

Sustaining Partnerships for School Improvement

**Center for School Improvement
Chicago 2008**

**Saul Rubinstein
Rutgers University**



A Union of Professionals



Partnership Research

- Joint Research effort between Rutgers, MIT and Harvard
- Colleagues Susan Eaton, Tom Kochan, Bob McKersie
- 50 US Partnerships over past 2 Decades
- Healthcare, Steel, Automotive, Defense, Telecommunications, Airlines, Papermaking, Pharmaceuticals, Higher Education, Aerospace, Public Sector including Education



Post-Industrial Model of Work Organization

- Expanded Opportunities for Voice, Discretion, Decision Making, Communication, Participation & Representation
- Shared Rewards
- Group vs. Individual Focus
- Competing on Flexibility & Responsiveness
- Focus on Quality/Solutions
- Creation of “Learning” Organizations
- Knowledge as a Critical Asset
- Team-based Structures



New Skill Needs

- Increase in need for Higher Level Skills
- Knowledge-based Work
- Non-routine Cognitive Skills
- Abstract Reasoning
- Right-Brain – Synthesis, Integration, Boundary Spanning
- Problem Solving
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Continuous Education and Training
- Learning to Learn



Impact on the Educational System and the Union

- Pressure from accountability systems to improve performance.
- Survey results show members want the union to help them do their work better.
- Majority of US Workers feel Representation & Participation Gap (Freeman & Rogers).
- The union cannot represent professional employees without addressing the quality and work of the institution.



Creating Successful Partnerships

- Crisis
- Extraordinary Leadership
- Quest for Quality of Schools and Profession
- Balancing Managerial Decision Making with Representation
- New Roles for Union Leaders
- Training – Problem Solving, Decision Making, Managerial Processes, Finance, Planning, Quality, Meeting Leadership, IBB
- Use of Internal and External Facilitators – CSI Technical Assistance & Training
- Enabling Language: Top-Down vs Bottom-Up



Sustaining Partnerships

- Building Dense Communications Networks – Vertical and Horizontal
- Collaborative Structures at all Org Levels
- Confronting and Overcoming Pivotal Events – Dual Track, Mixed Motive (Walton & McKersie)
- Maintaining Tension between Collaborative Work (Integrative) & Conflictual (Distributive)
- Creating Joint Gains - Performance & Quality
- Training & Skill Development - Capacity
- Leadership – Union and Management
- Strategic Alignment – Improvement Planning around Schools, Teaching and Learning
- Manage Across Boundaries
- Institutionalize



Obstacles to Partnership Success

- Decision Making – Pseudo, Partial, Full (Pateman)
- Resistance - Middle Management & Stewards
- Lack of Alignment Between Partnership & Strategic Objectives of the Organization
- Failure to Balance Representation with Managing the System
- Lack of Capacity for Sophisticated Partnering at 3 Levels – Workplace, CB, & Strategic
- Focus on HR vs. Operations
- Unsuccessful Leadership Transition
- Economic Decline
- Tension – Confidentiality and Rep Democracy



Implications for Local Unions

- Balance Traditional Roles with Governance
- Flexible, Responsive, Quality Organizations
- Joint Governance and Co-Management
Source of Union Power for Membership
- Increased Power and Influence at Strategic and Operating Levels
- Management as Task not Class of Employee
- Expanded Leadership Abilities and Organizational Capacities



Implications for Locals *(continued)*

- Strategic Focus on Education Reform
- Rethinking Local Structures
- Reorganizing Resources around Multiple Roles
- Acquiring New Skills – Technical, Strategic, Process
- Balance Managing System with Representing Members
- Political Skills – Local, National, Community
- Capability to Cross Boundaries – District, National Union, Community, Employers
- Institutionalization – Contract, Board, Way of Operating, Structure, Improvement Planning