in the importance of minority students having the ability to write and communicate clearly, she saw a need to improve students’ writing at Hillside. To accomplish this goal, she created a routine to ensure that teachers were spending sufficient time on writing in the classroom and to follow students’ progress. Although Mrs. Nelson’s actions were critical, like the other routines and tools highlighted in this chapter, this leadership practice at Hillside took shape in the interactions between herself, teachers, students, and tools.

The case of Hillside illuminates how school leaders can move beyond the managerial imperative and establish tighter links between school leadership and management practice and classroom practice. By designing organizational routines and appropriating various tools, Mrs. Nelson helped develop leadership and management practice for improving classroom instruction at Hillside. Serving as boundary practices, organizational routines were an efficient means of linking the principal’s office with many classrooms on a regular basis.

Systems of Practice and Professional Community: The Adams Case

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Principal Therese Williams began her principalship in 1989 in a troubled school. Adams School, an urban, public, 1,200-student, K–8 school, ranked among the lowest performing Chicago public schools in student achievement. Adams faculty members, spread across three aging brick buildings, were dominated by social cliques and were unaccustomed to talking about instruction. The declining socioeconomic status of the community contributed to falling expectations about student learning at the school. Dr. Williams was unsure about where to start, but after 10 years of determined effort, she and her leadership team had begun to turn the student-learning story around. When asked about how the change happened, Dr. Williams replied:

We set the expectation that our school will make progress, and we try to provide the structure, the professional development, the monitoring of instructional program, so that we can reach our goals. We expect to meet our goals, and we set goals that we expect to meet, and excellence has been the standard. We don’t accept mediocrity. As an instructional leader here, I would not be comfortable, I would not be satisfied, if our school did not make continual progress. If we don’t make the progress we expect to make over a given time, then we are looking at answers and at issues that would probably help us

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to improve. So we don't just sit back with the status quo and say, "That's okay, the staff is happy, the kids are happy." Well I'm not happy, because we are not making progress.

Our research at Adams showed that these expectations not only were shared by the leaders and teachers, but also were "built in" to the school in the form of a powerful professional community among the staff. Dr. Williams stated, "It was only when teachers began to talk with one another about their teaching that the test scores started to rise." Professional community is widely recognized as a valuable quality of schools (Lee & Smith, 1996; Little, 1982; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). A professional community is shaped around the goals that define teachers as members of a profession dedicated to promoting student learning (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2000). Professional communities develop internal practices and expectations to coordinate the nonroutine nature of teaching practice through self-regulation and the development of information feedback systems (Argyris, 1990; Huberman, 1995; Little & Bird, 1987; Louis, Kruse, & Bryk, 1995). In professional communities, teachers have opportunities to break down the isolation of classrooms in collaborative, problem-setting, and problem-solving activities with colleagues (Halverson, 2002; Hargreaves, 1994; Huberman, 1995; Miller, Lord, & Dorney, 1999; Rosenholtz, 1989b). These activities could include collaborative curriculum design, instructional evaluation, interdisciplinary teaming and curriculum development, textbook and course material review, or school improvement planning (Bryk, Bhring, Kerbow, Rollow, & Easton, 1996). Networks of such activities help to create and sustain the conditions for strong professional communities in schools.

A Consortium on Chicago School Research (1998) report indicated that the component aspects of professional community improved over the years of Dr. Williams's tenure at Adams. By the late 1990s, the Adams community scored high on measures such as a shared focus on student learning, peer collaboration among teachers and leaders, public classroom practices, reflective dialogue among teachers, willingness for teachers to engage in innovation, and schoolwide support for change.

While I knew that a change took place to transform the Adams community, I began my study uncertain of what was responsible for the change. Strong leadership, a determined effort by some faculty, external resources and high-stakes accountability all seemed to have played their part. In my effort to understand the practice responsible for the Adams transformation, I turned to the distributed leadership framework to identify the tools, structures, and organizational routines the Adams staff developed and used. This chapter emphasizes the situational distribution of leadership framework to trace how Dr. Williams and her staff developed and linked a series of programs, or artifacts, to reshape the local professional culture to improve student learning. The term artifact is used here to describe the programs, policies, or procedures leaders use to influence the practice of others. If artifacts, such as faculty meeting agendas, academic calendars, or professional development plans, are effectively designed and shepherded by leaders in schools, they can give rise to new routines of practice that can reshape the professional culture of a school. Artifacts, then, are the primary tools school leaders use to shape new practices. One mark of successful artifact implementation is the emergence of new organizational routines that can become powerful constituents of a school culture (Halverson, 2004).

Here I will consider how Adams leaders used artifacts to establish powerful organizational routines that reshaped professional discourse at Adams, resulting in the strong sense of professional community that school leaders credited with the improvements in student learning (Halverson, 2002, 2004). The chapter will focus on the development, use, and networking of three key organizational routines: Breakfast Club, a faculty discussion forum; the Five-Week Assessment, a schoolwide formative assessment routine; and the School Improvement Plan, a districtwide annual planning process. Adams staff used these organizational routines to create multiple opportunities for interaction around the key instructional issues of the school. These interactions, over time, helped to create the trust necessary for a powerful professional community focused specifically on literacy instruction in the early grades. Here I tell the story of how these routines came to establish a powerful "system of practice" (Halverson, 2004) that created the capacity necessary for improving student learning.

ADAMS SCHOOL

The Adams School had a long history of service to its neighborhood. An all-White school in the mid-1950s, by 1990 the school consisted entirely of African American students. The academic quality of the school and the socioeconomic status of the students had declined during this demographic transition. By the early 1990s, the local press labeled Adams as one of the 10 poorest and poorest performing, schools in the city. In terms of the local standardized tests, 78% of students were below national norms in math, and only 15% of students could read at the national norm. After 10 years, Principal Therese Williams and her staff had, by 2000, increased the proportion of students testing at or above the national norms from 22% to 50% in math and from 15% to 33% in reading comprehension on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). These improvements occurred in the face of annual student mobility rates of 30–40% and a 97% low-income
new ideas in their classrooms and, more important, give and receive critical feedback as a staff in order for the instructional changes to take hold. Dr. Williams and her staff began to realize that a strong professional community based on instruction was a necessary condition for using research-driven practices well.

The development of professional community at Adams provides an interesting story of how leaders use artifacts to create new organizational routines. In the initial years of her tenure, Dr. Williams struggled to bring together faculty cliques that fragmented instructional discussions in the school. Several staff members decided to retire or transfer when Dr. Williams arrived. However, Dr. Williams recognized that staff changes were not the answer for improving student learning.

You can’t go in with the idea that you have to get rid of everybody, because you are going to bring in the same kind of problems that are out there. The key is if you have a group of committed people, try to work with them and arm them with the knowledge that they need to become professionals, and I think that is what we try to do also.

To initiate staff interaction, Dr. Williams created frequent school-sponsored opportunities for faculty to interact with one another across peer groups and developed a system of organizational routines that helped teachers interact around instructional issues. Once staff grew accustomed to these interactions, Dr. Williams began to focus discussions around the chronic issues of instruction in the school.

**BREAKFAST CLUB**

Breakfast Club became the cornerstone organizational routine for the emergent professional community at Adams. Principal Williams and Gwen Tracy, the Adams language arts coordinator, designed the Breakfast Club in 1995 as an opportunity for teachers to discuss research relevant to current instructional initiatives and practices among pre-K–3 language arts teachers. High-stakes district accountability measures had pressured the Adams staff to develop more effective professional training. After several years of mixed results with external interventions to teach best practices, Dr. Williams and her staff began to revise their assumptions about quality professional development. Dr. Williams noted, “We began to believe in the importance of professional community when we realized that, it wasn’t taking classes, but that it was when teachers started talking about their teaching that the scores started improving.”

student population. While these gains might look modest by comparison with current NCLB-fueled test score gains, in 2000 these improvements were enough to propel principal Therese Williams and her staff into prominent roles within the district as highly regarded experts on turning around low-performing schools.

The path from leadership to results is often difficult to trace. The Adams staff and school culture underwent a significant change during Dr. Williams’s tenure—but which features made the difference in improving student learning? Initially, Dr. Williams felt that integrating research-proven curricula, teaching, and assessment techniques in everyday classroom practice would make the difference. As she explained, “There was a time when we were working very hard, but not working very smart... we were not using research to inform our practice, we just kept on reinventing the wheel.” Dr. Williams soon found that sharing the research was insufficient to make change. Reinventing the wheel, ironically, turned out to be valuable work because the process of reading and acting together helped to create a strong professional community. Through structured opportunities to review and reflect on research and practice, teachers had to become willing to try out...
Breakfast Club involved monthly meetings in which a teacher led a discussion, before the school day began, about a piece of research, usually concerning reading or writing instruction, with groups of pre-K–3 teachers and administrators. During the years 1998–2001, there were an average of eight Breakfast Club meetings per year, with an average of 14 of the 18 pre-K–3 faculty and staff members in attendance. Principal Williams attended about three-quarters of the Breakfast Club meetings during this period. Hard-learned experience about the perils of imposed professional development opportunities prompted Dr. Williams and Ms. Tracy to build the following features into the Breakfast Club routine:

- The program should not be mandatory, to avoid the stultifying atmosphere of many faculty meetings.
- The substance of the discussions themselves should sell the program—if valued information was exchanged at the meeting, word would get around and people would want to come.
- Meetings should take place in the mornings, so that teachers would be fresh and ready to entertain new ideas.
- Readings should be kept short, so that teachers would have a greater chance of viewing them before coming to the session.
- Teachers should be able to select the readings and lead the discussions.

Dr. Williams thought that a hot breakfast, paid for from her own pocket, would indicate clearly to faculty members that she was willing to sacrifice to get the program off the ground.

Sample Breakfast Club topics from the 1998–2000 school years included a review of a multiple-methods approach to language arts instruction, a conversation about the value and viability of learning centers in primary classrooms, discussions of the components of an ideal language arts classroom, and presentations on how various components of a new schoolwide language arts initiative worked out in teachers’ classrooms. The conversations and interactions that started during Breakfast Club have become a significant organizing framework for the kinds of practice that characterize the local professional community. As one first-grade teacher commented after 4 years of participating in Breakfast Club:

We have had it for such a long time that we think it has always been this way, but it hasn’t been. It probably started when we started respecting each other and the work that we were doing. . . . Once we started [Breakfast Club] with Ms. Tracy, that was the catalyst. Because teachers presented on different topics, and it’s very profes-

sional. Our presentations that we put together . . . I mean, not all of them, are better than the ones you go out and pay for.

Although Breakfast Club began as an opportunity for teachers to talk about research and practice, it subsequently evolved into a more complex organizational routine to support teachers’ brainstorming, experimentation, and design of curricular initiatives.

**Breakfast Club and Professional Community**

Dr. Williams and Ms. Tracy originally designed Breakfast Club to involve faculty in discussions of relevant instructional research. However, over time, increased staff participation in Breakfast Club helped to create some of the key characteristics of professional community at Adams, including the establishment of teacher collaboration and curriculum design as cornerstones of the professional development program, the privatization of practice, the cultivation and use of in-house expertise among faculty and staff, and the creation of a sense of ownership among staff about the instructional program.

Breakfast Club represented both a change in degree and a change in kind for prior professional development at Adams. Many externally designed professional development efforts, intended to bring new ideas into the school, were perceived as too intermittent and variable in quality to provide much long-lasting impact on student achievement scores. As one teacher described:

A lot of times people come in with a set program, . . . but it did not really help us. It got teachers involved in knowing that you have to use [for example] manipulatives and knowing that quantitatively you could add something to your curriculum. It was fun, and we did it for a while, but it did not help us.

Early in her tenure, Principal Williams organized curriculum review teams, first within grade levels (1990–91) and then across grade levels (1992–93), to get teachers talking about the school’s instructional program. Breakfast Club built on and focused this history of teacher collaboration into a routine that supported regular staff discussion of new instructional ideas in relation to current instructional practices within the school. The Breakfast Club routine created systemic opportunities for teachers to reflect on their instructional practices in light of new ideas. Breakfast Club changed the way Adams leaders and teachers thought about professional development in the school; it framed the interactions among teachers and leaders about teacher development differently. Specifically, Breakfast Club encouraged attention to both insider and outsider knowledge. Further, Breakfast Club avoided casting
teachers exclusively as learners and afforded them an active, creative position in their own professional development.

The Breakfast Club discussions also helped to deprivatize practice and create in-house instructional expertise. While initial meetings provided opportunities for interested teachers to become familiar with and discuss new ideas, in later meetings teachers reported on their efforts to try out these ideas in their classrooms. Creating a loop within the teacher community, from discussing to experimenting and reporting on their experience with new ideas, helped to create a system of reflective practice in the school. This was particularly true of the teachers who initially took leadership roles in the discussion and experimentation with new language arts ideas and techniques. The reflective loop created by the implementation of Breakfast Club encouraged many teachers to openly discuss language arts instruction with one another. As one teacher articulated:

Before this, I might have been too nervous to do this [present about my teaching]. But now, when I get in front of the classroom ... it didn't bother me anymore. Throughout the years, it really makes a difference. Because when you are presenting, when you are talking about that article with your colleagues and they are all accepting you, you realize that this isn't such a bad thing. Before that, when you are closing your doors and nobody is saying anything—you just did your good job and closed your door.

Deprivatizing practice allowed teachers and school leaders to recognize and exploit the considerable local instructional expertise in the design of subsequent professional development opportunities. For example, spin-off routines such as Teacher Leader (established in 1998) provided a half-day professional development meeting to allow teachers to conduct workshops about the ideas developed and shared during Breakfast Club, while Teacher Talk (established in 1997) applied the format of Breakfast Club to the grade 6–8 faculty meetings. The cultivation of in-house expertise, through Breakfast Club and other initiatives, was an important source for developing internal leadership opportunities for teachers within the school. Dr. Williams helped develop organizational routines like Breakfast Club, in part, to provide avenues for fostering both local leadership and instructional expertise, thus helping to enrich the human capital available for subsequent problem-solving opportunities.

A sample Breakfast Club meeting illustrates faculty and staff interaction. During this meeting, a first-grade teacher led a discussion on how to use learning centers to engage some students while others receive instruction directly from the teacher. The tone of the discussion was collegial, with lots of laughter and side conversations as teachers talked with one another about the value of learning centers. The discussion leader commented, "You can't teach the class as a whole. A method won't work if some can read and others are working on the alphabet. ... I can't be in two places at one time." A younger teacher expressed her struggle with how to organize a classroom into separate learning areas. Several of the veteran teachers spoke from their experience about developing learning centers. One teacher commented that teachers had to train the students to work separately in learning centers. She explained, "You have to train [the students] to use the learning centers. ... You can't do it in the first month of school. It may take 3 to 4 months, but eventually you can send them off." The discussion leader commented that her experience had helped her simplify the process, and she wondered, "Am I getting lazy or am I getting smart?" In previous years she had developed control systems and lots of instructions, forms, and files that generated a lot of paperwork. Now, she was able use a simple system that worked for her. The discussion leader agreed and added, "We as adults have trouble learning to cooperate." Principal Williams quietly observed the discussion and made a point of agreeing with the discussion leader's point that "we should have a half day where we can learn what we are doing in each other's classrooms."

Breakfast Club served as an organizational routine for developing a shared sense of an instructional vision for the school. Instead of mandating a direction for the language arts program, Dr. Williams and Ms. Tracy used Breakfast Club to allow for the collaborative consideration of and experimentation with alternative programs. As teachers explored and reflected upon alternative practices, they came to realize how the proposed practices might remedy the shortcomings of the existing instructional program. In 1999, after several years of discussion and experimentation, the teachers and school leaders selected Pat Cunningham's Four Blocks of Literacy (see Cunningham, Hall, & Defee, 1998) for the cornerstone of their new language arts program. Breakfast Club served as a foundation for teachers to come together on the needs and merits of instructional initiatives, and it provided a structure to support inquiry and collaborative design. The value of Breakfast Club as a forum for reflection on practice was evident as the school community reflected upon its experiences for the purpose of supplementing the initial Four Blocks program. Breakfast Club provided a legitimate, ongoing forum to discuss and yet proposed directions for the instructional program, helping to continually test and revamp the plan for language arts instruction in the school.

**FIVE-WEEK ASSESSMENT**

The Adams leaders developed Breakfast Club to create an organizational routine for incorporating research into faculty discussions. The successful establishment of Breakfast Club gave rise to a new question: How could
Adams teachers see whether the new practices discussed at Breakfast Club worked in their classrooms? The Five-Week Assessment routine was designed to provide meaningful formative data to teachers and leaders about whether the program initiatives discussed in Breakfast Club improved student achievement on district standardized tests. The culture of professional community and collaborative design, resulting in part from innovations such as Breakfast Club, led Adams school leaders to frame the problem of reshaping the school instructional program in terms of collaborative artifact development—the design and continual redesign of routines and tools to enable instructional improvement.

The Five-Week Assessment offers insight into how the Adams community drew on the capacity developed through Breakfast Club to meet the demands of standardized testing. Faculty discussions of curricular interventions, combined with high-stakes testing expectations, helped create a collective need for a new assessment artifact.

We realized that the [state] tests themselves didn’t give us much information about what we could do to improve our scores—mainly because we received the results well after we could do anything about it. We thought about a more frequent assessment program, say every 5 weeks, that would help us tell where the children were.

The Five-Week Assessment routine design began as an effort to retrofit the specific, learning-outcome demands of the standardized test, particularly in language arts, to the school curriculum. Prior collaborative design efforts suggested that this effort too should provide an occasion for staff collaboration. In 1998, Ms. Tracy and a team of teachers met to design the Five-Week Assessment by undertaking an item analysis of the ITBS exam, focusing on reading comprehension. The design team drew on its experience with reading assessments to assemble a suite of tools teachers could use for a schoolwide assessment of student reading progress. Every 5 weeks, teachers throughout the school conducted the resulting 1-2 hour assessment with their students. The design team collected and graded the assessments, and then discussed the results to plan intervention strategies for underperforming classrooms. The team also developed a plan to move the assessments from reading to other subject areas over subsequent years. Initially designed to prepare students for the ITBS exam, the assessment program shifted toward testing children for the kinds of narrative, expository, and persuasive writing, and open-ended questions required by the new forms of testing developed by the state. Each year, Ms. Tracy presented a monthly schedule for the schoolwide Five-Week Assessments. By 2001, the Five-Week Assessment had become a widely used and discussed diagnostic tool as teachers and leaders anticipated student achievement scores and analyzed their data, through artifacts such as Breakfast Club and Teacher Leader, to shape the existing instructional program and for teachers to check schoolwide student progress.

Five-Week Assessment and Professional Community

While high-stakes accountability policies can provide an occasion to share feedback about the effectiveness of the instructional program, they also can serve to threaten professional community in a school. School leaders who use accountability systems to pit teachers, grade levels, and schools against one another can erode the sense of trust, resulting in a further insulation of practice (see discussion in Chapter 5). At Adams, school leaders realized that using test scores at the classroom level could create competition and resentment among teachers and discourage the formation of professional community. The language arts coordinator commented on the need for grade-level reporting of scores to turn accountability data into a positive force.

I think ... when the [standardized test] was first started it did something very interesting that almost forced us to work as a team. ... [Reporting at the classroom level led us to think] this one teacher over here could be a shining star, but if the other two or three were not getting the same kinds of results then that one teacher didn't look good anymore because my score was not enough to pull up the entire grade level. So, if I want my grade level to get a good score, then I need to help these other teachers pull up to where I am.

The Five-Week Assessment routine helped to mitigate the summative effect of standardized test scores by providing intermittent benchmarks to gauge the projected results. Although the results of the Five-Week Assessment did not accurately predict the standardized test results at first, over time, as the curriculum became more aligned with the assessments, the Five-Week Assessment proved an effective means to point out teachers who were doing particularly well, and served as a warning flag for problem classrooms. For example, in 2000, the Five-Week Assessment revealed that fifth-grade students in a particular classroom were falling behind in science. One teacher commented, “Looking at the Five-Week Assessment saved our butts because we could focus in on helping the students learn the science content they needed to do well on the test.” In this case, teachers worked to enhance the existing language arts program with more science-related readings in order to supplement the existing science program. Here, the Five-Week Assessment sounded an alarm to bring Adams resources to bear in addressing instructional issues before they emerged as accountability problems.
While professional community can emerge from the expression and sharing of common interests around instruction, the long-term viability of professional community may well depend on the development of feedback systems to provide information about how collaboratively designed initiatives are working. The Five-Week Assessment routine deepened the professional community by bringing the resources of the community to bear on emergent instructional issues.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

Unlike Breakfast Club or the Five-Week Assessment, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) was introduced to Adams as a districtwide routine. In many schools, such district-designed instructional planning routines can serve as mandated hoops through which school leaders must jump, completed for the sake of compliance and never consulted until the next round of submission is due, leaving core instructional practices untouched. However, savvy leaders can use routines such as the SIP as opportunities to both satisfy district requirements and create organizational routines that facilitate collective reflection that is shared across the instructional program.

Adams school leaders took the SIP as an opportunity to extend the collaborative design routines established in Breakfast Club and the Five-Week Assessment to develop a comprehensive grasp of the school instructional program. The district-developed SIP routine provided a series of forms and suggested activities designed to help school leaders coordinate budgetary and instructional priorities with the Local School Councils, a school-based decision-making body, and the central office. School improvement planning is intertwined with many of the organizational routines at Adams, reaching back to the arrival of Principal Williams at Adams in the late 1980s. She reported that instructional planning was one of her initial tasks.

We began school improvement immediately. I believe it was 1988 when the first legislation passed that created School Improvement Plan, and we started from the beginning having everybody who wanted to be involved, involved.

Instructional planning, for Dr. Williams, was a way to get faculty and staff involved in conversations around instruction and its improvement. By the late 1990s, the SIP had come to serve as an umbrella routine to structure school professional development and planning. Each fall, Dr. Williams opened the school year with a review of the student achievement goals as specified in the current SIP. She used the preservice meeting to relate school goals to district goals ("We are not alone. . . . There is a systemwide emphasis on reading instruction.") and displayed an impressive grasp of the details of the Adams instructional plan. For example, in 1999–2000, Dr. Williams described how teachers needed to recommit to teaching phonemic awareness.

Without direct instructional support, phonemic awareness eludes 25% of in-class first graders . . . imagine the effects it had for our children. As we learned through several Breakfast Club discussions last year, the literature is clear—we can't superficially teach the basics; we must be clear that all students have a firm background.

During the fall semester, teachers participated in the inservice programs through routines such as Breakfast Club, and leaders accessed the progress of instructional innovations through the Five-Week Assessment. During the spring semester, the community revisited the SIP goals and outlined a new plan, during a series of formal meetings, that made up the school improvement routine. In March, specific subject-matter meetings were called to hammer out program priorities and student achievement goals for the upcoming school year. Thus, the final plan submitted in May to satisfy district requirements reflected a school-level adaptation of the SIP routine to cultivate the local development of professional community.

A 2000 SIP meeting on math instruction illustrated how the Adams collaborative-planning process worked. Language arts coordinator Gwen Tracy took the lead by instructing teachers to review the 1999–2000 math plan. After about 5 minutes of buzzing conversation, a first-grade teacher began a discussion of the adequacy of the current textbook series. Ms. Tracy later explained:

The teachers have to own the meeting process because the SIP depends upon their commitment to the changes we propose. . . . If the teachers don't take charge, the meetings don't work. . . . There were a couple of times during the meeting today where [first-grade teacher Mrs.] Brown looked over at me [for some help at getting the meeting going].

Ms. Tracy related that after many of the early SIP meetings, people would come up to her and request programs or resources they wanted but had not brought up at the meeting. She noted:

At first, the teachers didn't see it this way; then they realized that all of the resources are passed out through the SIP. If they weren't involved in the process, they didn't get any of the resources.
As the math discussion unfolded, the five members of the Math Team (teachers from grades 1, 3, 5, 6, and 8) coordinated the brainstorming session. One Math Team member noted, “We need to work on the more open-ended, problem-solving aspect of math in anticipation of the new accountability challenges proposed by the ISAT.” The eighth-grade Math Team member added, “Next year’s text book has a lot of practice with open-ended questions. . . . The middle school lessons will have an open-ended question every day . . . consistent with the NCTM standards.” Teachers’ perceptions seemed to be that while the TBS focused more on testing skills, the new ISAT would focus more on problem-setting and problem-solving issues. The Math Team recognized that the current instructional program was well tailored to the math problems of the TBS, but was not as well suited to the ISAT.

The meeting served as an opportunity to review previous SIP math plans with respect to other program initiatives. One teacher proposed that the Five-Week Assessment routine in math be expanded to provide the information generated by the language arts assessments: “I think we should make the assessments similar to how they are planned for language arts. I would like to see us plan for the testing in math the same way.” This lack of coordination between math and language arts pointed to how the school had chosen to allocate subject-matter organizational resources. Ms. Tracy’s role in coordinating the Five-Week Assessment in language arts had no analogue in math—the math exams were developed and conducted by full-time teachers and apparently had not received the same attention and review as the language arts exams. This lack of resources was now being felt as teachers faced the new instructional demands of the ISAT. As one teacher commented, “When you look at last year’s ISATs, [you can see] what we are doing now [for the Five-Week Assessments] is not working.”

This SIP review and design meeting provided a glimpse into the collaborative design practices at Adams. The meetings were held to provide faculty with an opportunity to shape the school instructional program. The design meetings relied on considerable resources in developing solutions. Prior experiences with the Five-Week Assessment routine, Breakfast Club, and collaborative program design meant that teachers and administrators could focus on program refinement rather than novel redesign; experience with group collaboration practice meant that much of the process simply could be assumed so that participants could focus on how programs could be coordinated into a coherent instructional program rather than on the process of collaboration. As one school leader noted:

Most of the programs we bring up in the SIP are seeded discussions over lunch and at grade-level meetings. For example, we talked about the Four Blocks program a full year before we introduced it into the SIP. [One first-grade] teacher who reads a lot presented the basic ideas of the Four Blocks at a Breakfast Club, and there were several Teacher Leader meetings about the Four Blocks program. I know that the program was discussed at grade-level meetings. By the time we talked about putting it into the SIP, everyone was on board.

The School Improvement Plan itself was a district-designed routine that afforded certain forms of school-level planning, coordination with student achievement outcomes, and discretion over resource allocation. In the hands of Adams school leaders, the SIP became an occasion for collaborative design of the school instructional program, and while this practice was not new to the Adams community, the SIP process created a powerful and legitimate routine for school leaders to deepen and extend the collaborative practices that already existed in the school.

The School Improvement Plan and Professional Community

Collaborative inquiry and design are the keys for how the SIP routine established a practice that extended professional community at Adams. While the SIP was itself the outcome of a collaborative design effort, it also served as an “umbrella” routine to coordinate specific instructional planning opportunities throughout the year and as a tool to focus instructional leadership practice across various organizational routines. As an organizing routine, the SIP worked as a powerful hub for focusing professional community in the school.

The SIP provided an ongoing, organizing occasion for collaborative design and assessment of the instructional program rather than an isolated task to be completed and shelved. Comprehensive instructional planning, for Dr. Williams and her co-leaders, was a way to get faculty and staff involved in conversations around instruction. The SIP played a central role in organizing multiple collaborative efforts. As described by one school leader, “Everything is tied into the SIP somehow. That’s what gives it credibility in the school.” Early on, when the SIP meetings were poorly attended, people would complain about not having the resources to get good work done, and the administrators would reply that the teachers needed to come to the meetings to plan for the things they wanted. “The budget, and the initiatives are all tied in. If you want to participate, you have to come early and stay late [at these meetings].”

Adams leaders set the problem of school improvement planning as a school-level process that addressed the key instructional goals of the school and customized those goals to satisfy the requirements of the SIP. The local emphasis on planning also helped focus the shared instructional vision in the
school. The annual Adams collaborative development cycle of the SIP helped ensure that the community at large was involved in both understanding and reviewing the instructional mission of the school.

**SYSTEMS OF PRACTICE AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY**

Although the value of professional community in schools is widely recognized, knowledge about how to create and sustain professional communities is not as widely understood. Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth's (2000) experience with developing professional community in a high school led them to comment:

> We have little sense of how teachers forge the bonds of community, struggle to maintain them, work through the inevitable conflicts of social relationships, and form structures for social relationships over time. Without such understanding, we have little to guide us as we create community. (p. 6)

We do have some understanding, however, of what leaders do in schools with strong professional communities. Louis, Kruse, and Bryk (1995) conclude that the most important task for school leaders is to create meaningful opportunities for teachers across the school to work together on pressing issues of common interest. Other key behaviors include being physically present in the school, creating networks of conversation among faculty, making resources available to support individual teacher development, building bridges and networks to practice and knowledge outside the local school, and fostering a school community in which instruction is viewed as problematic.

In many cases, these behaviors both lead to and require structural supports for successful results. Making successful leadership practice accessible means, in part, creating representations of practice that go beyond how leaders create structures to get at how these structures "hang together" in practice. If we assume that professional community is an effect of how these behaviors together shape a school culture, then we are faced with the need to develop both conceptual tools and practical examples that simultaneously demonstrate how behaviors support one another and how aspiring leaders can fashion similar systems in their schools. The knowledge garnered needs to integrate what is known about the what of professional community with frameworks to show how networks of practice can be developed to support such practices.

A distributed perspective on leadership helps to identify and understand the practice that establish the conditions of professional community in schools. A distributed perspective defines instructional leadership as the establishment and maintenance of the conditions for improving teaching and learning in schools. Taking a distributed leadership perspective means focusing on leadership practice and the tasks that make up this practice. These tasks are distributed across two primary dimensions in schools: the social distribution and the situational distribution. The social distribution refers to the network of people engaged in leadership tasks, while the situational distribution refers to those aspects of the situation that frame the interactions among these people, and concerns how activities are enabled and constrained by the context within which people work (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001).

The Adams case suggests that professional community is an outcome of certain configurations of social networks in a school. Leaders influence the development of social networks not only through direct participation, but also indirectly through the design and implementation of organizational routines. Breakfast Club, for example, was a routine designed to allow for faculty interaction around literacy research. When taken together, the routines at a given school compose a system of practice that coordinates the practice of the school's instructional program. A system of practice describes how the local network of routines and tools facilitates the flow of the instructional practices of the school. Teachers and school leaders not only work within the constraints of the network of routines in their given situation, but think about the limits and possibilities of their practice in terms of this network. Changing the range of available instructional artifacts not only changes the context of learning, but also can influence the ways that teachers understand learning in their classrooms. At Adams, the Five-Week Assessment is best seen as a consequence of Breakfast Club that amplified the professional community already established and focused faculty collaboration into new areas of assessment. A system of practice perspective suggests that, in order to understand the function of any given routine, it is best to view how the routine both relies on and enables other routines in the system. Organizational routines, then, result from behaviors guided and constrained by other routines over time. A large part of leadership agency involves coordinating and maintaining organizational routines and tools in order to create desired outcomes.

Professional community, I suggest, is an outcome of certain systems of practice in schools organized around sharing and developing instructional expertise and practice. Researchers have understood the development of strong professional community in a school as an enhancement of the school's capacity to engage in instructional improvement (Youngs & King, 2000). One way to understand professional community as a form of capacity is to treat it as a special kind of social capital. Coleman's (1988) concept of social capital refers to resources available to an actor or an organization by
virtue of participation in certain interpersonal or institutional structures. While material and human capital are possessed by the actor personally, social capital "inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors" (p. 98). Social capital is developed through social interactions that build trust (Wehlage, 1993). Coleman describes trust as accumulated through participation in networks of obligation and commitment, which offer opportunities for participants to rely on one another for the pursuit of common interests or for the completion of tasks. At Adams, Dr. Williams's work developing Breakfast Club aimed to create a new form of professional interaction around literacy practices. Networks of reciprocal obligations and commitment develop trust and reputation in an organization (Fowler, 1999).

Professional trust is developed as actors realize they can share ideas with colleagues, and reputation accrues when actors develop opinions about the trustworthiness of other actors. Bryk and Schneider (2002) suggest that a high level of trust among adults in schools is a critical resource for school leaders engaging in program reform. In their examination of Chicago Public School data from 1990 to 1996, they found that schools with high levels of trust at the beginning of reform efforts had a 1 in 2 chance of improving student achievement scores in math and reading, while schools with low levels of trust faced a 1 in 7 chance of making significant gains. While the cause-and-effect relationship of trust and change is difficult to trace, this research points toward how trust can be used as a key resource for school leaders in making organizational change.

Professional community, then, is a kind of social capital that emerges in certain systems of practice. To create professional community, school leaders either shape existing routines or design new routines to create the structures that foster social capital. Coleman (1988) describes how social capital develops through the closure of social or information structures in organizations. Closure happens when actors have opportunities to interact, create trust, and develop reputations around selected practices. Closure involves completing feedback loops for information and social interaction in organizations. Social capital is developed in organizations and interactions that present redundant opportunities for closure. Open systems, on the other hand, have few structured opportunities for closure. In open systems, actors diverge from the source of information or directive without structured opportunities for subsequent reconvergence. Trust around core practices does not develop because actors have little opportunity to enter into relations that create obligations or commitments. Many school instructional systems of practice are open in this fashion (Figure 3.2). In order to promote professional communities in schools, leaders must create legitimate structures that give rise to the occasions in which teachers can share and reflect upon their hard-won instructional expertise, question their own practice, and accept the suggestions of peers. Closing a system means establishing routines that close feedback loops in which actors can receive information about the degree to which obligations have been entered into and fulfilled.

**PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY AND THE CLOSURE OF OPEN SYSTEMS AT ADAMS**

School leaders at Adams helped establish routines that give teachers opportunities to discuss practice, develop programs, and understand assessment information. These routines helped to create the kind of trust within the organization that in turn fosters the possibility for professional community. To highlight features of how local leaders influenced the system of practice, I consider how Adams leaders and staff implemented the three routines discussed above to shape the professional interaction in the school and nurture practices that resulted in a strong professional community.

School leaders at Adams used organizational routines to help teachers engage in conversations to improve teaching practice. As routines such as Breakfast Club and the Five-Week Assessment gave rise to new routines that began to reshape professional interaction at Adams, the emerging sense of professional community in turn inspired and led to the design of new routines. In other words, professional community became a form of organizational capacity that served as a condition for emergent routines and tool design efforts. This section outlines how each routine created the social capital of professional community within the school, and discusses how the routines together helped to form the backbone of a reformed system of practice at Adams.
Each of the routines described above provided closure at a different level of the social system at Adams. Breakfast Club, for example, provided a forum for teachers to reflect with one another both on research and on one another's practice (Figure 3.3). As it grew to maturity, Breakfast Club added a collaborative design dimension as a platform for the development and customization of the school language arts program. The communication network among teachers sparked by Breakfast Club created multiple opportunities for interaction around instruction, planning, and assessment among teachers and school leaders. Much of the social capital developed during Breakfast Club stemmed from the conscious effort of school leaders to encourage teachers to take leadership roles in conducting and participating in meetings. The status of Breakfast Club within the school community gave leaders a forum within which to shape the school’s instructional improvement agenda.

While administrators conducted informal and formal assessments of classroom teaching, the system of practice included no legitimate structures (other than personal invitation or relationship) for teacher observation of other classrooms. Interaction in Breakfast Club consisted of self-reports of what teachers did in their classrooms. The Five-Week Assessment routine helped to close a loop in the instructional system by providing measures for how well teachers were implementing the innovations discussed during Breakfast Club (Figure 3.4). The Five-Week Assessment provided another chance for professional interaction as teachers collaboratively developed and analyzed measures of classroom-level student achievement. The production and discussion of customized quantitative feedback helped to create professional obligations among staff. The collaborative development and implementation of the Five-Week Assessment provided needed closure among teachers about whether instructional innovations were working. The Five-Week Assessment also gave school leaders feedback on how instruction fared in classrooms. Incorporating Five-Week Assessment data into Breakfast Club discussions helped to preserve the tipping point (Gladwell, 2000) at which the professional community could sustain self-reflective assessment practices without imploding or becoming irrelevant.

Finally, the School Improvement Planning routine augmented the Adams professional community by establishing opportunities for teachers and school leaders to articulate what they had done and to build this into the schoolwide instructional plan. Since the school was accountable to the district and to the Local School Council for achieving the SIP goals, the collaborative-planning process provided sanctioned space for staff interaction to determine the direction for the instructional program. Adams leaders and staff created committees, meeting schedules and agendas, and stipends to establish the SIP activities as an organizational routine for staff interactions (Figure 3.5). These meetings created obligations among community members to draft and implement viable plans; the successful completion and execution of the plans created trust among members that their work was not in vain.

Separately, the Adams routines described here provided structures for interaction that supported the creation of certain kinds of obligations around instructional issues. Analyzing the function of each routine in isolation, however, misses the systemic nature of the way professional community has evolved at Adams. A school improvement plan, for example, creates neither an atmosphere of innovation nor the means for formative and periodic assessment of practice. Similarly, a 5-week assessment that attempts to measure teacher instructional performance progress alone can splinter professional communities because of the threat that comparing teachers with one another
will make them less likely to collaborate on instructional matters. Together, however, these routines help to create a coherent system of practice that brings closure for several different opportunities for faculty interaction (Figure 3.6). The Adams professional community is the product of these aggregated organizational routines. Considered as a system of practice, the routines and tools described here relied on one another as conditions for design and as resources for subsequent design and problem-solving efforts.

Several interesting issues arose in this analysis of practice, tools, routines, and professional community. Did the Adams routines rely on or create professional community? It might be argued that there was a strong pre-existing sense of professional community at the school upon which these routines depended for their subsequent success in framing instructional practice. Bryk and Schneider (2002) suggest that existing high levels of trust provide a key resource for leaders in facilitating school change. There seems to have been a strong sense of community and shared vision among a tight group of leaders at the school who perceived their responsibility to improve student learning in the school. Perhaps there was an already existing strong sense of professional community among these teachers that, when tapped by designed routines, blossomed into schoolwide professional community. If professional community can be measured in terms of student learning, however, the effects of the pre-existing professional community were not supported by increases in student test scores. Indeed, in the early 1990s, Adams ranked among the poorest performing schools in the district. One administrator recalled that, before Principal Williams, there were strong teachers in the school and a strong sense of social community among teachers and leaders, but that teachers who initiated discussions about instructional issues felt stigmatized and silenced.

While the model provided here cannot conclusively demonstrate causality between organizational routines and professional community, it does suggest that the routines developed by Dr. Williams and her leadership team were key instruments to create trust and open discussions of instructional practice among teachers. The routines themselves, however, do not seem to be easily separable from the context in which they were created. Anecdotal evidence that other schools that experimented with Breakfast Club-like routines felt little impact on the development of professional community suggests that the routines themselves are not the answer. Rather, it is how the routines interacted with one another, creating possibilities that afforded redundant opportunities for professional interaction, that seems to account for the strong professional community at Adams. Further investigation is required into schools just embarking on the creation of professional community as an avowed outcome to explore the relation between routine construction and the underlying forms of human and social capital that make professional community possible.

Does reliance on the analysis of routines as the path to professional community give short shrift to the importance of interpersonal and spiritual leadership practice in schools? This analysis is certainly not intended as a
comprehensive approach to understanding school leadership practice. Routines merely establish the conditions for practice in organizations—the actual practices of teaching and learning involve levels of agency well beyond the determining structures of routines and tools. The moral leadership and interpersonal skills required to build consensus, establish vision, and give hope in schools transcend the structural components of the instructional context. Still, organizational routines provide powerful tools and symbols to convey moral and interpersonal leadership, and the system of practice establishes the conditions for interaction that shape the school’s culture. The ability of leaders to create routines that alter the existing system of practice in schools is a powerful capacity not only for shaping the traditions of teaching and learning but also for providing inspiration through symbolic leadership. The analysis of the routines that compose the system of practice by itself may not tell the whole story of instructional leadership, but it does point to a valuable place to start making successful leadership practice accessible to interested others.

**CONCLUSION**

This case of how a system of designed and implemented routines helped to create a vibrant professional community at Adams provides a vantage point for understanding the nature of professional community in the school. The case shows how Adams leaders exercised agency in designing and adapting organizational routines to shape professional community. Leadership practice is constituted in part by the ways leaders seek to redesign and manipulate organizational routines. Taken together, these routines help to enable leadership practice around particular tasks, which create and sustain the occasion for directed and purposeful interactions among staff.

While many schools offer ample opportunities for interaction, not all of these interactions help create professional community. Grossman, Wernberg, and Woolworth (2000) suggest that when conversations around instruction occur in schools with high levels of social capital but no significant history of professional community, a sense of “pseudocommunity” is created in which actors may interact but do not engage in difficult discussions about instruction. In such schools, there are few structured opportunities for interaction about the quality or the process of instruction, and thus little social capital is developed around instruction. The Adams case demonstrates how leaders created organizational routines to address what they perceived to be the chronic instructional issues of the school, and then leveraged the capacity developed by prior routines to create new routines that deepened and enriched the school’s professional community. Mapping the routines that local leaders created and adapted to shape instruction provides an important way to understand the development of professional community. Identifying what the key routines are and understanding the ways they fit together in practice offer insight into the kinds of situational constructs local leaders build and rely on in developing local professional communities in their schools.
### Appendix 3.1. Adams Organizational Routines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Designers</th>
<th>Duration of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Breakfast Club</td>
<td>To provide in-house professional development for and by Adams faculty</td>
<td>Monthly meetings before school at which faculty members make and discuss presentations on research relevant to current instructional programs</td>
<td>Language Arts Coordinator, Principal, Teachers</td>
<td>1995–present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. School Improvement Plan (SIP)</td>
<td>To create annual local school plan to align instructional and budgeting priorities for the upcoming school year</td>
<td>District-designed artifact that acts as a catalyst for local planning efforts as leaders and teachers develop instructional program to meet mandated student test performance targets</td>
<td>District, Principal, Administration, Teachers (approved by Local School Council)</td>
<td>1989–present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Five-Week Assessment</td>
<td>Locally designed testing program to provide formative data to complement summative standardized testing data</td>
<td>Testing program based on reverse engineering summative tests to give teachers and leaders a sense of progress toward improved standardized test achievement</td>
<td>Language Arts Coordinator, Assistant Principal, Principal, Teachers</td>
<td>1995–present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teacher Observation Process</td>
<td>Process to provide formative and summative evaluation of teachers according to union guidelines and district policies</td>
<td>District and locally designed forms used to make sense of principal’s teacher observation session; evaluations based on district guidelines and local instructional program priorities</td>
<td>District, Principal, Assistant Principal</td>
<td>1989–present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix 3.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Designers</th>
<th>Duration of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Real Men Read</td>
<td>Annual event designed to bring male African American role models into the school to read to students</td>
<td>An annual school-wide breakfast program in which African American men gather to eat and read to children throughout the school</td>
<td>Language Arts Coordinator, Assistant Principal, Principal</td>
<td>1998–present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Career Day</td>
<td>Annual event designed to offer Adams students an opportunity to survey career possibilities</td>
<td>A two-part annual assembly for middle school students to listen to African American speakers, then meet with African American professionals in a variety of career fields</td>
<td>Guidance Counselor, Principal, Teachers</td>
<td>1999–present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Chicago Annenberg Challenge Curriculum Planning Process (CAO)</td>
<td>Year-long curriculum planning effort using LeTUS project-based science curricula as a seed for building middle school cross-disciplinary curricula</td>
<td>Collaborative curriculum design effort using LeTUS project-based science curricula as a seed for building middle school cross-disciplinary curricula</td>
<td>Science Coordinator, Teachers, Northwestern and Roosevelt University Researchers</td>
<td>2000–2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Science Coordinator Position</td>
<td>Position established to design science program for Adams’s designation as Multi-Science Academy in collaboration with classroom teachers</td>
<td>Promotion of 6th-grade teacher Tim Zacharias to renovate science program and to design and teach middle school science curriculum</td>
<td>Science Coordinator, Principal, Assistant Principal</td>
<td>1999–2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cultivating High Expectations in an Urban Elementary School: The Case of Kelly School

John B. Diamond
Harvard University

I have high expectations for the [children]—I've said to the staff and I'm sure they agree...there are no excuses. In the past there have been excuses why children, especially inner-city children, don't do well. Because they come from disadvantaged homes and what have you. Well, we can't do anything about that and I've said to [teachers] over and over, "Parents send the best they have. They don't keep the good ones at home." So we have to work with what we have and do the very best job that we can do.
—Dr. Johnson, Kelly School's Principal

As Dr. Johnson sees it, she is working to ensure that students at Kelly School, a 100% African American K–8 school in Chicago, acquire a strong academic foundation, develop self-esteem, and reach their full academic potential. She argues that "the teachers here, the entire staff, we want these children to succeed, so we try to do the things to help them succeed." While she works in an inner-city school in a low-income African American neighborhood, she argues that "there are no excuses" for students not to excel academically. Instead, she believes that it is the responsibility of the teachers and the administration to ensure students' success. Based on test scores, she and her colleagues have demonstrated impressive outcomes.