogue, decision making, action, change, evaluation, all the while continuing dialogue.

Desocialization. Shor (1993) explains desocialization, integral to conscientization, as

- recognizing and challenging the myths, values, behaviors, and language learned in mass culture; critically examining the regressive values operating in society, which are internalized into consciousness—such as racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, a fascination with the rich and powerful, hero-worship, excess consumerism, runaway individualism, militarism, and national chauvinism (p.33).

In the language of whole school reform, "community" is most often a goal. The term "learning community," usually perceived as homogeneous, rarely is discussed regarding its meaning how or to achieve it. Learning communities in virtually all instances are composed of differences of thought. Communities made up of children from many different ethnic, racial, religious, and social backgrounds especially need to be viewed as non-homogeneous, and from the perspective of ‘cross-cultural leadership’ (Shields, 2001). Shields (2001) discusses the need for critical leaders to respect all perspectives relating to difference, and to work with those differences to create a community with shared norms and values that are dynamic and continuously re-negotiated as the community ebbs and flows; it is a harmonious community rather than a united one.
In a community of difference, the commonalities are values of inclusivity, respect, and a desire to understand diverse perspectives; the norms are commitment to reflection, critique, and dialogue. Such norms do not merely reflect the customs of an already powerful or established group, but are constantly subject to re-examination and renegotiation to best address the needs of all members (Shields, 2001, p. 5).

There are no prescriptions for community because all are different. In each context, communities are created and re-created. The critical leader, through exercise of transformative power and understanding of the necessity to reach beyond the efficiency goals of reform to that of caring acts, uses dialogue between and among students, teachers, staff, parents, and neighborhood community members. Dialogue establishes the foundation for trust building which engenders inclusivity, esteem, deliberation, and analysis, ultimately resulting in negotiated norms and values by which societal members may live in accord.

In communities of difference, a significant task for social justice leaders is to consider the “extra-discursive” as it affects racial and ethnic minority students, for it is fundamental to narrowing the gap between and among educators’, students’, and school cultures. The “extra-discursive” is “an intransitive relationship pre-existing its possible utterance” (Cain, 1993, p.83). That is, it is the experience of something prior to its having a name or of being understood and explained; it is having knowledge without the ability to discuss. How is it possible to know a reality that is pre-discursive?

· Reality and the knowledge of it are separated by capacities of the knowers who are limited and species-specific. In communities of difference, members of various groups of difference may have pre-discursive knowledge of other difference groups, for the creation of that knowledge emanated from their particular group. That is, the knowledge of the Other is limited by their own capacity and experience based on and limited by their own culture.
· Capacities for knowing are culture-specific, depending on the modes of thought and discourse.
· Capacities are historically or relationally specific, depending on the site occupied by the knower in a relational nexus which provides social vantage point (professions, race, class, religion, age…) (Cain, 1993).

Unless there is social justice leadership, the differences among and between groups may remain in the pre-discursive mode, each group knowing the Other and themselves through their own cultural experiences.

Developing and maintaining a community of difference requires attention to the individual as well as to the community. Social justice leadership, committed to apprehending the ideals of community and mutuality need to be cognizant of “preserving the forms of autonomy, individuality and care for self” (Grimshaw, 1993, p.69). That is particularly important in the creation and sustenance of a community of difference, where the focus is understanding the Other in terms of cultural group, and finding commonalities among norms and values of various groups in order to form a community of difference. Within whole school reform, the individuality of each student requires recognition and consideration; the personal and common good need to be balanced unless they become as constraining and coercive as forms of individualism that community seeks to replace (Grimshaw, 1993).

Communities of difference include economically poor children. Because WSR largely targets schools in poverty areas, education for the children is more than academic. Education necessary for such students is political as it includes the context and circumstances that affect children’s external options, as well as their choices, hopes, and goals (Noddings, 1992; Nussbaum, 2000). The children see and experience a world of drugs, poverty, and sickness; inordinate health problems; inequitable access to educational opportunities; unjust expectations of school and society; and the lack of instruction in how to use the power they have to liberate and free themselves (Freedman, 1990; Kozol, 2000, 1995, 1991; McLeod, 1987). Those experiences influence what they love, value, fear, and feel capable of doing. The children’s schooling and education, therefore, necessitate considerations of health, physical and emotional; freedom from humiliation and violence; and attention to the inner spirit (Noddings, 1992; Nussbaum, 2000).

For the success of WSR to be tied solely to accountability systems is unreasonable. Although accountability may be
necessary to sustain the bureaucracy of schooling, to expect all children to learn the same things at the same time despite the disparities in their freedom to achieve (Sen, 1992) flies in the face of all that educators know and believe. Furthermore, state and national accountability systems do not take into account communities of difference: language, family priorities, social and economic opportunities or limitations, and other group values. In essence, accountability systems narrow what children learn, despite the increased knowledge of how children learn (Larson & Murtadha, 2001).

School leaders need to be more like community organizers and less like corporate executives. Larson and Murtadha (2001) note that “…the problems that limit the educational opportunity and life chances of many children must be resolved through community-wide initiatives where the purposes of education and the needs of the communities of color and communities of poverty are central to discourse, policy, pedagogy, and practice” (p.15). For social justice leadership to facilitate the implementation of WSR in communities of difference, the following questions serve as a guide:

-Does WSR seek liberation and human development for marginalized and oppressed children?
-Does WSR emphasize possibilities rather than problems?
-Is there obvious commitment to the value of the children they are intended to serve? (Larson & Murtadha, 2001).
-Do WSR models reflect traditional and historical behaviors and worldviews of White males? Do they hold up for females and people of color?
-Does WSR promote harmony within difference?
-Does WSR encourage—insist on—focusing on our children rather than children at-risk?
-Is the foundation of WSR’s commitment to difference in unity, that is, to working in harmony? To ethical behavior?

**Self-organization/self-education.** Lastly, Shor (1993) indicates that self-organization or self-education is critical to the methodology of conscientization. He describes this as “taking the initiative to transform school and society away from authoritarian relations and the undemocratic, unequal distribution of power; taking part in and initiating social change projects; overcoming the induced anti-intellectualism of mass education” (p. 33). This final stage of conscientization, is the actual implementation, the action resulting from the deliberative dialogue, critical thinking, and reflection. It is Freire’s (1989) notion of the people identifying what it is they need, not being told, and taking the actions to acquire those needs.

The role of social justice school leaders is critical, for it is at this stage where “apprehensions of the complex of contradictions” (Freire, 1989, p.106) must be considered in order to develop and implement educational pedagogies suitable for all students and educators. At this point, school leaders need to work with the school community, including teachers, students, parents, and community members, to address the self-identified educational needs of various groups, acknowledge and respect the professional knowledge of teachers, meet the political mandates, and bridge the gaps between teachers’ and students’ cultural understandings that affect teaching and learning. In other words, the social justice leader is asked to have the wisdom of Solomon!

At this juncture, power relationships are fore-fronted. Caring power is necessary to facilitate and implement schooling that will educate students to become positive social change agents, but the site for caring power is the traditional organization of school: bureaucratic, hierarchical, and domineering.

**Power3**

In addition to the discussion of power awareness associated with conscientization, I offer my further understandings of power and caring power, and schooling. Social justice leaders need caring power, that is, the recognition that caring for an organization requires the positive use of power, power of position and of authority to provide the room for moral debate concerning particular needs vis-à-vis principles of fairness and justice. Such a leader uses positional power to respond “to the particular, concrete, physical, spiritual, intellectual, psychic, and emotional needs” (Tronto, 1989, p.174) of the total organization.

Implementing school reform requires the power associated with people and places of domination in order to merge public and private spheres. It means seeking out and developing leaders
from nonhegemonic cultures whose roles and power most often are ascribed as informal and unofficial, uninstitutionalized, that is not publicly acknowledged. An understanding and ability to care, merged with official power to teach and model caring becomes caring power... (Sernak, 1998, p.156).

Caring power needs leadership to support thinking and doing, demands time, resources, skills and knowledge. Social justice leaders see power in terms of not having all the answers, but willingly using their power to struggle with ambiguity and to make hard decisions, despite knowing that they will not always be right and may, unintentionally, make a decision that is not in the best interests of a student or group of people. However, they know how to regroup, to dialogue, to know when it is appropriate to show weakness and when it would be damaging to others in their care. Their vision is clear enough to guide others, but does not dictate, leaving space open for the development of collective imagination. Finally, the caring power of social justice leaders functions to maintain a "delicate balance of care, justice, and power" (Sernak, 1998, p.161).

A Study of Two Whole School Reform Models: Success for All and Professional Development Schools

In this section, I examine two WSR models, Success for All and Professional Development Schools and their implementation in one elementary school in New Jersey. I suggest that although neither has claimed as its purpose to achieve social change through social justice, that both—and all other WSRs—be examined in that light. Though higher academic achievement and accountability for the academic success of students traditionally underserved are certainly worthwhile goals, it is essential for leaders of WSR to ask why those goals carry such importance. In other words, it is critical that leaders ask what the overarching purposes of schooling are, and how WSR will help students achieve those outcomes. To that end, I open a discussion about Success for All (SFA), a highly structured whole school reform model, and the Professional Development School paradigm (PDS); a collaboration between P-12 schools and universities, using questions presented by scholars invested in social justice: Whose reform is it? Who benefits? Who dominates? Will our society benefit as a whole? (Toll, 2001; Starratt as cited in Shields, 2001). With those questions as my guide, I turn to Freire’s notion of conscientization as a framework from which to examine the two reforms in order to begin dialogue on the potential for WSR and the leadership necessary to impact the reality of children whose cultures and traditions are not those of the hegemonic society and who live in poverty.

Success for All (SFA)

Power awareness. Weber maintained that bureaucracy leads to excessive rationality, numbing feeling and producing a loss of spiritual vitality. Modern society becomes an “iron cage” in which “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart” (Weber as cited in Wexler, 2000, p.6) live. Whole school reform too often becomes embroiled in bureaucracy, power that manipulates and controls, that seeks efficiency over and at the expense of caring. There is more talk about “reform” and not enough effort to “re-form” our educational system.

The State Department of Education in New Jersey maintains a power position—owning, benefiting, and dominating—in regard to whole school reform. It mandated that all Abbott4 districts must choose and implement a whole school reform model from among the many available. It highly recommended that elementary schools with especially low scores on the state standardized fourth grade test elect to use SFA, a highly structured program with many of its own materials, training programs for teachers, and evaluation procedures for each school. Although the program has components in the four major subject areas (reading, mathematics, social studies, and science), reading is by far the area most developed and for which there are the most extensive materials, training and evaluation. If a school chose SFA, it received “perks” from the State, usually in terms of more money for technology.

Success for All would be appealing to the State because it is, in Weber’s (as cited in Wexler, 2000) terms, excessively rational. There are minutely detailed teachers’ manuals, series of books for each reading level, standardized tests for each level, record-keeping materials, extensive initial training and annual follow-up training for all teachers, a coordinator who receives initial and continuous training, and regular evaluation by SFA-employed staff. The program requires management of the ways in which it prescribes its materials to be used. It provides a rational
way to assess all students.

Although the trainers say that teachers can substitute materials for theirs, few teachers do, nor are they encouraged to do so because that would require re-thinking time-use and assessment.

The State maintained control over education in the whole school reform selection process. Teachers in P.S. 3 did have a choice regarding which reform model they wanted to use, but they were not in effect, empowered to do so. The choice was forced, in as much as they were given a limited number of models from which to choose and an even a more limited amount of time to consider them.

When I asked teachers whether they based their choice on the culture of the students, the answer was, “No.” Their selection was based almost entirely on the “sales pitch” they received from the SFA sales representatives. Success for All is an example of what Toll (2001) calls the “neo-liberal” approach to reform: educational entrepreneurs who design programs that limit teacher control in pedagogy and content, advocate uniformity among students through the use of the same instructional methods, and reduce attention to difference and tolerance with the standardized materials. The program fit the technical rational understandings common to bureaucratic functioning, thus maintaining a power over structure.

Success for All reflects not a re-making of society, but a repetition of the past. Listening to the children during their rigidly controlled lessons, I immediately was taken back decades to Distar, the rote learning reading program designed for children with learning difficulties and often used with poor, minority children. When I perused the materials, I also was reminded of the highly scripted Houghton Mifflin series of the 1980s—the big books, the little series books, and the unison responses to questions. The SFA model mirrors the past, and perpetuates the historical stereotype of economically deprived students who often are not of the dominant culture: they are capable of primarily rote learning which will continue non-deliberative social reproduction (Gutmann, 1987/1999; Bowles & Gintes, 1976). Rarely, if ever, would SFA be the whole school reform of choice in middle and upper-class schools where developing critical thinking and analytical ability is of high priority (Anyon, 1981). Students maintain the traditional authority-dependency position in the SFA process, thus, rehearsing their futures as passive citizens and workers by learning what is told to them and accepting that as having learned (Shor, 1993).

Critical literacy. Success for All is essentially a functional literacy program that emphasizes reading at the expense of writing. Common teacher complaints center on the lack of time to attend to writing because it is not part of the scheduled 90-minute SFA block. Writing is to take place in the students’ classroom during another literacy period, which may or may not occur. A concern for teachers is that during the SFA reading block, students are homogeneously grouped by reading ability, not by grade level. Each teacher is assigned and trained to teach a particular SFA reading level. When the students return to their home classrooms, they are in a heterogeneous literacy group. That presents difficulties to the teachers, who are secure in the strategies for their homogeneous reading group, but are not necessarily confident basing writing strategies on the SFA reading techniques that would have to span a number of reading levels to accommodate the children in their classes. By controlling the content and pedagogy, the SFA program limits the teachers’ perspectives to only the content within the parameters dictated by the SFA materials. Teachers are aware of the need for students to write, but not in terms of critical literacy, of having students discover deep meanings of events or situations and applying them to their own lives.

Success for All is, for the teachers, the vehicle to improve student scores on standardized tests. If, as Foucault (1987, 1990) declares, knowledge is empowering as well as power over, then not providing and making accessible more structured forms of knowledge can be construed as failing to provide resources for empowerment that some have and some don’t (Grimshaw, 1993). This program does provide resources and accessibility for students to learn how to read words, that is, to recognize and to be able to figure out what a group of letters says and stands for. The SFA model does afford students a basic structure for reading for meaning, let alone critical thinking..

However, students’ achieving the ability to understand social contexts and their relation to them has not been integral to teachers’ training in SFA. There, in essence, has been no dialogue. SFA is a process that teachers learned to follow. The product is student achievement, not the freedom for students to achieve (Larson & Murtadha, 2001). Writing enables students to learn to express themselves in ways that will initiate needed change to overcome their
economic and social standing. Without or with only limited writing experience, students’ access to education for liberation and freedom is compromised.

Deep understanding occurs through dialogue emanating from reflection. In SFA, there is little dialogue, which Freire indicates is the basis for transforming the world through self-knowledge gained by reflection. In a program based on rote learning and response, teachers have little or no time to work with children to understand themselves and their reality mediated by society. Dialogue "is the encounter between humans, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (Freire as cited in Lankshear, 1993, p. 96). To name the world is not just to have knowledge, but it is to know that one is knowing. For poor and minority students to know they are knowing is critical to their liberation and freedom, in essence, to their humanization.

To engage in dialogue requires time and patience, a spiral of time to reflect and time to think. Critical thinking is subverted by the need to have instant "knowledge" so that students can demonstrate "learning" on standardized tests. Success for All provides the salve for those in power to feel as though they have prescribed methods by which children who have not learned sufficiently in the past now know. By scores on regularly administered tests constructed by the SFA corporation, teachers, administrators, and politicians can point to instant learning. Yet, there are critical teachers and leaders who question:

The success of the reading program in this study (SFA) depends on the design of the assessment and the curriculum. The curriculum basically teaches to the test. However, based on the grade summary report the percentage of students tested at grade level increases with more experience in the Reading Program. Teaching to the test is definitely not the way to create success in our schools....

Discovering how the assessment tool caters to the program was an important developmental outcome. The intern gained knowledge about the assessment tools and how important it is to research the assessment tools along with the curriculum. Teaching to the test sometimes appears to be a hidden agenda. This process helps some students, but it does not promote true success to me!5

Critical literacy and thinking happen over time with guidance. Teachers know and understand that, but their actions are mediated by the social climate and the needs and wants of those in power. No matter what educators perceive, there is too often the reality of having that knowledge compromised over time without the consciousness that it has been changed.

“ There is a sublimated social vision, a reality-based envisioning of possibility in the mystical, dimly articulated space of the social unconscious, which the depth and rapidity of current social change churns to the surface by grinding its defenses down quickly in the path of instant productivity” (Wexler, 2001, p.12).

Desocialization. Parental involvement is important to SFA. The program "encourages and trains parents and other community members to fulfill numerous volunteer roles within the school, ranging from providing a listening ear to emerging readers to helping in the school cafeteria” (Slavin & Madden, 2001, p. 12). To create a community of difference, it is important that parents be involved in the school. The key word to consider in the SFA philosophy, however, is "train." Like the teachers, parents are "trained;" they are not "educated" to think about, to question, and to enter into discourse and dialogue with each other and educators. Consider the assumptions made. If the parents were middle class or above, or if they were not racial or ethnic minorities, would there be the expectation that they needed to be "trained" to work in classrooms, or would the assumption be that they would know how, or would be able to "figure out" what they should do? Nor are teachers, administrators, and staff educated to work with parents. Is there the assumption that educators don’t need to understand the cultures of their students in order for students to learn? Nothing in the SFA materials takes into account the cultural backgrounds of the students and their parents, the
teachers, and the school.

How are “poor” and “poverty” understood in connection with the goals of SFA? “When a child fails to read well in the early grades, he or she begins a downward progression…Failing students begin to have poor motivation and poor self-expectations, which lead to continued poor achievement, in a declining spiral that ultimately leads to despair, delinquency, and dropout….The commitment is that SFA will do “whatever it takes to see that every child becomes a skilled, strategic, and enthusiastic reader by the end of the elementary grades” (Slavin & Madden, 2001, pp.4-5). Imposed values may lead to low-self-esteem if the children are unable to meet the expectations of others. Educators who believe that WSR is to liberate children would have to question why students would despair and ultimately drop out of school because they had trouble reading. Does “doing whatever it takes” mean? Are poverty, homelessness, teachers’ divergent cultures and beliefs considered in the students “failure?” Nowhere does SFA specifically discuss how the program addresses those issues. Nor does SFA account for continuous student transfers in and out of the building, for the lack of substitutes because of a district’s inability to pay competitive wages, for SFA tutors not meeting their students because of having to cover classes where there are no substitutes, for poor teacher attendance because of low morale caused by budget cuts and increased responsibility, and for conflicting teacher-student cultures. To reiterate Sen’s (1992) sentiment, do all children need to learn the same things, in the same way, and at the same time?

The SFA program maintains the myths and beliefs of the dominant culture by what it does not overtly espouse, namely the freedoms the children will achieve.

Discussing why educators ought to consider using the SFA program with children who have been traditionally underserved, Slavin and Madden (2001) use value-laden words traditionally used in the mass culture to refer to children living in low-income areas and who often are racial and ethnic minorities: learning deficits, failing students, poor motivation, poor self-expectations, poor achievement, delinquency, and children at-risk. In their discussion, they do not attempt to define or describe what those words and phrases mean. Are the children at risk because, as Kozol (1995,1991) points out, they have a high incidence of asthma among them? Because they do not have enough to eat or sufficient clothes to wear? Because they have to assume responsibilities that many adults would not take? Because they do not read about people like themselves? Because they are not taught to question, but are rewarded for compliance? How or in what are they delinquent—in not doing homework? In behavior? Will reading alone raise poor self-expectations? As stated before, there is little in SFA that promotes self-reflection mediated with the realities of society to allow students to learn how to transform their situations in the world.

The myths of poor, minority children and what they need from school continue to abound in SFA through the attention given to reading, a ninety-minute block, and mathematics at the expense of science and social studies. In kindergarten, the entire day must be devoted to some form of reading pedagogy; there is no time for activities of the past that were valuable learning experiences for the children. In middle- and upper-class schools, children delight in learning to use the computer and find science experiments fascinating. Through a breadth of learning experiences encompassing a variety of disciplines, those students learn that a much bigger world is open and accessible to them than to the children in poor districts. The SFA “whole school reform” does not involve the whole; it revolves around only a minute part, continuing to de-privilege the poor and the minorities.

Yet with all my criticism of SFA, the program has dispelled some of the myths and stereotypes about poor, minority children for some teachers. Some teachers who previously believed that “those” children can’t learn, have begun to change their perception as they see that through SFA evaluations the students’ test scores have increased. Because there seems to be “proof” that the students are learning, some of the teachers who doubted now have higher expectations for the children.

Self-organization/Self-education. Because of the highly structured nature of SFA, and the premise that it was created by experts who provided the process by which it should be implemented, there is no reason to think that it would encourage self-organization and self-education to transform schools. In fact there is no reason to believe that the goal of SFA is to transform school and society. It is an impersonal movement emanating from the current power elite to maintain school and society as it is.
The Professional Development School model unites schools and/or school districts, and a university to establish a collaboration that blends theory, research, and practice to enhance teaching and learning, P-16, through continuous professional development. The PDS philosophy and organization are based on five standards emanating from the national accrediting body, North Central Association of Teacher Education (NCATE): (a) learning community, (b) collaboration, (c) accountability and quality assurance, (d) diversity and equity, and (e) structure, resources, and roles. Each of the standards is applied according to the needs of the individual school and/or district and university; building and sustaining relationships within and outside the school are an important aspect of the reform. Integral to the standards are content, pedagogy, and disposition, the latter highlighting the importance of attitude and feeling, soft and often unwieldy qualities that make assessment of outcomes difficult, but that are important in the overall commitment to relationships. There is no program per se, nor are there specific materials. The PDS model has not been endorsed as a whole school reform by the state of New Jersey, but has been chosen by some schools as a supplement or additional WSR model.

The primary difference between SFA and the PDS model regarding power awareness is that PDS has the potential to reconfigure the pedagogy and structure of schooling so that people have the opportunities to use their power to affect how educators and students learn, and how knowledge is created. That is, effort spent to establish collaborative relationships that lead to shared decision making within schools—in classrooms, as well as within the institution of school—and between P-12 schools and the university in research and in the preparation and continuing professional education of teachers and administrators is fundamental to the reform.

Unlike SFA whose focus is on delivering instruction to students via material, strategies, and assessments designed by experts, PDS concentrates on improving teaching and learning for educators in all positions, as well as for students. The emphasis is on collaboration, working together to construct continuously improved pedagogy through research, theory, and practice. No one entity is the expert; each person or body contributes knowledge and experience to develop the best practices until they, from a Kuhnian perspective, become insufficient because there is new content and pedagogical knowledge that has been found to supercede them.

Although the intent of PDS is to re-form schooling by re-focusing power, P-12 and university educators are not always capable of changing their own historical perceptions and actions. Collaboration should start with commitment, not only to creating a collaborative between the university and a P-12 school, but also to changing the structure of schooling. “This commitment must go beyond the desire to build a collaborative. It must include a strong desire to deal with structural inequalities due to status differentials in our society and with personal conflicts that arise when people work together” (Sandoval, 2001, pp. 25-26).

Gallego, Hollingsworth, and Whitenack (2001) describe two PDS partnerships, one that was successful and one that was not. That which was not resulted from the inability of the participants from the P-12 school to re-think their roles in terms of equity and equality, to question power differentials, and to avoid the discomfort of conflicting thoughts and ideas. The school personnel viewed the university liaisons as the experts, looking to them for ideas and or approval. Collegiality, connoting harmony, that is, no contentiousness, at all costs, was preferable to vulnerability and risk-taking that might result in feeling pain in the process of growth and change which could lead to social justice. They preferred to keep their distance from one another by maintaining politeness.

The successful PDS included personnel who challenged the university staff, who debated and argued issues that traditionally had not been discussable. They were willing to expose their ideas, values, and beliefs in order to create the trust necessary to develop an equitable relationship among themselves and between themselves and the university liaisons. In relation to the university liaison, they initiated ideas and actions and did not seek approval or even necessarily want approval. The teachers challenged the university staff and were comfortable being challenged. Furthermore, they looked at the structure of their school and proactively sought ways to change it that would accommodate better ways of teaching, and that would seek to limit inequity and inequality among staff and between staff and administration. They challenged the assumptions connected with WSR, in general. As the teachers experienced the growing trust that supported equity among them, they were able to understand the benefits of sharing decision making with their students and creating classrooms and a school that sought equity for all.
For PDS partnerships to be authentic, they need to derive from conviction, not convenience (Gallego, Hollingsworth, and Whitenack, 2001). At this time, the P.S. 3 partnership with the university is largely a convenience, particularly since there is funding from a Title II grant. Teachers and administrators see PDS more as a way to “get help” without having to pay for it, rather than as a partnership in which there is commitment to improve the structure, function, and equity of schooling. Like SFA with its perks from the State, PDS carries its own perks through its offers to support professional development through workshops for beginning teachers and for teachers who would mentor student teachers. Additionally, the university sponsors graduate courses at the school that are tuition-free. Administrators and teachers view those benefits from personal perspectives of improving the school in the eyes of the community, or of doing what has been mandated by the State (teachers working toward their 100 hours requirement6).

Although a formal contract exists between the College of Education, the district and P. S. 3, the teachers were not really involved in making the decision to take part in PDS. As with SFA, PDS became a reality because of decisions made by those in formal power positions in the bureaucratic hierarchy with the intent of doing what would be best for the children. Unlike SFA where there are distinct guidelines to follow, PDS requires deep thinking and whole-hearted involvement. Many of the teachers at P.S. 3 are open to collaboration, routinely sharing ideas and materials with one another, or offering a listening ear or helping hand. However, there is minimal understanding concerning the commitment to a partnership that is on-going—even after the grant expires—for continuous improvement of teaching, learning, and equity in power and cultural relationships, the latter two not in teachers’ or administrators’ consciousness.

Teaching for student success requires re-structuring the organization of school for caring, for bringing social justice into conscious awareness, and for serious learning. P.S. 3 has already made strides to do that with its “family halls” of grades 1-5, and with the attempt to keep class sizes small, around twenty or fewer students. Although one teacher does not have the same class for more than one year, teachers come to know the students because they are in the same family for five years. The students also feel comfortable as they progress from grade to grade. Lunch time is arranged so that students are able to be with their age-peers for that time, as well as teachers having time to visit and collaborate informally with other teachers at that grade about their students and their teaching. They also have scheduled times once a month for grade-level meetings. However, issues such as poverty—why there is poverty—among the students, cultural gaps between educators’ and students’ lives, and differences between communal, cultural, and school values are not considered.

Such re-structuring mirrors some of the ways in which Howey (1999) advocates PDS partnerships might do a better job of teaching children. Yet, what is missing in the previous description of the reorganization is the dialogue among the teachers and with the administrators that provides the opportunity to question and analyze how and to what degree they perceive the effectiveness of that configuration. The power to restructure and to maintain it remains in the hands of those in power, most often those external to the schools.

The University wants PDS to become a whole school reform accepted by the State. At this time, the objections revolve around the lack of “hard” data to corroborate success. The State wants data that will indicate rising test scores on the standardized tests. There is firm belief that will happen through PDS, but the change will not be instant because the model is holistic, attempting to create and sustain community; address children’s mental, physical, and emotional health; create an equitable environment; and equalize power. That will take time. Those in power want instant results.

Critical literacy. Emphasis in PDSs is on “best practices” in teaching that lead to increased learning. Like any other model, the interpretation of the standards and of the rhetoric will drive the particular program in a specific situation. The teachers discuss their pedagogy in terms of how it helps the children increase their learning to pass the state standardized tests. Little discussion or conversation involves student’s understanding of the deeper meaning of learning; who they are and what have they internalized about themselves from society’s assumptions, how they can change their lives, how their past history is important to understanding what they can do for themselves and their community in the future, why and how the content areas affect their immediate lives.

For critical literacy to occur requires that teachers and school leaders not fear taking risks. An example in P.S. 3 is
that of a teacher who chooses to show the television movie, “Roots” to her class each year during African American History month. The video is listed in the district as unacceptable viewing for elementary school children. The teacher in question, however, has decided that the children she works with need to know and understand their history as it happened and as it continues to affect their lives. She shows the video to the children and asks them what they know about slavery, if they had any relatives who were slaves, and what they know about those relatives. She then talks about what slavery was and how some of their lives continue to imitate slavery in certain ways. The teacher commented that parents have thanked her for those lessons, and that students have brought bits and pieces of those conversations up throughout the remainder of the school year. There are two issues at hand: the teacher went against district policy at risk to her tenure; the administrator passively allowed her actions by not acknowledging—not seeing—what she did. Significant change in attitudes and beliefs about particular non-hegemonic cultures cannot occur within passivity.

In many PDSs affiliated with our university, teachers are becoming more aware and committed to students’ connecting schooling to the social context of their lives. One of the ways that has occurred is through teacher study groups using the book, The Teaching Gap (Heibert & Stigler, 1999), based on the TIMMS study of mathematics teaching in the United States, Japan, and Germany. Through their study, teachers have responded to the deep learning that happens in Japanese schools in which there are fewer topics covered, but far more in-depth study.

Although PDS promotes deep understanding, that is not always what P.S 3 teachers do. There is strong concern and much pressure for teachers to get through the explicit curriculum set before them by the District and State. To take the occasion to show “Roots,” interspersed and followed by deep discussion, takes time away from covering the mandated coursework. Assessment and evaluation of teacher work stresses curriculum completion as much as possible, therefore, indicating teacher and student success, albeit a narrow interpretation. To spend more time on deep learning rather than on coverage of the surface issues is to put oneself—and students—in jeopardy of less than satisfactory reviews.

The accountability system has narrowed what children learn despite our increased knowledge of how students learn (Larson & Murtadha, 2001). The SFA program meets the expectations of the system in an immediate perspective more so than PDS. Rather than teach for children to achieve over the long term, accountability systems tend to focus on narrow perceptions and understandings that too often are not part of racial minority children’s lives. The PDS model attempts to focus on developing the students’ freedoms and capabilities to learn, as well as providing the fundamental knowledge that is needed for them.

Creation of knowledge by the students is critical to the PDS philosophy. Much of PDS teaching and learning is based on constructivist thinking whereby students determine how they know what they know. Constructing knowledge takes time. Although teachers may choose to have children learn through that pedagogical method, the structure of their school may not support it. Critical literacy and power awareness must occur simultaneously. A bigger concern is whether educators know how to encourage students to create knowledge that goes beyond what they’ve experienced and internalized from society.

Desocialization. Freire (1989) talks about the necessity to know oneself in order to know the self in relation to others and to society. Although there is the tendency to focus on curricular issues because of the often painful anxiety and complexity of the process of learning about oneself, that is less than compassionate teaching. Without knowledge of the self, educators contribute to distancing and manipulating students. The PDS model, through its emphasis on building community, intimates the importance of being personally present to others or in the situations of their lives. Teaching and learning are reciprocal, therefore, there is a need for active problem solving regarding an awareness of who one is, as well as how one learns.

In the Learning Community graduate course at P.S. 3, as we dialogue about culture, the teachers are continuously asked to consider how they think about particular issues. For instance, when we discussed standardized tests and how they affected the children they taught, I asked how they would change the tests to better assess their students. Their solution was to test primarily on basic skills. The next question, then, was what did that say about their expectations for their students, despite the fact they all said that they told the children “they could be anything they wanted to be?” A poignant conversation resulted in the conflicting thoughts they carried about who they wanted to be
and how they acted in reality. The possibility to cover the critical area of the self is present through PDS; however, how the liaisons from the university and school choose to interpret the learning community standard determines whether that will occur.

Through the diversity and equity standard, PDS implies a commitment for equity on behalf of children. A commitment to action for equity on behalf of children is even more important. There is personal safety and reward in compliant teaching/leadership, but that will not ensure action to liberate and free culturally diverse students. In the Learning Community class, teachers examine aspects of the children’s lives that they feel are inequitable and are making action plans for change. One of the changes they are considering is the notion of expectations: if they believe the children can be anything they want to be, what are they, as teachers, going to do to work with the children to reach their goals?

Bilingualism and cultural understanding need to be an integral part of PDS. A deep understanding of school culture and of the children in the context of their community needs to be a critical component of pre-service teacher education (Howey, 1999). Despite the diversity and equity standard for PDS, few teacher education programs prepare students to work with children of different cultures, and rarely is there an effort to positively socialize new teachers into the culture of the students. Teachers in PDSs, as those involved in other WSR, want to help the children succeed. Yet the question arises, are the teachers’ understandings of the children and their cultures, including gender, patronizing or valuing? In the context of a learning community, one of the PDS standards, how are teachers encouraged to help others learn to collaborate with others who are different from them? At this point, that learning is not consistent, but dependent upon the university liaisons’ understandings and abilities to facilitate the development of such knowledge and action, as well as the teachers’ and administrators’ receptivity to it. Knowing about the social culture is a necessary component to promote and strengthen high academic performance learning. It is essential to critical literacy and power awareness.

Although there is a standard for diversity and equity, little emphasis is given to gender equity. There is an increased awareness of the discrimination associated with race and class, but less attention is placed on gender bias and gender preference. For PDSs to be viewed as a whole school reform that seeks to address and remediate unjust practices in schooling and ultimately in society, desocialization in the education of girls and young women cannot not be ignored.

Self-organization/Self-education. Considering the goals and standards of the Professional Development School model, the similarity is striking. Consider Shor’s (1993) list of values for critical pedagogy, which are essential to conscientization: “participatory, situated, critical, democratic, dialogic, desocialization, multicultural, research-oriented, activist, and affective” (pp.33-34). Compare those to the PDS standards: learning community, collaboration, accountability and quality assurance, diversity and equity, and structure, resources, and roles.

Viewing the goals, it is important to note from a critical pedagogy perspective, that situated, democratic, dialogic, desocialization, and affective are not specifically listed in the standards for PDS. The affective component is a criterion by which to assess the outcomes of the PDS standards. However, the other components were not addressed in the standards’ norms. The concepts of democracy and of dialogue are most important in establishing a learning community, and to accomplish collaboration, and diversity and equity. Desocialization is critical to the concept of multiculturalism and diversity and equity. Until a group is de-socialized of its prior beliefs and biases about and toward different cultures, diversity and equity will be difficult, if not impossible, to attain.

Professional Development Schools have the potential to transform society, but will have to take a hard look at their relationship to “the standards.” Both the NCATE and the National Board of Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) provide a reasonable guideline and framework by which to put the PDS model into service. However, those standards, depending upon interpretation, can become a stranglehold on the efforts to teach for social justice. How we view the learning community; collaboration, diversity and equity; accountability and quality assurance; and structures, roles, and resources will determine how socially just the PDS model is. A major concern is that context will not be taken into account in the pursuit of the standards; however, the school site is important in the interpretation and accomplishment of the goals. If site is considered, then it will be possible to argue that PDS is striving for self-organization and self-education that will change schooling and society. Through collaboration, creation and
sustenance of learning communities, shared vision, and the valuing of diversity, PDSs have the potential to institutionalize vision and imagination, sensory practice (linking schooling and life experience), and the union of diverse cultures and thought as a re-integration of education into society (Wexler, 2000).

For self-organization and self-education to become a reality, PDS will have to question and challenge the political nature of schooling, assumptions about minority cultures, and context of the curriculum. There will have to be the willingness to risk exposing the hidden agendas and the powers that control. In order to do that, those who implement the PDS model will have to know and understand themselves and be amenable to asking the hard questions of self-knowledge to others. Diversity and equity can happen only with that knowledge. Finally, and most importantly, there has to be the commitment to action. All the knowledge and dialogue in the world will not change society unless it is put into actions that seek to bring equitable access and opportunities for life experiences.

Implications and Conclusions

Implications for Social Justice Leadership and WSR

Whole school reform models are just that, models. Each has a particular thrust and design to guide a school to reform itself for the benefit of improving teaching and learning. Their success in achieving social justice, however, in large part depends on school leadership and the way in which the intent of the models is interpreted and put into practice. Some models, such as the Comer model or Coalition for Essential Schools, provide a strong foundation for positive social change by emphasizing strong connections between parents, students, educators, and the communities at large, as well as efforts to bridge the cultural gaps among those groups, in order to improve schooling for all students. Should those models achieve success, students would be educated to become citizens ready to work in a dynamic society in continuous need of change and re-evaluation of change. However, the success of those models, as the ones I studied, are dependent upon school leadership. Are the leaders asking the big questions and dealing with the complexities of interweaving and opposing values, understandings, and cultural beliefs of the different groups of people involved their schools?

As I reflect on SFA and PDS in P.S. 3, my thoughts concern the school leader and what his role was in the implementation of the reforms. Did he consider power awareness as using caring power to address questions and complexities resulting from differences; critical literacy to consciously facilitate students’ and teachers’ understanding of themselves and the cultural, racial and ethnic, economic, and religious gaps among students and school personnel, as well a between school community goals and national and state mandates; desocialization to consciously work with students and teachers to re-think ingrained and institutionalized beliefs concerning different cultures; and self-education to work with students and community to blend the needs and wants of different cultural groups and the national and state mandates for education to lead beyond what is to what can be?

The success of SFA and PDS in P.S. 3 to work toward social justice would have required much more involvement, directly and indirectly, by the school leader. He would have had to question what the children actually learned through the call and response and rote learning of SFA reading materials. Instead he satisfied himself with increased test scores as proof of learning and improved teaching, although the SFA materials are teacher proof.

When teachers initiated projects that addressed critical literacy and desocialization, there needed to be more than tacit support. He would have had to use his caring power to re-arrange schedules so innovative teachers could implement their creations through which they and their students learned about difference. Teachers involved with PDS designed projects that involved team teaching and students not in the mainstream, a regular second grade class paired with a bilingual class to learn about and from each other, and a special education teacher and art teacher who co-taught a behaviorally challenged class the four basic subject areas through art. They all received approval from the leadership, but had to plan “on the fly” because they had no common time to meet.

He would have had to take a risk to fight for a qualified bilingual teacher rather than settling for a personable teacher from Venezuela who had limited English and was assigned to teach children from Mexico who spoke no English. He would have worked with the PDS facilitator to find ways to integrate the teacher and the students into the school, rather than avoiding the bilingual room altogether.
To actively support social change, he would have encouraged the teacher to show “Roots,” not just looked away so he did not know she violated policy. He may have invited other principals to discuss the policy in light of the benefits and drawbacks it had regarding students’ learning to question who they think they are and who they really are and can be.

Collaboration with parents was having them sign a notebook that they listened to their child read each night, an SFA requirement, then keeping a tally of how many signed each week or month. Having a pizza party or spaghetti supper for parents and children once a semester had value via the opportunity for him to visit with the parents together with their child or children on an informal basis and not connected to a discipline issue. However, handing the parents a paper with upcoming events was not dialoguing with them regarding the education of their children.

Dialoguing with, not telling teachers what had already been decided was totally lacking, despite efforts by PDS facilitators to encourage this and to ask for meetings to discuss topics brought up by teachers. There were no faculty meetings other than the initial beginning-of-the-year one in which teachers were treated to a continental breakfast and two hours of requirements and expectations for the year. Information and discussion occurred much like the game, telephone. The original information or topic was much distorted because it was communicated and discussed in multiple venues in and out of the school among various individuals and groups. What resulted was not attention to multiple understandings of a topic, but polarizations of one group against another.

Because there was no dialogue, there was no way to uncover the values (Shields, 2002) of the teachers and administrators. Consequently, there was no overt understanding of where the teachers, individually and collectively, stood regarding SFA and PDS. As a PDS facilitator, the administrator gave me ten minutes at the beginning-of-the-school year meeting to explain PDS. The school leader had no follow-up other than to say that if anyone had questions s/he should see me after the meeting.

He would have to have been open to teachers’ questions about the curriculum and how they wanted to change it, rather than his telling them what the changes were for any give semester or year.

Most importantly, he needed to understand the climate outside his building. The community denigrated the students in his school; the district lines were re-drawn so that the poorest students in the community and from projects known to harbor drug dealers attended P.S. 3; all the students were primarily African American with a growing Latino population. Teachers did not volunteer to go to P.S. 3. The school itself was not visible from the street, but was accessible only from a alley-like drive. There was not community understanding of the reform models, nor was there support. He led in a vacuum except for quantifiable data, which were highlighted each year his students came in last on State standardized tests.

The above are just snippets of what a school leader would need to do in order for a school reform to address social justice issues. In essence, working with a reform model toward social justice requires more than management and efficiency or following the model protocol. The reform model is only as good as its leader and those who choose to follow him/her. A school leader must want to work with and in a community of difference, understanding that the dynamic nature will require constant work to maintain a positive tension. A leader must want to collaborate with teachers, parents, and community members, knowing that the process is often messy and contentious. For a community of difference to thrive, dialogue is necessary, although time-consuming. Efficiency may, therefore, be sacrificed. A school leader desiring social change as an outcome of a reform model needs to know him/herself in order to open dialogue with others to facilitate their self-growth. Ultimately, a school leader needs to see whole school reform as a microcosm of the larger society, that is, to understand that reforming teaching and learning is the beginning of social change.

Conclusion

When I began this paper, my intent was to examine the success of whole school reform and two models, specifically, in terms of addressing social justice issues through schools. I end this paper realizing that WSR are only new and, maybe, improved tools for school leaders to use in working for positive social change, that is, successful living within
communities of difference. The values and beliefs of the leader (who may be in an informal leadership position) are critical to the achievement of social justice. Most of all, school leaders must view their position of influence out of the school as well as inside it; s/he has to acknowledge and act on the biases and prejudices from without.

I believe that of primary importance is the consideration of the “continuing impact of social structure on our lives” (Wexler, 2000, p.10) and the “determinative power of organized social life, social structure, and technology to affect not only meaning and identity, but also the conditions of experience and, perhaps most importantly, to set the terms for opposing, transforming, and transcending the social present” (Wexler, 2000, p.11). School reformers who work toward social justice will have to be cognizant and vigilant in working within situated life experiences, within the externalities of schooling, in order to strive for change that is transformative. Unquestionably, attention needs to be paid to social injustices; however, “while educational leaders have to work towards social justice by rooting out discriminatory patterns and practices which represent prejudice and scientism, we have to attack the core of the problem which is anchored in our culture and the attendant mythologies which define and support them” (English, 2005, p.56). And, as important, we must “remain constantly aware of the ways in which new modes of resistance and self-understanding run the danger of re-instating, in some way, aspects of that against which they have been struggling” (Grimshaw, 1993, p.59).

**Endnotes**

1Mintrom’s notion of communitarian benefits stems from his discussion of exchange perspectives on democratic governance. Because businesses, professional associations, unions, and political interest groups control a great deal of political clout, there is the assumption “that interests and resources are fixed and, hence, exogenous to the political process” (p.618). Mintrom disputes that theory citing as potential communitarian benefits the shaping and results of policy debates through dialogue and exchange among politicians, scholars, and others from a wide variety of paradigms and perspectives. Additionally, other benefits as they pertain to the goals of WSR would include collective problem-solving and decision making that has the potential to lead to respect for how decisions are made and for the participants, themselves; educational policy based on and supporting democratic practices, leading to more student behavior influenced by democratic tradition and the greater the likelihood of students and adults engaging in the customs and procedures of democracy; mutual respect for self and others by working through differences using dialogue; and education that is nondiscriminatory, nor is oppressive.

2I use critical school leader or leadership interchangeably with social justice leader or leadership, as I believe they share the same qualities.

3The following is a summary of my beliefs regarding caring for a collective using caring power. For an extensive discussion of the connections between caring and power, see Sernak, K. (1998), School Leadership: Balancing Power with Caring, Chapters 9 and 10.

4As a result of the court case, Abbott v. Burke, economically disadvantaged school districts, as determined by the State, receive increased state funding in the attempt to equalize the education for children in poor districts with those in moderate to wealthy ones.

5Taken from an administration student intern’s conclusion of a study of SFA in her elementary school, 2001-2002.

6Teachers in New Jersey are required to have 100 hours of professional development beyond their B.A.

7The SFA program provides for regular monitoring, during which time SFA trainers spend a day in the school to observe classes and to make sure the teachers are following the script. If there were deviations from it, the school would receive a lower rating, which was reported to the Central Administration. It was common knowledge that when the teachers knew the monitors were coming they prepared their lessons to follow the script exactly, which many of the more skilled teachers rarely did.

**References**


**Brief Biography**

Kathleen Sernak is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ. She teaches educational leadership, urban leadership, policy, and ethics to doctoral students. Her research and publishing are in the areas of ethics, particularly an ethic of care, issues of social justice, and democratic and ethical leadership. Prior to Rowan, she was at Purdue University and Mount Marty College.

E-Mail:  ksernak@comcast.net