Labor-Management Collaboration in Education: The Process, the Impact, and the Prospects for Change
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Section I: Introduction

Historically, the primary role of teachers’ unions in America has been to protect the rights of teachers—to ensure they have decent wages, hours, and working conditions. Administrators and schools boards, on the other hand, have been charged with balancing budgets and complying with laws and regulations. The public expects that both sides will be committed to providing quality education to students. Tensions between unions and school management have always existed, but several factors have intensified the strain in recent years, including recession-induced budget cuts, which have led to teacher layoffs, furloughs, pay reductions, and increased class sizes; the continued push for more charter schools and privatization; and federal reform policies, such as teacher evaluation and compensation systems tied to standardized test scores. In addition, efforts to curtail teacher unions’ rights as witnessed during the past few years in Wisconsin and Ohio, and the recent wave of anti-union sentiment—fueled by pundits, politicians, and films, such as Waiting for Superman and Won’t Back Down—have contributed to an increasingly acrimonious climate in many of the nation’s school districts.

But as tensions rise and the role of teachers’ unions is called into question, an unexpected and hopeful phenomenon is emerging. School board members, administrators, and labor leaders in a growing number of school districts have become frustrated with the negative media, the mistrustful relationships, the adversarial negotiations, and the general dysfunction that has not served well the interests of teachers, schools, or students. These educators have abandoned the traditional, adversarial, labor-management paradigm and have chosen instead to work collaboratively as partners.

This report analyzes case study research on districts that have adopted a collaborative approach to labor-management relations, and it describes collaboration’s impact on the districts’ capacity for innovation, problem solving, and implementation of key reform initiatives. A key finding of this analysis is that collaborative partnerships often build trust and strengthen professional relationships among local leaders. The partnerships have been crucial for districts attempting to implement innovative practices that improve teaching and learning.

In Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland, for example, the teachers’ union and district administrators worked together to replace the district’s teacher evaluation system with a comprehensive alternative that included high-quality professional development, peer assistance for struggling teachers, and extensive training on evaluation for principals. Dramatic improvements in student learning have occurred recently in this district, and MCPS stakeholders attribute much of the progress to their labor-management partnership. Local union president Doug Prouty says, “We have the same interests at heart in terms of working with kids.” Jerry Weast, MCPS superintendent at the time, agrees: “We really got our community to agree on the outcome [of having 100 percent of students graduate on time and 80 percent prepared for college and careers] …Then everything else flowed from that” (Eckert, 2011, p. 29).
Early efforts to promote labor-management collaboration in education were spurred by the Teachers Union Reform Network (TURN), a progressive coalition of local teachers' unions founded in 1996 by Adam Urbanski, president of the Rochester Teachers Association, and the late Helen Bernstein, former president of the United Teachers Los Angeles. TURN's mission is to promote “responsible and responsive teacher unionism” in which labor and management work together to protect the interests of teachers, improve working and learning conditions in schools, and implement solutions to advance student learning.¹ According to Urbanski and then TURN co-director Roger Erskine (2000), who served as Executive Director of the Seattle Education Association,

The Teachers Union Reform Network approaches the issue of reforming schools and education by re-framing the role of teachers and their unions as partners from the outset. Rather than regard teachers as an inert ingredient in the formula for school reform, TURN views them as catalysts. Further, improved instruction is the issue that drives the shape and focus of these new collaborations.

Bringing about this change in how teachers and their unions are treated requires a cultural change, as well. The teachers themselves must accept responsibility for change and see themselves as agents rather than mere targets of reform. They must champion sound efforts to improve instruction. The unions and union leaders must expand their view of themselves to include the role of leaders of reform. (p. 368)

Members of TURN are local affiliates of the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Regional TURN conferences are held regularly throughout the year, often with labor and management teams from local districts, to focus on ways unions can work collaboratively with management on a wide range of school reforms.

Contrary to the view that unions exist only to protect teachers’ interests, teachers and union leaders in MCPS and in many of the districts examined for this report often welcome the opportunity to look beyond the “bread and butter” issues of wages, hours, and working conditions, when a foundation of trust and transparency is established with management. Many teachers work just as hard to find innovative solutions that benefit students. As researchers Linda Kaboolian and Paul Sutherland observe in their book, Win-Win Labor-Management Collaboration in Education: Breakthrough Practices to Benefit Students, Teachers, and Administrators, “Both school managers and teachers’ unions have a vested interest in seeing their enterprises succeed and in ensuring that public education does not erode” (Kaboolian & Sutherland, 2005, p. 7).

Many of the collaborative districts studied in this report have adopted improved systems of assessment and support for teachers like the one in MCPS. Others have crafted innovative

¹ TURN’s website is located at http://www.turnexchange.net
policies such as extended learning time for students and extra pay for teachers who work longer hours. In virtually all cases, local stakeholders are working together to solve serious and challenging problems that are often ignored or mishandled in an adversarial environment.

It appears that many important reforms, like the ones mentioned above, could not have been adopted if labor and management were working at cross-purposes. As Kaboolian and Sutherland (2005) explain, “Adversarial relationships between teachers and school management significantly impede change efforts required to improve student achievement. Adversity is expensive and hinders a clear focus on students, using up resources—money, time, energy, and leadership attention—which could be put to better use” (p. 5).

The number of school districts that have adopted a collaborative approach has remained relatively small, but in 2011, labor relations in the U.S. took a historic turn. Perhaps under public pressure to find education solutions without the bickering, the nation’s leading management and labor organizations and the U.S. Department of Education agreed to co-sponsor the first-of-its-kind national conference on labor-management collaboration. Superintendents, labor leaders, and board presidents from 150 school districts convened in Denver, Colorado, to hear firsthand how a select group of districts is leveraging collaboration to improve student learning. This conference exceeded the expectations of the co-sponsors who were initially unsure whether such an event would generate much interest. Over 100 district teams that signed up for the event were turned away for lack of space.

A follow-up study conducted a year after the conference found that many of the participating districts were collaborating effectively on new policies and practices designed to improve their students’ academic outcomes (Futernick, McClellan, & Vince, 2012). Based on this conference’s success and strong interest from districts that could not attend, a similar conference was conducted in Cincinnati in 2012. Teams representing 105 school districts and 14 states participated in this event. The same group of labor and management co-sponsors signed a vision statement to transform the teaching profession and to improve student learning through collaboration and increased empowerment of teachers, administrators, and communities. The fact that the national education organizations representing labor and management and the U.S. Department of Education have publicly pledged their support for collaboration could signal the beginning of a paradigm shift in U.S. labor relations.

The real test will be whether state and local affiliates—those who wield far more influence on district practices—will follow this lead. Teachers will need to be confident that progressive unionism focused on student outcomes will not diminish their ability to secure decent wages, benefits, and working conditions. Those with authority to manage schools will need to be convinced that sharing power with teachers can increase the odds that schools will improve.

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2 The additional co-sponsors of the conference were the American Association of School Administrators, the National School Boards Association, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Council of Great City Schools, and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.


4 Information about the two labor-management conferences and a link to the shared vision statement is available at http://www.ed.gov/labor-management-collaboration.
Because the shift to a collaborative approach is unfamiliar and extraordinarily challenging, those educators willing to try it will need access to a rich knowledge base of proven tools and strategies to guide their collaborative work. We hope this report contributes to that growing knowledge base so labor leaders, education officials, policymakers, and researchers can apply labor-management collaboration (LMC) strategies to strengthen America’s public schools.

The Report’s Organization

Section II considers the prospects for large-scale implementation of labor-management collaboration in this country by examining some of the lessons learned from Finland and Ontario, Canada, where student learning is strong, and from labor-management collaboration in the U.S. private sector.

Section III contains an in-depth analysis of studies of 50 school districts from seven separate research reports. Three aspects of labor-management collaboration are examined in these districts that may prove helpful for education stakeholders looking to advance their own levels of collaboration: (1) the conditions that led leaders in these districts to adopt a collaborative approach; (2) the impact collaboration has had on district practices and policies; and (3) the factors that promote effective collaboration. A summary of findings appears below.

Section IV recommends additional research that is needed to answer critical questions about the impact of LMC and the factors that promote and hinder it.

Key Findings from the Analysis of LMC Research

Important lessons for educators can be learned from high-performing systems outside of the U.S. and from collaborative arrangements in our own private sector.

- Labor-management collaboration is widely practiced in Finland and Ontario, Canada, where student learning has improved dramatically in recent years. Educators in these places believe collaboration has been a key contributor to these improvements.
- Collaborative partnerships have been linked to significant improvements in productivity, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction in several private sector U.S. companies, including General Motors, Ford, and Kaiser Permanente.
- Collaborative partnerships can be derailed when key stakeholders fear the loss of power or lack knowledge about the process and the potential benefits.

The following factors motivate districts to engage in LMC:

- Critical breakdowns have developed between labor and management.
- Government and private foundation funding initiatives require district leaders to adopt new policies, which in turn require changes to labor agreements.
- Labor and management leaders recognize the seriousness of the education problems their students face.
• Labor and management leaders are exposed to collaborative efforts that have been successful in other districts and have the opportunity to obtain assistance from external providers.

LMC’s impact can be significant:

• LMC often leads to improved professional relationships, characterized by increased trust, communication, and empowerment among key district stakeholders.
• LMC has been instrumental in the adoption of district policies that are associated with improved student learning, including policies on teacher evaluation, peer assistance and review, leadership improvement programs, and extended learning time.
• LMC often leads to improved district capacity for collaborative problem-solving, which has been particularly useful in addressing fiscal crises, reducing teacher grievances, and solving student achievement challenges.

The following policies and practices promote effective LMC:

• Labor and management share a strong commitment to improve student learning.
• Communication of vital information, especially when it involves budgets, is clear and transparent.
• Leadership at all levels is collaborative and widely distributed.
• Districts learn to implement interest-based bargaining and adopt “living contracts.”
• Districts obtain technical assistance from external support providers.
Section II: The Prospects for Change

“Collaboration is the elixir of the status-quo crowd.” (Klein, 2011)
– Joel Klein, former chancellor of the New York City Schools

“Stop the blame game and start collaborating. Big fights between administrators and teachers are catnip to reporters, but they don’t do much for children.” (Weast, 2009)
– Jerry Weast, former superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools

The statements above represent two very different views about the role collaboration should play in improving our schools. In one camp, those like Joel Klein reject collaboration with teachers’ unions because they believe the interests of management and labor are fundamentally at odds. Former Washington D.C. schools chancellor Michelle Rhee holds a similar view about teachers’ unions, remarking, “[C]ollaboration and consensus building are frankly overrated in my mind” (Wall Street Journal Blogs: CEO Council, 2009). Terry Moe, a political scientist at Stanford University, says unions have and always will oppose reforms that benefit children because unions “…are in the business of protecting jobs and of protecting the occupational interests of their members.” When asked about the prospects for school improvement through collaboration and “reform unionism,” he calls it “wishful thinking” (Hannaway & Rotherham, 2006, p. 252).

In another camp, educators like Jerry Weast and administrators and union leaders from the districts examined for this report view collaboration as an essential reform strategy. For them, collaboration is not wishful thinking. They point to successful student-centered initiatives that would not have been adopted were it not for the collaborative approach they took.

Despite the progress that has been made through collaboration, only a small number of districts in the U.S. have adopted this approach.\(^5\) Those skeptical about the prospects of collaboration might argue that these districts are mere outliers—that the paucity of examples is proof that most collaborative approaches cannot be taken to scale. But international research provides compelling evidence to the contrary (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, 2012; Sahlberg, 2011; Tucker, 2012). Finland, widely recognized as having one of the most successful systems of education, also has strong teachers’ unions. Finnish teachers are well prepared and highly regarded. Government officials have long worked closely with unions and view them as essential partners. Public schools in Ontario, Canada, have also shown dramatic improvements in academic achievement in recent years. Prior to this turnaround, government leaders and teachers’ unions had been bitter adversaries. As Marc Tucker (2012) describes it, “The Conservative government…had gone to war with the teachers and their unions, cutting funding, reducing professional development by half, and taking out television ads demonizing teachers. The result

\(^5\) TURN’s website (www.turnexchange.net) lists just 30 district affiliates nationwide. Districts not affiliated with TURN that engage in labor-management collaboration also exist, but this review of case study research suggests the overall number is a small fraction of the roughly 14,000 U.S. school districts.
was a highly polarized environment, with teachers resorting to strikes and lockouts to defend what they could of their prerogatives, and no improvement in student performance” (pp. 19-20). In 2003 a new government administration tried a different approach to address stagnating student performance. According to Tucker, “They brought teachers and their unions to the table for discussions of education reform strategy and won their trust by listening hard to what the teachers had to say and then providing the needed support. The reform strategy that they adopted assumed that teachers wanted to do the right thing but lacked the capacity to do it” (p. 20).

Important lessons about the potential benefits and pitfalls of collaboration can also be learned from experiments with this approach in the U.S. private sector. One of the most celebrated labor-management partnerships occurred during the economic downturn of the 1980s when union contracts negotiated by the United Auto Workers (UAW) included provisions to increase cooperation with automakers. As market share for automobiles shifted to Japan, General Motors (GM) and the UAW launched the Saturn project, a labor-management partnership that managed operations, product design, marketing and sales, customer relations, and dealer management. The UAW supported this approach because it believed the resulting flexibility, efficiency, innovation, and commitment would produce a better car and greater profits for Saturn. Its autoworkers would share those profits. For many years Saturn was hailed for producing quality products, customer satisfaction, and a profit for GM. Many believed that the partnership with management played a key role. But as economic pressures mounted for America’s auto industry and as management and labor leaders were replaced, GM eventually stopped making the Saturn. In their study of the Saturn experiment, Saul Rubenstein and Tom Kochan (2001) conclude that GM’s trial partnership with the UAW was successful but ended in large part because the concept of a partnership with labor was not fully supported and integrated into the corporate culture at GM. According to Kochan,

> *In these labor-management partnerships that we have seen over the years, there must be a full strategy to go from unit level organization to full integration of the learning network throughout the organization. If this is not done, economic, competitive, and leadership challenges will create political trouble that will not sustain the learnings and successes that had been created.* (Kochan cited in August, 2011)

Mike Bennett of the UAW describes the problem this way:

> *Top leadership of the organizations, both union and corporation must be 100 percent committed. The more people who are involved in decision-making naturally creates turbulence, and because the top leadership changed in both organizations and because that new leadership was not committed to the Saturn labor-management partnership, that turbulence overwhelmed the chances of the partnership to succeed and ultimately to exist.* (Bennett cited in August, 2011)

Educators can also learn important lessons from the private-sector partnership at Kaiser Permanente, which Kochan and his colleagues (2009) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology call “the largest, most complex, ambitious, and broad-based labor-management partnership in U.S. history” (p. 2). Prior to the labor-management partnership that began in 1997, Kaiser struggled financially and nearly collapsed. Mistrust, conflict, and ideological differences
were pervasive, but pressures to change created a willingness among labor and management to try something different. Kochan reports,

Now, more than a decade later, Kaiser Permanente and the union coalition have succeeded in sustaining their partnership, demonstrating that it is not only possible to negotiate path-breaking labor agreements in innovative ways, but to work together to implement new medical technologies and team-based work systems that health care experts see as central to reducing costs and improving the quality of health care in the United States. (p. 4)

Research on labor relations in the private sector demonstrates that collaboration between management and labor is not only possible, it can lead directly to dramatic improvements in profitability and quality of products and services (Bluestone & Bluestone, 1994). Studies like those of Saturn also show how difficult these partnerships are to sustain if commitments are not made throughout organizations and their industries. International research on labor-management collaboration in education points to similar benefits and challenges, which suggests that it can be implemented at scale.

Why, then, are there so few labor-management partnerships in this country, and what factors work against this collaboration going to scale? More research is needed to fully answer this question, but four factors seem to be at play. The first is fear. Fear was a key reason that the experiment with collaboration at Saturn could not be sustained. GM executives and UAW leaders who came on to the scene after the Saturn experiment was launched viewed its celebrated and unorthodox labor-management partnership as a potential threat to the usual ways of doing business. Fearful that it might diminish each side’s bargaining power, both sides opted for what was familiar and safe—even though this course of action would help to perpetuate the persistent gridlock between labor and management—gridlock that would eventually contribute to the near demise of America’s auto industry.

Change is threatening because the outcomes are uncertain, and some people undoubtedly fear it will make things worse. Change also requires that stakeholders reconsider deeply held beliefs—in this case about whether people can be trusted to do the right thing in a collaborative environment. In their analysis of the Saturn experiment, Rubenstein and Kochan (2001) note the difficulty an alternative approach presents to management:

Labor-management partnerships are...highly controversial within management circles. Sharing power with union leaders is not a well-accepted principle. Managers who have had little exposure to labor relations or human resource management will not take naturally to their roles as partners. They need training to do so, and their rewards and career prospects need to be contingent on their success as partners. (p. 134)

Until the national labor-management collaboration conference in 2011, collaboration had not been widely embraced by the education establishment. In fact, just like at Saturn, those fearful that collaboration would destabilize existing power relations had actively resisted calls for collaboration. Harvard education researchers who observed educators attempting to implement new collaborative structures say, "Not surprisingly, these changes in structure, roles and expectations of collaboration provoke resistance from many who have long operated under the
norms and practices of a traditional labor-management relationship” (Qazilbash, et al., 2009, p. 10). Despite evidence that collaborative leadership can actually lead to greater organizational success and stakeholder power (Gray, 1989; Kanter, 1994; Rubin, 2009), some district stakeholders likely fear that the opposite will happen. School administrators might worry they would lose their authority to establish policies and make decisions, or that change would take too long if they collaborate with teachers. Unions might fear that management would use collaboration as a way to get teachers to conform to management’s reform agenda. Rank and file teachers might worry that overly friendly relations with the other side would lead to collusion—that their leaders might sell out.

A second factor that could thwart the growth of labor-management partnerships in U.S. school districts is the tough-minded reform agenda of the past two decades that has been dominated by high-stakes accountability, rewards, and sanctions. Combined with recession-induced budget cuts, the reform has pitted stakeholders against one another, creating an environment that is more conducive to confrontation than to collaboration. Michael Fullan has argued that the overemphasis on accountability has not served the U.S. well and that it is the wrong driver for reform. Countries like Singapore and Finland, which now have some of the world’s strongest education systems, led their reform efforts by building capacity and developing social capital. High stakes accountability systems appear to work against intrinsic motivation and diminish social capital and the trust that is needed to spark and sustain labor-management partnerships. According to Fullan,

…no system in the world has ever achieved whole system reform by leading with accountability. As the “right drivers” progress (capacity building and team work for example) transparency of results and practice will be key to securing public commitment to education, and to elevating the status of the profession. (Fullan, 2011, p. 9)

A long history of research on organizational change points to a third factor that prevents districts from adopting a collaborative approach. Stakeholders often resist change unless they are sufficiently dissatisfied with the status quo and can envision a better future. In several case studies reviewed for this report, local education leaders pursued collaboration only after the negative effects were felt from a labor strike or some other painful district crisis. Educators might be reluctant to embrace a dramatic shift in labor-management relations if they believe the status quo is acceptable or at least tolerable. The adversarial system might not be serving anyone’s interests well, but it has the virtue of being familiar and predictable. Given that the collaborative movement is young and relatively little has been written on the subject, many local educators simply lack knowledge about alternative collaborative practices or the skills required to implement them. According to Kaboolian and Sutherland, district stakeholders “who rarely experience horizon-broadening opportunities will need convincing that new ways of doing business will be worth the effort and pain” (2005, p. 9).

A fourth factor that has prevented the spread of labor-management collaboration is the lack of a supportive infrastructure. Because the benefits of labor-management collaboration have not been widely understood in this country, leadership development programs for school administrators, school board members, and teacher leaders have operated under the long-standing, adversarial paradigm, and most have paid virtually no attention to practices such as
interest-based bargaining, living contracts, transparent communications, or joint problem-solving—practices that are fundamental in a collaborative paradigm. The case study research reviewed for this report reveals a stark reality: labor-management partnerships, while very productive, can be exceedingly difficult for local stakeholders to develop and sustain. Those who might be open to working collaboratively simply have few places to turn for assistance.

The forces that resist change are formidable, but change might be inevitable given the increasing pressure to address persistent shortcomings of the nation’s schools and growing discontent with the acrimonious labor-management relations. The demand for change has come from politicians, the media, and, increasingly, from educators themselves. A recent Education Sector study revealed that more and more teachers want their unions to play a greater role in improving schools. Forty-three percent of teachers polled in a 2011 survey (compared with 32 percent polled in 2007) agreed that teachers’ unions should “put more focus than they currently do on issues such as improving teacher quality and student achievement.” The study’s authors conclude: “Teachers want their unions to protect their jobs and to negotiate good salaries and benefits...But teachers increasingly want unions to be involved in improving their work, and in supporting certain reforms” (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012, p. 8). The fact that the U.S. Department of Education and the nation’s professional organizations representing labor and management recently pledged to promote collaboration suggests that a desire for change is emerging, not just from practitioners on the ground but from leaders at the top as well.

Also fueling the shift toward collaboration is the emergence of research showing that productive partnerships between labor and management are not only possible, but often lead to joint problem solving, stronger agreements, and greater attention to matters that affect student outcomes. This research is working to counter claims from those like Joel Klein, Michelle Rhee, Terry Moe, and other union critics who have dismissed collaboration as a reform strategy. The case study research is especially powerful because the stakeholders themselves—the ones with the greatest credibility among their peers—tell the stories. These stories have even begun to change the way the media view the problem. New York Times editorial writer Nicholas Kristof has been an outspoken critic of teachers’ unions, but after hearing about a progressive new labor contract developed collaboratively by labor and management in New Haven, Connecticut, he writes:

*Teachers’ unions are here to stay, and the only way to achieve systematic improvement is with their buy-in. Moreover, the United States critically needs to attract talented young people into teaching. And that’s less likely when we’re whacking teachers’ unions in ways that leave many teachers feeling insulted and demoralized. The breakthrough experiment in New Haven offers a glimpse of an education future that is less rancorous.* (2012, p. 1)

The next section analyzes major case studies that have been conducted on labor-management collaboration as practiced in K-12 school districts in the U.S. This research provides important lessons from the field about the factors that lead local educators to engage in collaboration, the impact collaboration has on school policy and student outcomes, and the practices that promote and sustain effective collaboration.
Section III: Lessons from the Field

Most of the research that has been conducted on LMC consists of case studies that examine the conditions that triggered LMC and the impact LMC had on local school policies and practices. Randomized controlled studies, the type of research that might show a causal relationship between a particular intervention and student achievement, have not been undertaken because complex organizational phenomena like LMC do not lend themselves to these types of studies. A recent study by Saul Rubinstein and John McCarthy has, however, shown a strong correlation between LMC and student performance. In their 2013 study of union-management partnerships in the ABC Unified School District (one of the districts WestEd examined for this report), Rubenstein and McCarthy found that “The quality of formal partnerships between teachers’ unions, administrators, and teachers at the school level is a significant predictor of student performance as well as performance improvement, after controlling for poverty and school type” (2013, p. 2). The authors concede that their study included schools from just one district and that this research should be replicated in other districts, but the findings are significant nonetheless because they show for the first time that collaboration between labor and management can make a difference for students.

As the number of case studies increases, researchers are able to draw increasingly stronger inferences about the effects of new organizational practices (Bennett & Elman, 2006; Yin, 2009). Case study research provides rich insights into the complex dynamics and personal interactions that are often missed in large random samples (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In the final analysis, the value of any education policy or practice is based on whether it contributes to improved student learning. Researchers may not be able to prove that LMC has such a direct, causal effect, but a study like the one by Rubinstein and McCarthy described above can point to a strong correlation. And, as described later in this section, case studies of LMC can show how LMC has led to the implementation of school policies and practices, which themselves can strengthen teaching effectiveness and improve student learning. In this way, an indirect link between LMC and student learning can be established.

Section III focuses on the impact LMC has had on districts and includes an analysis of factors that commonly lead management and labor leaders to collaborate with one another. These findings are useful because they point to strategies that could be used to promote LMC where it has not yet been tried. Next is an examination of the impact of LMC on professional relationships; on efforts to solve important education challenges; and on the adoption of new district policies on teacher evaluation, peer assistance and review, and extended student learning time. The section concludes with a description of labor-management practices that have led to successful and sustained LMC in the districts that were reviewed.
Methods

This report analyzed seven recent investigations that examined 50 district LMC cases from 23 states. (See Appendix A for a more detailed description of the goals, findings, and methods for each study.) These studies represent some of the most comprehensive, detailed, and up-to-date LMC case study research available. Data from these case studies typically come from interviews; direct observations; surveys; and artifacts, such as contracts, informal agreements, reports, and meeting minutes. To identify motivating factors, common initiatives, and practices related to LMC, the 50 district cases were analyzed by employing a version of the constant comparative method of qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), a method that is frequently used where knowledge about a particular phenomenon is still relatively limited. Following this approach we identified and coded themes within and across district cases where LMC has been practiced, and then reread the case data repeatedly to identify common patterns. This process enabled us to gain insights into three aspects of LMC that are central to this report and are discussed in the following pages:

(1) Why district leaders choose collaboration
(2) The impact of labor-management collaboration
(3) Practices that promote and sustain effective labor-management collaboration

Why District Leaders Choose Collaboration

In the analysis of case studies, the following five factors frequently led local district and union leaders to choose collaboration over confrontation in their relations with one another. The graph below indicates how frequently each factor played a role in the 50 districts that were studied. The total number of instances exceeds 50 because multiple factors appeared to be at play in some districts.
Externally Funded or Mandated School Initiatives

Collaboration between labor and management occurred most frequently when district leaders needed to collaborate to obtain additional funding from government agencies or private foundations. Federal initiatives, such as the Race to the Top and the School Improvement Grant programs, provide significant funding to the lowest-performing schools in each state, but to become eligible for these programs, teachers’ unions and management have been required to adopt policies that would make changes to their collective bargaining agreements. Districts have been ineligible for federal funding if they were unwilling or unable to craft labor agreements to satisfy a range of requirements that affected the way teachers would be evaluated and compensated, the number of hours they would work, and whether the majority of teachers would need to be replaced at participating schools.

The majority of districts eligible to participate in these federal grant programs agreed (in principle, at least) to meet the requirements so they could obtain funding. While local educators did not necessarily embrace every grant requirement, many welcomed the idea that federal funds could be used to increase teacher collaboration and planning time; provide extra pay for extra hours worked; support new professional development; pay for external support; and purchase new technology and learning materials. Some educators viewed the programs’ more controversial requirements, such as teacher evaluation systems tied to growth in student achievement, as opportunities to replace ineffective evaluation systems with ones that could help teachers improve their practice. But regardless of the response to these programs, union and management leaders who wanted to submit fundable applications for these competitive grant programs were motivated to cooperate with one another.

Private foundations have also made significant investments in school reform, and like the government-sponsored funding programs, the terms of their grants to school districts often require collaboration, or at least the mutual consent, of labor and management. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, for example, granted millions of dollars to districts like the Hillsborough County Public Schools in Florida and the Pittsburgh Public Schools in Pennsylvania, but only after labor and management leaders agreed to collaborate in good faith to redesign their teacher evaluation systems. One case study reviewed for this report focuses on the collaboration that took place in the Tulsa Public Schools in Oklahoma after the district received a $1.5 million grant from the Gates Foundation to develop a new teacher evaluation system.

While the opportunities for additional funding have been the impetus for collaboration, new funding opportunities have also led to increased confrontation and tension among labor and management in some districts. This tension occurs when labor and management forego funding because they are unable to agree to the grants’ terms. As reported in EdWeek, labor-management tensions have been particularly acute in response to the recent Race to the Top competition, which offered grants up to $40 million to districts that agree to implement teacher and administrator evaluation systems that include measures of student academic growth (Zubrzycki, 2012). Local teachers’ unions in districts that were eligible for these grants, such as Oakland Unified in California, objected to this requirement.
In Clark County, Nevada, and Palm Beach, Florida, union leaders were frustrated by the limited amount of time they had to develop their applications. The United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) was unwilling to sign the Los Angeles Unified School District’s Race to the Top application because its leaders believed the $40 million that would have been awarded to the district would not have covered the cost to implement the grant’s required elements. According to UTLA President Warren Fletcher, “We were trying to be budgetarily responsible, and we were vilified for doing so” (Zubrzycki, 2012, p. 17). Teacher union leaders such as Fletcher were not able to implement federal policies in a way that was consistent with their perceptions of their members’ best interests.

**A Critical Breakdown in Labor-Management Relations**

Educators will often tolerate dysfunctional circumstances for long periods of time, and it sometimes takes a crisis or the sense of hitting rock bottom for them to change. In a number of the districts, mistrust, poor communication, and deeply entrenched adversarial relationships were common before management and labor leaders began to collaborate. “Hitting the wall” in contract negotiations was the impetus for many districts to reverse course. In nearly one-quarter of the district case studies examined, stakeholders pursued LMC after a critical breakdown in labor-management relations occurred. These breakdowns were often accompanied by contentious arbitrations, a spike in teacher grievances and lawsuits, and even strikes. An analysis of collaborative efforts in the Clark County School District in Nevada described the frustration stakeholders were experiencing from 1995-2001, prior to adopting a more collaborative approach:

> Everyone was dissatisfied with the lack of clear direction and the turbulent and hostile environment. Lengthy contract negotiations that ended in arbitration left [the local union] CCEA with a three-year backlog of unresolved grievances and arbitrations, contract disputes, and contested performance issues. Simultaneously, CCEA had a dramatic loss of support—membership dropped by 1,700 members in two years. (Rice, 2007, p. 4)

Relations between labor and management were similarly contentious in the Plattsburgh City School District in 1975 when stalled contract negotiations led to a three-day teacher strike. In the midst of this strike, the superintendent and union president realized that the only chance of resolving the impasse was to begin working collaboratively toward a solution that would work for both sides. This new relationship helped end the strike, and the union and administration continued working collaboratively to address a number of challenges that included declining student enrollment and the lack of support for struggling teachers. Collaboration among stakeholders still remains a distinctive component of the district culture in Plattsburg (WestEd, 2011).

Similarly, a bitter strike in the ABC Unified School District in California compelled district and union leaders to publicly acknowledge the futility of their adversarial relationship, and they agreed to find a better way forward (Eckert, 2011). Stakeholders in the Saint Francis Independent School District in Minnesota made a similar commitment to one another after narrowly avoiding a strike (Eckert, 2011).
The case study research illustrates that some local stakeholders will change course when circumstances become sufficiently intolerable. But the fact that many districts operate in crisis mode for years is proof that hitting rock bottom is no guarantee that district leaders will opt for collaboration. It may be the case, however, that if education leaders in these districts were offered external assistance and given an opportunity to witness effective collaboration at work, they too would consider a different path.

**New Leaders Committed to Collaboration**

Approximately 20 percent of the district cases studied indicated that a new superintendent who embraced collaboration was one key factor that led to change. In a smaller number of cases, new union leadership set the stage for collaboration. Stakeholders said these new leaders initiated more trusting and respectful relationships and encouraged innovation at all levels. In several cases, existing union leaders demonstrated openness to LMC once they saw that new superintendents were committed to this approach. Ed Allen, president of the teachers’ union in the Oklahoma City Public Schools, says he “credits the district’s successful collaboration to the new superintendent’s openness with the union and the union’s willingness to think about teaching and learning issues, and not just about traditional union concerns such as pay and benefits” (WestEd 2011, p. 15).

New collaborative leadership is an important contributor to LMC efforts, but other conditions must also be present. According to Tom Alves, former president and now Executive Director of the San Juan Teachers Association in California, the arrival of new collaborative leaders was essential in his district, but these individuals could not, by themselves, change the pre-existing adversarial culture and mindset of stakeholders throughout the district. “The culture of the district’s middle management and union membership was still rooted in traditional adversarial mentalities,” Alves recalls. Real change in the district’s culture began only after representatives from the Harvard Negotiation Project trained management and labor leaders in interest-based bargaining. According to Alves, “This training was extremely successful, stuck with the district, and became the foundation for all future collaboration” (WestEd, 2011, p. 30).

This San Juan case and other similar examples underscore the important role that leaders play in promoting collaboration, but they also illustrate that leadership alone is not enough to trigger a full, sustainable transformation to a collaborative culture.

**Shared Commitment to Improve Student Learning**

In approximately one-fifth of district cases, district and union leaders adopted LMC after both sides acknowledged the seriousness of problems with student learning in their districts. These leaders chose to collaborate without legislative pressures or funding incentives. In one Colorado school district, for example, management and labor worked together to turn around a failing middle school that had not yet been placed on an official “turnaround” list (Futernick et al., 2012). Likewise, leaders in the New Haven Public Schools in Connecticut agreed to address student achievement gaps in response to increasingly vocal calls for improvement from the local community:

*With the general charge to “do something differently” from the mayor’s office and the New Haven business and university community, the New Haven School...*
Change Initiative was launched in the winter of 2009. The mandatory contract negotiations at this time dictated a unique strategic approach. In concert with the teachers’ union, the superintendent’s office set up nonconventional “reform tables” to talk about broad ranging issues and concerns and to engage all stakeholders, including newly invited groups of teachers and administrators. The overall school change initiative soon became about targeting the three areas of differentiated school tiers, the assessment of teachers and principals, and engaging community members in the work of school reform. (Eckert, 2011, p. 34)

Eckert (2011) found that collaborative districts tend to share a general, but explicit, commitment to improving student learning and closing achievement gaps, and it appears that, in some districts, student achievement gaps catalyzed initial stakeholder collaboration. However, most of the case studies do not provide insight into how stakeholders came to perceive steadily growing achievement problems as shared priorities. Future research should be undertaken to study and reveal useful strategies that could be employed to promote labor-management collaboration in all districts and especially those with persistent student achievement problems.

**External Assistance and Exposure to Successful Collaboration Models**

Nearly one-fifth of the districts analyzed here indicated they would not have initiated LMC were it not for the offers of technical assistance they received from experts through universities, nonprofit organizations, or government agencies. Yale University personnel actively advocated for and provided assistance with LMC in the New Haven Public Schools. Collaboration and conflict resolution programs offered by institutions such as Rutgers, Cornell, and Harvard appear to have stimulated and sustained collaboration in many other districts.

Several districts also reported pursuing LMC after participating in the Denver Labor-Management Collaboration Conference in 2011, where local leaders engaged in face-to-face interactions with teams from collaborative districts. Local leaders were impressed by the firsthand accounts of success from their peers working in other districts. One attendee wrote, “Before this conference there were only adversarial conversations among the three stakeholders. We meet regularly now to collaborate around student success in our district.” A labor leader who attended the conference said, “We would not have started any collaboration at all if not for the conference invitation and everything that went along with that” (Futernick et al., 2012, p 5).

**The Impact of Labor-Management Collaboration**

The case study analysis indicated that LMC commonly led to two types of outcomes that have the potential to improve school quality. The first is improved professional relationships and trust among district leaders, which allows for more effective communication and problem solving. This achievement is considerable as a large body of research indicates that without trust, teachers tend to isolate themselves in the classroom and fail to develop the professional capital necessary to improve student learning.

The second area of impact, and the one to which the greatest attention is devoted in this report, is the adoption of new district policies that are associated with effective classroom instruction and improved student outcomes. The most important policies that emerged from LMC include improved teacher evaluation systems, peer assistance and review programs, and extended
student learning time. No evidence was found that such policies have been developed or sustained in the absence of some degree of LMC.

**Improved Professional Relationships**

Collaboration among education stakeholders is a means to an end, not an end in itself. As Humphrey et al. (2011) point out in their recent book on peer assistance and review,

*The promise of collaborative bargaining is not simply in changing the tenor of the discussion, in increasing the level of civility. The promise of collaborative bargaining lies in altering the substance of labor-management discussions and agreements. It lies in management and union being willing to examine the previously unexamined, doing the hard work together of confronting tough, high-stakes issues, and reaching accord on how to proceed when decisions carry real and human consequences.* (p. 30)

In nearly all of the district case studies reviewed for this report, stakeholders described improved professional relationships and trust as the foundation for effective problem solving and the development of policies that support student learning (Eckert, 2011; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010; WestEd, 2011). Virtually all stakeholders and researchers who conducted the case studies expressed a belief that *trust* was an essential—if not *the* essential—ingredient in changes that led to better outcomes for students.

According to Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2002), trust in schools is best conceptualized as the outcome of everyday interactions where stakeholders rely on each other in a web of interdependent relationships. Parents, teachers, and administrators are particularly dependent on each other since each plays a critical role supporting student success. Since these stakeholders typically do not monitor or control one another’s actions, they must trust that each is adhering to established norms and expectations and is carrying out its respective responsibilities competently.

David McLain and Katarina Hackman (1999) find that stakeholders are more willing to assume risks associated with organizational change when they have confidence that key decision makers will take their interests into account. Schools with little trust among staff do not risk change even when their current practices are ineffective. District stakeholder descriptions of trust were consistent with this finding and with Bryk’s definition of trust.

Despite broad agreement about the importance of trust, the concept is difficult to define and measure. In most of the cases reviewed for this analysis, stakeholders and researchers described it as a mindset or social capacity that emerged from and contributed to LMC. More trusting relationships were often accompanied by increased transparency and a willingness to share critical information. Most often this information sharing involved budget and financial information, which was especially important during fiscal crises.

In several cases, districts adopted viable and broadly supported budgets primarily because of the trust and transparency that emerged through a collaborative environment. For example,
teachers in Baltimore City Public Schools were willing to ratify a new contract only after district leaders provided them with previously undisclosed budget information.

In order to achieve the trust, the district decided to “open the books” willingly ... and allow for the union leadership team to validate the information and understand the fiscal condition of the district. The second time around, teachers ratified the contract, because their concerns were addressed and because time was allotted to communicate details of the contract to them. (Eckert, 2011, p. 13)

When the ABC Unified School District in California faced a severe budget shortfall, stakeholders were invited to review alternative budget scenarios in a number of public forums. The union ultimately proposed furlough days for teachers that saved $6 million and prevented layoffs. School board members also agreed to take a proportionate cut in their own stipends (Eckert, 2011), signaling a commitment to share the financial burden.

Conflict and power struggles are a natural part of organizational life, but constructive conflict can improve individual and organizational growth and problem-solving capacity (Pfeffer, 2010; Schwarz, 1994). Several stakeholders from districts with a long history of LMC described conflict as manageable and productive when stakeholders trusted each other to respond to conflict proactively and respectfully. This shared commitment to resolving conflict often generated tangible outcomes, as was the case in Douglas County School District in Colorado. Union president Brenda Smith described the effect of improved professional relationships on the formal grievance process in her district at the time:

Our district has really focused in on relationship building. We, as an organization, as a teacher’s voice, are always at the table talking about what’s next so there are no surprises. We have not filed a grievance in over six years. We typically make a phone call prior to a grievance and solve issues through dialogue and open communication. Part of this comes from building relationships, getting to know whom you’re dealing with inside the system and when there are problems, solving them very quickly. (Smith cited in Eckert, 2011, p. 17)

Five additional districts attributed a reduction in formal grievances to increased trust and a willingness of management and labor to address conflicts early as they emerged. By saving time and money on formal grievance processes, many districts were able to devote more time to practices and policies that positively impacted student learning.

District Policies That Improve Teaching and Learning
The following section briefly examines several specific district policy initiatives that are associated with improved teaching and learning and that have emerged through LMC across the labor-management studies under review. For each policy initiative—teacher evaluation, peer assistance and review, and expanded learning time—a description of how LMC contributed to its adoption is offered, along with a discussion of the evidence showing a link between these policies and improved teaching and learning.

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6 Collaboration efforts in Douglas County schools were largely abandoned after new several new members were elected to the school board in 2012.
Improved Teacher Evaluation Systems

The federal Race to the Top program, the School Improvement Grant program, and funding initiatives from organizations like the Gates Foundation have required the adoption of educator evaluation systems that include measures of student academic growth. Such evaluations are also a key condition for districts seeking waivers for sanctions imposed by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. According to Sara Rosenberg and Elena Silva (2012), “Teacher evaluation is, without question, the fastest-moving and most controversial area of reform in education today” (p. 4).

Many teachers and union leaders have resisted the use of student test scores for evaluation purposes, including “value-added” models that attempt to show a teacher’s impact on student achievement while accounting for such variables as poverty and language proficiency (Rosenberg & Silva, 2012). But some union leaders have begun to see the call for change as an opportunity to replace obsolete, meaningless evaluation systems with ones that help teachers improve their practice. In 2010, the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) agreed to tie teacher promotions to improvements in student learning (as judged by teachers and their evaluators), provided that decisions on promotions would also be based on several other factors, including observations of practice, student and teacher portfolios, and teacher self-assessments. MTA also insisted that extra support be provided for new and struggling teachers (Oakes, 2010).

Randi Weingarten (2012), president of the American Federation of Teachers, and Dennis Van Roekel (2011), president of the National Education Association, have indicated that they support calls for evaluation reform provided that the new systems are fair and are used to help teachers improve their practice. In a letter to the New York Times, Weingarten (Weingarten, January 19, 2012) writes:

> As president of the American Federation of Teachers, I know that local unions across the country have embraced an education agenda that includes a laser-like focus on how to improve teaching and learning, starting with a teacher development and evaluation process now being used by many school districts. That framework squarely addresses evaluating teachers, improving teacher practice and removing those who are ineffective.

In nearly half of the district cases analyzed for this report, teacher evaluation redesign was the key driver of LMC. Several stakeholders in these districts indicated that LMC had increased teacher support for their new evaluation systems. Teachers appear to be ready and willing to support more rigorous evaluations, but only when a culture of trust has been established previously.

In 2000, after attending the American Federation of Teachers Educational Research and Dissemination program, union leaders worked collaboratively with management in Minnesota’s St. Francis Independent School District to establish a “Teacher Academy” to support professional development, evaluation, and compensation innovations. In 2005, in response to a state funding initiative, the collaboration led to the development of the Student Performance Improvement Program (SPIP). SPIP incorporated a career ladder and additional pay for accomplished teachers and a new teacher evaluation system. Initially, only 54 percent of the
district’s teachers supported this program, but within one year, 85 percent of the district’s
teachers voted to support it, and 90 percent of the teachers were participating in SPIP a few
years later (Eckert, 2011). St. Francis union leaders and administrators worked together to
increase support for the program, and teacher evaluations and observations conducted jointly by
a team of peers and an administrator were central to program’s success. Leaders also credit
their low teacher turnover rate (less than 2 percent per year) to SPIP (Rubinstein & McCarthy,
2010).

In 2009, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Tulsa Public Schools’
(TPS) administrators and union leaders collaborated to develop a multiple-measure teacher
evaluation system that received nearly unanimous support from teachers (WestEd, 2011). The
Tulsa Teacher and Leader Effectiveness (TLE) Observation and Evaluation system includes 20
performance indicators that link teaching practices to student achievement. This system is now
the preferred model of the Oklahoma Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Commission and is
being shared with other Oklahoma districts. According to Keith Ballard, TPS superintendent, TLE
was developed through “a highly collaborative effort, with a research-based evaluation model
that was developed with teachers, for teachers.” Lynn Stockley, President of the Tulsa
Classroom Teachers Association, added, “When teachers are a part of the process, they set
high levels of accountability for themselves” (Tulsa Public Schools, 2012).

The manner in which collaboration led to the design and implementation of each evaluation
system varied from district to district across the cases reviewed for this analysis. Some districts
established formal committees with labor and management representatives, while others
obtained input and buy-in through informal processes.

Districts may be able to design and implement new teacher evaluation systems in the absence of
the more intentional and comprehensive collaboration seen in a number of these LMC cases, but
additional research is needed to evaluate the quality of implementation and the effects on
teaching quality and student outcomes. Instances where districts have adopted new teacher
evaluation systems in the absence of collaboration can be found in Race to the Top states and
where state or local board policy have required districts to adopt new teacher evaluation
systems.

**Peer Assistance and Review Programs**

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs first emerged in Toledo, Ohio, in 1981 and were
spearheaded by Dal Lawrence, former president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers. PAR is
designed to improve classroom instruction by allowing accomplished teachers to work with new
teachers and to help struggling veteran teachers. PAR programs are also designed to assist with
decisions about whether to retain teachers. Typically, PAR panels (joint labor-management
committees) oversee the program and select the accomplished teachers responsible for
supporting and assessing other teachers in the district. A number of studies suggest that PAR
programs generate promising results for teachers and students. The most effective PAR
programs have been shown to improve teacher retention rates, help struggling teachers improve
their practice, and assist with the dismissal of ineffective teachers (Harvard Graduate School of
Education, 2012; Qazilbash et al., 2009).
In their 2011 study of PAR programs, researchers from SRI International and Koppich and Associates observed, “It often is the union that brings the idea of peer review to the district. PAR programs hinge on the union being an active half of the partnership that makes PAR work” (Humphrey et al., 2011, p. 29). In their analysis of the role labor-management collaboration has played in developing and implementing PAR in two California school districts, the authors say:

The promise of collaborative bargaining is not simply in changing the tenor of the discussion, in increasing the level of civility. The promise of collaborative bargaining lies in altering the substance of labor-management discussions and agreements. It lies in management and union being willing to examine the previously unexamined, doing the hard work together of confronting tough, high-stakes issues, and reaching accord on how to proceed when decisions carry real and human consequences. In the PAR programs in Poway and San Juan, the promise of collaborative bargaining is fully realized. No weak demonstration of feel-good cooperation, the union-management bonds forged in PAR have created a culture of collaboration that enables the parties together to make important decisions on teacher performance and evaluation. (p. 30)

How LMC Paved the Way for PAR in the Plattsburgh City School District

The Plattsburgh City School District in New York experienced years of contentious labor-management relations before adopting a collaborative approach. This new relationship laid the groundwork for a successful implementation of PAR. When this policy was developed in 2009 through a new, shared decision-making process, labor and management leaders in Plattsburgh explicitly stated that PAR’s primary purpose was to promote teacher development and not to fire ineffective teachers. To ensure the program would be implemented well, a diverse PAR design team—including teachers, administrators, and a representative from The State University of New York at Plattsburgh—attended two three-day meetings every three months for over a year (WestEd, 2011). Plattsburgh designed and implemented a PAR system that emphasized “shared risk taking, informed professional practice, and high level student outcomes” (Eckert, 2011, p. 38). The design team continues to direct the district’s professional development efforts, observes all new teachers up to 20 times each year, and provides administrators with extensive data to support tenure decisions.

Several case studies, including Plattsburgh, also pointed to the important role that LMC played in adopting and implementing effective PAR programs. Teachers and administrators jointly established common expectations for teachers, goals for students, and new roles for accomplished teachers who would evaluate and assist their peers, all of which were incorporated into their labor contracts through collective bargaining. Stakeholders from multiple districts report that LMC had helped strengthen, and in some cases, save fledgling PAR programs. This was the case in the Syracuse City School District, which reveals the interdependent nature of LMC and PAR in supporting one another through systemic and sustainable change over time.

Improved district relationships proved extremely valuable when an eleventh hour grievance from the principals’ union in 2005 “shocked” the PAR workgroup and threatened to derail the Syracuse PAR program. But the prior external facilitation
had improved labor-management relationships and gave district stakeholders the tools and skills to work through the grievance. The result was a consensus among management, the teachers’ union, and the principals’ union and a memorandum of understanding that preserved the district’s PAR program. (WestEd, 2011, p. 34)

One key finding from the case study analysis is that programs like PAR, which can have a significant impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning, may be developed and sustained only where there is successful LMC. While PAR programs vary in their effectiveness, no evidence was found in the research reviewed that any PAR programs have emerged in the absence of LMC.

Another important finding is that PAR programs are extraordinarily difficult to implement. Principals must be willing to relinquish authority as the sole evaluators of teachers; they must recognize and be able to support consulting teachers who have taken on evaluative responsibilities. This shift in roles and expectations requires a commitment to distributed leadership in general and LMC in particular. Districts that adopt PAR programs typically form joint-governance panels, and they must incorporate PAR agreements into their labor contracts. According to Qazilbash et al. (2009), unions and management must learn to distribute authority in fundamentally new ways:

Because PAR engages teachers in evaluating other teachers—a responsibility that previously was exclusively held by principals and other school-based administrators—both teachers and administrators must agree to redistribute their responsibilities and work together to improve the quality of the work of teachers in their schools. This shift requires them to enter a new kind of working relationship, one for which there is no blueprint...This transformation to a collaborative working relationship typically occurs first between upper management and union leaders, but eventually must also develop between principals and teachers, who work together both on the PAR Panel and in schools. (p. 10)

As is the case with the development of new teacher evaluation programs and expanded learning time, LMC appears to create more fertile ground for the development of PAR programs (Humphrey et al., 2011; Qazilbash et al., 2009). But the case studies on PAR also illustrate that the design and implementation of these programs operate in the reverse direction—they often trigger or strengthen LMC on other initiatives in the district, which suggests that PAR may be a good place for districts to focus their collaborative efforts if they have not done so already.

Expanded Learning Time
A growing body of research suggests that expanded time for student learning, when coupled with high-quality professional development for teachers, improves student outcomes (Farbman, 2012). A recent study of expanded learning time’s (ELT’s) effects on student learning in approximately 80 districts (Redd et al., 2012) found that ELT appeared to narrow the achievement gap for some disadvantaged students, and that it was especially likely to increase student achievement when combined with additional support for students and families. A number
of philanthropic and nonprofit organizations have begun to promote ELT in light of these findings, and it has become a key component of the federal education reform agenda.\textsuperscript{7}

Despite these promising results, however, early research suggests that, without some degree of LMC, ELT may be implemented poorly and fail to produce desired learning outcomes for students. Zakia Redd et al. (2012) found that overall ELT results were mixed largely because the quality of planning and implementation varied significantly among the districts studied. ELT programs that showed no measurable improvement frequently suffered from both low levels of student participation and a lack of teacher buy-in. These researchers concluded that ELT initiatives only are likely to improve student achievement if district leaders simultaneously develop stakeholder support throughout their systems. ELT especially requires increased time in staff schedules for teacher collaboration, coaching, and evaluation so that additional time for instruction is used well.

\textbf{Expanded Learning Time and Labor-Management Collaboration in Massachusetts}

In 2005, Massachusetts initiated a statewide ELT initiative that illuminates both the promise and complexities of ELT. Ten schools in five districts engaged in significant LMC efforts to develop joint union-management plans that received state approval. The statewide program resulted in 19 schools, serving over 10,500 students, which added a total of 300 hours per academic year to their schedules. Teachers were paid stipends for their additional work and used ELT not only to review material covered during the school day but also for enrichment activities related to the arts, physical education, and technology. Although initial reports showed significant gains by students in ELT schools, a more recent report found that student achievement had “not materialized as expected across ELT schools as a whole.” (Abt Associates, 2012, p. xix)

What was the problem? Student fatigue in ELT programs may have accounted for some of the lackluster results. Abt Associates also discovered that implementation strategies for ELT varied considerably among schools and that researchers had not measured the quality of instruction or enrichment activities. Some schools and teachers freely chose to explore ELT. However, others were strongly encouraged and perhaps even pushed into doing so by district leaders (WestEd, 2011). A large body of research indicates that such conditions are not propitious for the implementation of new initiatives, since school change requires a strong sense of buy-in from the professionals who are most engaged with students and their learning on a daily basis (Evans, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; MacDonald & Shirley, 2009).

\textsuperscript{7} Low-performing schools participating in the federal School Improvement Grant program are required to increase time for student learning and for teacher collaboration.
A comprehensive study of a large-scale ELT initiative in Massachusetts, conducted by Hilary Pennington (2007), found that early teacher and union involvement was critical to the design and implementation of high-quality ELT:

*Involving teachers and unions from the start of planning is essential. Too often in school reform efforts, administrators take on new projects or initiatives without first consulting teachers. The districts and schools that were able to successfully plan a longer school day and gain union agreement were those that involved teachers on the planning team and solicited their feedback on various features of a redesigned educational program.* (p. 4)

These findings indicate LMC will improve the likelihood that ELT initiatives will be effectively implemented to support student learning. The National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL), one of the nation’s leading authorities on ELT, provides resources and technical assistance on ELT implementation. NCTL recommended that Massachusetts’s ELT initiative leaders consider several questions when negotiating ELT agreements: how teacher schedules are staggered, how professional development and collaborative planning time are allotted, how teachers are compensated, and whether or not the policies become a side agreement or part of the full contract (National Center on Time & Learning, n.d.).

**Practices That Promote and Sustain Effective Labor-Management Collaboration**

The case studies analyzed show that LMC is extraordinarily challenging, especially in the early stages when stakeholders have little experience with the process. This difficulty was the case for a small number of districts that sent leadership teams to the national LMC conference in Denver. Several teams that left the conference with high hopes and a plan for collaboration abandoned their efforts as a result of changes in leadership or when local stakeholders did not immediately support the call for a collaborative relationship between labor and management. One superintendent from a West Coast district reported that a newly elected union leader had actively opposed LMC efforts that her predecessor supported. A union leader in a Midwestern district encountered local political officials that opposed LMC on the grounds that it wasted resources during a period of fiscal austerity (Futermick et al., 2012).

Despite the challenging nature of LMC, a growing number of districts are overcoming obstacles and establishing productive labor-management partnerships. All of the district cases with a lengthy history of LMC appear to have at least one characteristic in common: they are purpose and solution driven. They view LMC not as an end in itself, but as a means to solving problems and improving their schools. Most of them also have extended the use of collaboration beyond the district office and beyond a single policy issue. A wide range of stakeholders embrace collaboration—it is promoted at the school level between principals and union site leaders and is a part of the district culture. Collaboration does not stop when superintendents, union leaders, or board members leave these positions.
Beyond these two characteristics found in most of the 50 district cases, 8 19 additional practices contributed in varying degrees to effective LMC (see Appendix C). Each practice appeared in at least six or more cases, which are organized into the following overarching categories: (a) a shared commitment to student learning, (b) effective communication, (c) networking and outside assistance, (d) collaborative and distributed leadership, and (e) interest-based bargaining processes. In districts with a long and successful history of LMC, stakeholders frequently took deliberate steps to attend to each of these areas on an ongoing basis.

A Shared Commitment to Student Learning

The most common practice in high-LMC districts was a consistent, shared focus on the quality of education provided to the district’s students. Sustained efforts to pursue LMC began in 2008 in the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OCPS) when a new superintendent encouraged more collaborative labor-management relations and a shared focus on student learning. When asked to explain the success they have experienced with LMC, OCPS union president Ed Allen said, “Key leaders on both sides must be willing to approach the relationship differently, with student achievement at the center of the conversation” (WestEd, 2011, p. 15). In OCPS, challenging SIG meetings ultimately led to a mutually acceptable plan to turn around the district’s five SIG schools. Several districts drafted collaborative working agreements that explicitly prioritized student achievement goals. In Colorado’s Douglas County School District, for instance, the Douglas County Federation of Teachers incorporated language in its constitution that focused on improving education opportunities for students but also on democratic participation by all stakeholders, including students. In one DCSD high school, students participated in interviews with prospective teacher candidates and submitted feedback to school administrators during recruitment processes. School and community stakeholders also collaborated to address emerging student needs. 9 In Green Dot Public Schools, a Los Angeles Charter Management Association with 18 schools, administrators and union representatives explicitly prioritize student interests as they negotiate contracts. Green Dot President and Chief Executive Officer Marco Petruzzi reported that they begin with a traditional contract and review each section asking, “What does this do for students?” (Eckert, 2011, p. 21).

According to communications expert Eric Eisenberg (1995), a focus on concrete student experiences minimizes unnecessary conflict and keeps group communication centered on outcomes and ideas that impact students most directly. Stakeholders from numerous districts described how an explicit commitment to understanding—and believing in—students had helped to resolve interpersonal conflicts and kept groups focused on student-centered initiatives. Like most districts, the following guiding principles of the ABC Unified School District in southern California emphasize the district’s commitment to student success, but they also do something that is seldom seen in the mission and vision statements of most districts. They describe how management and labor will interact to support students:

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8 Initially, 50 district cases from seven source documents were analyzed, and 14 districts were removed because they did not meet the following criteria: (a) general applicability to multiple district regions or states, (b) at least 18 months of uninterrupted experience with LMC, and (c) sufficient detail on LMC practices.

9 As noted earlier, collaboration efforts in Douglas County schools were largely abandoned after new several new members were elected to the school board in 2012.
• All students can succeed; we will not accept any excuses and will work together to promote student achievement.
• We won’t let each other fail.
• We will respect each other, be honest with each other, and maintain confidentiality.
• We will not “sugar coat” difficult issues, but we will disagree without being disagreeable.
• We will reflect on each other’s comments, suggestions, and concerns, seeking clarification until we understand.
• We will both “own the contract.”
• We will aim to solve problems rather than win arguments.
• We will laugh at ourselves and with each other. (eSchool Media, 2011, p. 1)

A common commitment to student outcomes appeared to reduce unproductive conflict and allows collaboration to become a strategy that is used by stakeholders throughout the district to solve a wide variety of problems.

Effective Communication

Improved informal and formal communication among stakeholders aided district efforts to build trust and sustain LMC. Informal interactions were sometimes described as small gestures that demonstrated respect and goodwill. Friendly greetings, a willingness to entertain thoughtful questions, and a sense of inclusion allowed stakeholders in many districts to remain committed to the LMC process, even when disagreements surfaced and could not be resolved. According to Tripp Jeffers, President of the Forsyth County Association of Educators, a good relationship is built on “expectations of inclusion and input,” so that “you’re able to agree to disagree” (Jeffers cited in Eckert, 2011, p. 45).

Numerous labor leaders and administrators also reflected on how trust had been initiated or strengthened through conversations over shared meals. For example, the deputy superintendent and union president from Chelsea Public Schools in Massachusetts reported that “eating breakfast and dinner together further solidified trust among stakeholders in the district,” (WestEd, 2011, p. 12), and Kate McKenna, former president of the Syracuse Teachers Association, described how a difficult agreement had been reached over a meal: “It’s hard to sit across from somebody and eat without talking” (WestEd, 2011, p. 33). According to Mary Ferriter, President of the Chelsea Teachers’ Union, these kinds of informal interactions “made us all human” (WestEd, 2011, p. 12).

These descriptions of informal trust-building interactions are consistent with Julie Kochanek’s (2005) observation that individuals develop trust in another’s interests, competence, and goodwill primarily through everyday personal experiences. Formal labor-management agreements and clearly defined decision-making processes appear necessary, but they are insufficient to support trusting labor-management relationships. The important lesson for districts attempting to implement LMC is that they must ensure there are numerous opportunities for informal, personal, and meaningful interactions among stakeholders. It is in these small, prosaic interactions of everyday life that trust must be won.

In districts where mistrust prevented the creation of a collaborative atmosphere, having ground rules and written guidelines helped to build trust and improve collaboration. In nearly one-third of
the district cases reviewed for this analysis, stakeholders had adopted agreements of various types to guide them through the difficult phases of group interactions and to reduce unproductive conflict. For example, in Maryland’s Montgomery County Public Schools, LMC efforts involved a “compact of respect” that “defines the culture and behaviors expected throughout the negotiating process” (Eckert, 2011, p. 29). Many organizational theorists have found that explicit ground rules like these help groups and group facilitators to maintain focus, reduce conflicts, and reflect more openly on difficult decisions (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1983; Schwarz, 1994).

Several superintendents reported that transparent communication about budgets, decisions, and district activities was also critical to successful LMC. According to Barbara Gray (1989), a researcher who has written extensively on collaboration, the process is most productive when stakeholders gather information jointly and strive to gain a consensus on the facts that are most relevant to understanding and solving a given problem. Gray also says that ready access to essential information reduces time “spent arguing over whose facts are right” (p. 81). In a few cases, district stakeholders attributed breakdowns in LMC to a lack of budget transparency and disagreements about relevant facts (Futernick et al., 2012).

To promote transparent communication, several districts frequently use surveys and public forums to obtain input from teachers, staff, families, and community members. The Montgomery County Public Schools and ABC Unified School District regularly seek input from parents about strategies for improving student learning (Futernick et al., 2012). The Hillsborough County Public Schools in Florida conducts “pulse checks” to monitor teachers’ attitudes and to obtain input on new initiatives (Eckert, 2011). Numerous stakeholders reported that improved communication and trust were deeply intertwined. According to Kevin Larson, a Douglas County parent:

> *If people don't feel there is trust between the leadership and the front line, when in doubt, with loss in communication, you assume the worst. What must happen is lots of communication. Then, when you don't know all the details, you assume the best is actually occurring, and the energy is spent getting innovations implemented.* (Eckert, 2011, p. 17)

These findings demonstrate that effective, frequent, and transparent communication among stakeholders within a district is a key determinant of successful collaboration between labor and management.

**Networking and Outside Assistance**

In the majority of cases reviewed for this analysis, LMC was strengthened as district stakeholders were able to network with others outside the district who were also engaged in LMC. Multiple district stakeholders reported that participation with organizations like the Teachers Union Reform Network (TURN) enabled them to learn new collaboration strategies from other districts.

Several district leaders who attended the Denver labor-management conference reported that time with district stakeholders and colleagues helped them identify new LMC strategies (Futernick et al., 2012). After the conference, one participant commented, “We learned how healthy dialogue and collaboration could inform school improvement, not in theory, but through practical example. I look forward to researching their systems to inform our work at home.”
Leaders in 19 of the cases reviewed have also relied on external assistance to initiate and sustain their LMC efforts. For example, the Spencer-Van Etten Central School District began pursuing a more collaborative approach during the early 1970s when district stakeholders attended conflict resolution and collaboration training sessions at New York University. During this time, Van Etten became an experimental site for a Cornell University labor relations project and continued to receive assistance from Cornell faculty for several years (Futernick et al., 2012). In 1989, stakeholders in California’s San Juan Unified School District reported that a strike would have occurred were it not for the assistance of the Harvard Negotiation Project, which trained San Juan stakeholders in interest-based bargaining strategies. According to Tom Alves, “This training was extremely successful, stuck with the district, and became the foundation for all future collaboration” (WestEd, 2011, p. 30).

Of note, several of the districts with more than ten years of LMC experience continue to seek regular assistance and training from universities, nonprofits, and labor organizations. Management and labor leaders from the ABC Unified School District have attended American Federation of Teachers-sponsored retreats that have focused on collaboration strategies (Eckert, 2011). Leaders from the Montgomery County Public Schools and the Norfolk Public Schools in Virginia have participated in a Panasonic-sponsored program that provides union leaders, administrators, and school board members with training and an annual multi-district retreat to improve skills related to planning, problem solving, and communication (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010). Neutral, third-party facilitators who assist with communication between district leaders play an important role in LMC. Districts are more likely to sustain a collaborative environment when they have opportunities to share experiences and receive ongoing training and support, especially for new leaders.

**Collaborative and Distributed Leadership**

Collaborative leaders played a significant role in virtually all of the cases reviewed. In describing these individuals, local stakeholders often said the leaders expressed concern for the well-being of all parties. They were good listeners who worked to reduce stress and conflict. When describing collaborative superintendents, union leaders pointed frequently to their allocation of time and space—in the form of open-door policies, shared meals, and a willingness to have casual conversations away from the office. These informal practices built trust and sustained vital relationships between stakeholders (Futernick et al., 2012). Collaborative leadership between union leaders and school board members was also a common element in many case studies.

In numerous district cases, leadership was distributed among stakeholder groups and not concentrated among a few key leaders. Approximately one-third of the district cases involved the active diffusion of leadership and the creation of new organizational structures, so that school site leaders and teacher leaders were responsible for important school initiatives associated with LMC. In many of these districts, LMC stakeholders recruited and coached teacher leaders and administrators. In the Plattsburgh City School District, for example, the union and district teamed up to bring in consensus-building trainers from New York State United Teachers. This collaboration ultimately resulted in a shared decision-making agreement for all six of the district’s
The agreement created the structure for school improvement planning teams and a districtwide improvement committee (WestEd, 2011).

A growing body of research (not specifically focused on labor-management relations) suggests that distributed leadership is associated with increased student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Distributed leadership does not represent an individual role or set of character traits, but a process of interaction between leaders and across leadership teams (Thorpe, Gold, & Lawler, 2011). In their analysis of 27 school leadership studies, Les Bell, Ray Bolam, and Leela Cubillo (2003) found that the impact of head teachers and principals on student outcomes was largely indirect and mediated by other influential stakeholders and relationships. For example, James Spillane, Richard Halverson, and John Diamond (2001) conducted a study of collaborative leadership in 13 Chicago elementary schools, which demonstrated how leadership teams—rather than individual leaders—worked to interpret student exam results and develop effective changes in instruction.

This outcome suggests that collaborative leadership is an important way of conceptualizing effective school leadership because school improvement requires the coordinated implementation and dissemination of a wide range of practices across districts. When leadership is distributed more broadly, influential stakeholders can co-construct and support new practices more consistently. For example, Eric Camburn and Won Han (2009) found that teachers across 30 elementary schools that implemented the America’s Choice comprehensive school reform program were more likely to adopt recommended literacy instruction practices if they regularly interacted with instructional leaders.

Emerging research on distributed leadership is also aligned with a growing effort to narrow the gap between research and the implementation of practices supported by research. According to Dean Fixsen, Co-Director of the National Implementation Research Network, more effective leadership and leadership teams are essential contributors to improved implementation. Leaders must be selected carefully, they must be given adequate support and training, and they must work as leadership teams rather than as individuals with increased authority (Fixsen et al., 2005). This suggests there is an important, but under-researched, relationship between LMC, distributed leadership, and implementation of evidence-based practices to support student achievement.

**Interest-Based Bargaining Processes**

As many of the LMC case studies illustrate, leaders in highly collaborative districts solve problems together and frequently undertake joint initiatives that advance student learning. But nowhere is LMC more important in these districts than at the bargaining table. Collaboration would not be sustainable if contract negotiations led to bitter disputes and damaged relationships among leaders.

Approximately one-third of the districts examined here have implemented interest-based bargaining (IBB) strategies, a process through which labor and management work collaboratively

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10 New York State now requires shared decision-making for all schools, but this agreement was secured prior to the statewide requirement.
to develop innovative and mutually acceptable agreements based on a broad set of interests rather than pre-existing demands. Virtually all of these districts learned to use IBB with the support of an outside facilitator. With the more traditional position-based approach to negotiations, stakeholders typically come to the bargaining table with well-established and dramatically different positions. Each side frequently takes extreme positions early in the process so they can make concessions and demonstrate a willingness to compromise later. In contrast, IBB requires stakeholders to share information openly and to work collaboratively to develop solutions that address common interests (Duvall, 2009). The early stages of an IBB process require each group to identify the outcomes they are interested in and to refrain from adopting a specific bargaining position with pre-established solutions or demands. IBB is typically conducted as an ongoing process of shared planning and problem solving rather than a periodic renegotiation of issues. In some districts, this collaborative process made it easier for stakeholders to sustain trusting relationships. For example, in the Montgomery County Public Schools, union and administrative leaders reported that their ongoing IBB strategies helped them interact respectfully, even when issues became contentious.

Labor and management team leaders in the Hamilton County Public School District receive IBB training every one to two years to ensure continuity as leaders are replaced. They used an IBB approach to work through the difficult process of reconstituting the district’s low-performing schools and design an incentive pay program to reward teachers for their work in hard-to-staff schools (WestEd, 2011). In addition, at least six districts using IBB have developed simple memoranda of understanding, with side agreements or continuous contracts, to increase flexibility and allow stakeholders to reconsider or redesign agreements around emerging interests without having to renegotiate an entire contract.

IBB has proven to be an effective approach to contract negotiations in some public and private sector organizations. Many collaborative districts use this approach not only because it advances the interests of labor and management, but also because it preserves professional relationships and the spirit of collaboration that is useful when solving other problems unrelated to collective bargaining.

Despite evidence of IBB’s capacity to improve stakeholder relationships, little research has been conducted to determine how IBB impacts stakeholder agreements and outcomes in schools (Klingel, 2003). Based on their study of IBB at Kaiser Permanente, Robert McKersie et al. (2008) find that IBB often represents a superior alternative, but they recommend in some cases that it supplement, rather than displace, traditional position-based approaches. These studies suggest that more research is needed to help districts assess where and when IBB is likely to be most beneficial in building organizational relationships and supporting improved student achievement.

**A Proposed Set of Indicators of Effective Labor-Management Collaboration**

The districts selected for this study were, in the researchers’ view, exemplars of effective labor-management collaboration. But each of the researchers used a different set of criteria to select the subject for their studies. The study conducted by scholars from Rutgers University, Cornell
University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for example, selected districts on the basis of “having a lengthy track record of innovation, and because they appear to have institutionalized a long-term collaborative partnership between administration and the local teachers’ union centered around school improvement, student achievement, and teacher quality” (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010). Jonathan Eckert chose 12 districts that had noteworthy partnerships, which administrators, school board members, and union leaders described at the 2011 labor-management collaboration conference (Eckert, 2011).

Other researchers used different filters. While there is no reason to doubt that the districts they chose are credible exemplars of labor-management collaboration, simply putting districts into one camp or the other is not the most useful way to describe the complex and varied ways labor and management work with one another. Some may collaborate well on fiscal matters, but not on policies directly affecting instruction or curriculum. Some may have used collaboration to create highly effective PAR programs but not on any other district initiatives.

Below are a proposed, preliminary set of indicators that would allow researchers, education officials, external support providers, and local educators to accurately assess the level and type of collaboration that exists in a district. Assessments based on common indicators would provide a useful picture of the current state of collaboration, patterns across geographic areas, changes in practices over time, and areas of strength and need. These indicators are based on the criteria that have been used by researchers and by the promising practices cited earlier that have emerged from case study research. The recommendations for additional research in Section IV also suggest that rubrics be developed that could be used to assess the level of attainment for each of the indicators.

Labor and management agree to do the following:

- Commit to establishing and maintaining a collaborative relationship.
- Share common goals and a mission tied to improved student learning.
- Implement organizational policies and practices, including shared decision-making structures and processes, to improve learning for students.
- Maintain trusting and respectful relationships through open and honest dialogue, by sharing information that impacts both parties, and by refraining from making disparaging remarks about the other side in public.
- Jointly address problems that are beyond the scope of the contract or collective bargaining agreements.
- Actively engage all district stakeholders in meaningful decision-making—including teachers (not just their leaders), board members, non-certificated staff, administrators, families, and community members.
- Ensure that the district’s budget and the budget decision-making process are transparent and presented in a manner that all stakeholders can understand.
- Periodically assess the strength and effectiveness of the partnership and make adjustments as needed.
- Support and hold one another accountable to their mutual commitments.
- Receive support for collaboration from their respective regional, state, and professional organizations.
Section IV – Recommendations for Further Research

America’s teachers’ unions have come under close scrutiny in recent years. Some observers believe that unions are an impediment to education reform because they represent only the interests of teachers and not students. Others argue that unions provide important workplace protections for teachers who would otherwise be subject to arbitrary and unfair treatment. However, if Nicholas Kristof is right, and teachers’ unions are indeed here to stay despite the contentious debates, the question should be: How should management engage with teachers’ unions so that students receive the greatest education opportunity? There is little evidence that the adversarial model has led to much progress. In fact, the confrontational climate that has dominated labor relations in education over the past few decades could well be a reason that America’s schools have made so little progress. At a time when budgets are tight and the availability of promising reforms so few, the emergence of a high-leverage, inexpensive way to improve the nation’s schools provides hope for a better future for America’s students.

While a collaborative approach between labor and management does not guarantee better outcomes for students, the case study research examined in this report suggests that the chances improve significantly. This optimism is based, however, on a relatively small number of case studies by researchers using different methodologies. As a result, many important questions remain unanswered. One cannot say, for instance, how many U.S. school districts are engaged in LMC. Nor can researchers establish a causal link between LMC and student outcomes until studies are conducted to determine whether non-collaborative districts are just as likely to achieve similar results. Below we point to several research questions that should be answered about LMC in U.S. school districts.

What portion of U.S. school districts practice labor-management collaboration? What portion would like to practice it?

LMC in U.S. school districts is the exception, not the rule. Case study research has identified only a small number of districts that are engaged in some form of collaboration. Researchers can only speculate on how many districts actually exist, how long collaborative arrangements typically last, what type of collaboration they engage in, or whether the number is increasing or decreasing. Nor do researchers know how many districts would be interested in pursuing this approach. Part of the problem is that researchers have no commonly accepted indicators with which to answer these questions. If ones were developed like those proposed at the end of Section III, along with rubrics to assess the level of attainment for each indicator, researchers could gain a clearer and more nuanced picture of collaboration in the nation’s school districts. New exemplars would undoubtedly emerge that would provide opportunities for researchers and educators to better understand the process, the challenges, and the impact of LMC.
Are high-performing districts more likely to engage in labor-management collaboration than low-performing districts?

This report examined case studies of districts that have engaged in LMC. The findings are encouraging; many districts that have adopted collaborative labor relations have successfully adopted policies and practices that benefit students. Rubinstein and McCarthy’s recent study of ABC Unified School District in California did reveal a strong correlation between LMC and improved student outcomes, but only for a small number of schools in one school district (2013). Their study and this meta-analysis of case study research does not show whether it is possible for students to perform well in schools and districts where LMC is weak or not practiced at all. If most highly successful districts do engage in LMC, this would strengthen the case for this approach and serve as a powerful counter argument to those like Michelle Rhee and Joel Klein who dismiss the value of collaboration. But even before such a study might be done, the research suggests that LMC increases the odds that district leaders will more effectively meet the complex challenges they face, allowing them to create better schools for their students. Since very few practices in education can guarantee success, selecting one with a good track record (and which require little financial investment) seems eminently sensible.

How do variations in implementation of LMC affect its outcomes?

The collaboration practices described in the previous section represent promising ways of initiating or strengthening LMC, but they do not guarantee improved outcomes for students. Most likely, sustained and meaningful LMC requires a combination of practices implemented fully and consistently. Just as effective classroom management is, on its own, insufficient to ensure improved student learning, a practice like IBB is unlikely to produce meaningful improvements in district policies without the successful implementation of other LMC practices, such as collaborative leadership, supportive networks, and external assistance. Implementation science scholars argue that organizational leaders often blame the quality of evidence-based practices for a lack of organizational improvement, when failures are actually the result of partial or poor implementation (Brownson, Colditz, & Proctor, 2012; Fixsen et al., 2005). The evidence from case studies suggests that LMC cannot be sustained in the absence of several intentional and fully implemented supporting practices, but without further research that focuses on implementation, it is difficult to make strong claims about the specific combination of practices that are needed to support effective LMC.

What resources exist and are needed for districts that want to engage in labor-management partnerships?

Districts that are persuaded by the evidence and want to pursue a collaborative approach would currently be hard-pressed to say what steps they should take or who they could turn to for assistance. The case study research revealed that many collaborative districts have actively sought outside assistance after a labor strike or a bitter dispute, but it should not take a crisis that prompts local educators to search for help. Any district that wants to pursue a collaborative approach should have access to a wide range of resources and support options. A clearinghouse of tools, strategies, research, technical assistance providers, and support networks would be a valuable resource for these districts.
What prevents some districts from adopting a collaborative approach to labor relations?

Given the positive impact of collaboration in a number of districts since the mid-1980s, why hasn’t this approach spread more quickly? In Section II, we speculated that four factors have been particularly influential: (1) fear on both sides that collaboration might weaken their power; (2) a tough-minded reform agenda that has promoted confrontation; (3) satisfaction with the status quo and an inability to envision a better alternative; and (4) the lack of support available to districts that would like to engage in collaboration.

Interviews, focus groups, and surveys with stakeholders in non-collaborative settings would reveal the extent to which these and other factors mitigate the proliferation of collaboration in America’s school districts. Knowledge about the obstacles to labor-management collaboration would be useful to technical assistance providers, conference planners, funding agencies, and others who are working to promote it.

What are the obstacles to effective collaboration?

Once district leaders make a commitment to work collaboratively, sustaining it over time is challenging, especially as leaders come and go. The case study research discussed in Section III pointed to several practices that promote collaboration, but much less is known about the conditions that can derail the process. Some clues were provided in our study of educators that participated in the 2011 national conference on labor-management collaboration in Denver. One year after the conference, several participants pointed to a number of factors that commonly impeded their efforts to sustain their efforts to collaborate, including broken promises and lack of transparency, an inability to manage conflict effectively, changes in leadership, external policy changes, negative influence by external constituencies, significant budgetary losses, and fatal half measures (Futernick et al., 2012). Because these findings are based on a small number of cases, additional investigations of districts that have encountered difficulties—including some that have abandoned this approach—would undoubtedly shed new light on common pitfalls.
References


Appendix A: Labor-Management Collaboration
Case Study Descriptions


This set of 12 case studies was conducted as a follow-up to the February 2011 national conference on “Advancing Student Achievement Through Labor Management Collaboration.” Case study districts were selected based on noteworthy partnerships demonstrated by district, board, and teacher organization representatives at the conference. Researchers examined (1) how partnerships in these districts were developed, and (2) the accomplishments of these partnerships. Researchers used interviews, document analysis, and audio presentation recordings to identify district practices and emerging patterns across case studies.

Key findings include the following:
- The 12 districts were engaged in three general areas of activity: teacher evaluation, compensation, and career development. This direction may have been influenced by external incentives, such as state and federal grants.
- Policies were developed over a range of time (from less than four years to more than four decades). Eight of the districts began their collaboration with a crisis, such as a strike or near-strike.
- Collaborating districts were rethinking their structures and processes to develop new ways of working together as partners. Eight districts established foundational commitments through joint statements regarding collaboration. All of the districts shared a commitment to their common goals and strive for transparency.


This report consists of six case studies facilitated by scholars from Rutgers University, Cornell, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in collaboration with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The purpose was to understand (1) how innovative union-management collaborative approaches were developed and sustained over two decades, and (2) how particular education initiatives have emerged from these efforts. The AFT selected the cases on the basis of districts “having a lengthy track record of innovation, and because they appear to have institutionalized a long-term collaborative partnership between administration and the local teachers’ union centered around school improvement, student achievement, and teacher quality.” Members of the research team visited each of the six districts and conducted interviews with approximately 60 stakeholders representing unions, school boards, administrative offices, and business communities across these districts. The
authors identified collaborative practices across a diverse group of unions and school districts.

Key findings include the following:
- Most districts sought a collaborative approach to union-management relations after a strike or a vote to strike.
- Labor-management collaboration (LMC) has led to three strategic priorities in each of the districts: (1) an emphasis on teacher quality (including professional development, new teacher evaluation systems, and peer-to-peer assistance); (2) a focus on student performance (data-driven improvement plans collaboratively designed by teachers and administrators); and (3) substantive problem solving, innovation, and willingness to experiment (e.g., jointly established reading programs).
- Various system infrastructure components helped to support collaboration in the districts, including an organizational culture that values collaboration, shared governance arrangements, collaborative structures at all levels of the district, and joint learning opportunities for union and management.
- Systems of collaboration are sustained in the districts through long-term leadership, community engagement, supportive boards of education, support from the AFT, and supportive/enabling contract language.


This set of seven case studies, conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, examines the relationship between Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program implementation and labor-management collaboration. The authors sought to understand stakeholders’ perceptions of PAR and to identify labor-management practices that are most critical to PAR’s success. Case study sites were identified through literature reviews, Internet searches, and informal researcher networking. Selected sites included PAR programs that implemented both assistance and review, and the sites collectively represented a range of geographic locations, district resources and sizes, and LMC histories. Researchers conducted two-to-three-day site visits to each district and interviewed nearly two dozen individuals from each of the seven districts, including PAR Panel members, superintendents, union presidents, current and former consulting teachers, and principals.

Key findings include the following:
- Successful PAR programs require new systems and structures that typically rely on effective LMC.
- Some PAR programs become more successful as they are integrated both programmatically and physically into districts and school sites.
- PAR program structures (e.g., collaborative panels) often restructure existing LMC relationships and patterns.
- Once instituted, PAR programs may be more resilient than other school initiatives, since stakeholders typically view PAR as effective, PAR is bargained into district
contracts and budgets, and the PAR Panel appears to empower its members to become active proponents of PAR.


This study, prepared by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future with support from the NEA Foundation, provides an in-depth analysis of two school district labor-management collaboration cases. Researchers selected these districts because they were making progress in narrowing student achievement gaps and supporting teacher quality based on demonstrated collaboration between their teachers' unions and school districts. Although narrow in scope, this study provides significant detail about the steps that each district took to build and sustain constructive union-management collaboration. Researchers conducted content analysis of relevant contracts, proposals, and reports. They also interviewed approximately 60 stakeholders from across the two case study sites, including teachers, administrators, negotiation team members, and affiliated education foundation representatives.

Key findings include the following:
- Systemic reform cannot occur without the active formal and informal involvement of district administrators and the education association. These stakeholders must have a common vision focusing on student learning that is guided by instructional improvement.
- It is beneficial to have a dedicated space and time for stakeholders to work out the initial details of a reform plan. Interest-based bargaining can be a sound structure to work through these details and goals.
- Stakeholders must respect the delicate nature of trust and take active steps to nurture trust during the early stages of collaboration. A focused effort must be made to institutionalize collaborative processes to help ensure stability during turnover.
- Stakeholder leaders should work together when approaching external foundations and funders to present a common agenda. Stakeholder leaders should also work to keep their constituencies apprised of goals and progress towards those goals.

5. **Case Study: Labor-Management-Community Collaboration in Springfield Public Schools (Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, 2012).**

This in-depth single case study, conducted by the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, examines key issues, opportunities, and challenges that shape collaborative work in Massachusetts by Springfield Public School's union, district, and community stakeholders, with support from the Rennie Center. The study presents key lessons and encourages other districts to explore these lessons in the context of their own collaborative efforts. Researchers conducted interviews with 15 district, union, and community leaders and analyzed 600 pages of documents from newspapers, research, reports, collective bargaining agreements, and websites. Although this study offers insight into just one labor-management collaboration case, it provides a detailed analysis over an extended period of time that is not present in most current case studies on this subject.
Key findings include the following:

- Researchers pointed to five lessons that emerged from this study: (1) use data to maintain focus and drive action plans; (2) expect unexpected interruptions; (3) build collaborative structures and relationships beyond the superintendent’s office; (4) rely on third-party facilitators for difficult discussions; and (5) invite community organizations to lead on-the-ground efforts and involve community leaders in district leadership teams.

- Stakeholder leaders in Springfield suggested four low-cost approaches to developing collaborative relationships: (1) read the contract; (2) use traditional committee structures for non-traditional collaborative meetings; (3) focus on common ground; and (4) prepare to be uncomfortable.

6. **Labor/Management Collaboration: A Conference for California Educators (WestEd, 2011).**

This set of 18 case studies was conducted in March and April 2011 to provide informational materials for a May 2011 labor-management conference for California educators. WestEd researchers interviewed district and union leaders to understand how labor-management collaboration in each district had generated noteworthy initiatives that were to be highlighted at the conference (teacher evaluation, principal evaluation, extended learning time, peer assistance and review, and school redesign). Districts were selected for interviews based on existing knowledge of a specific initiative in the district, and interview questions were designed to elicit the process of collaboration around that specific initiative.

Key findings include the following:

- Stakeholders should establish a shared vision and common goals around student achievement outcomes.

- Stakeholders should engage in frequent communication (both informal and formal), along with consistent openness and transparency throughout all collaborative efforts.

- Stakeholders should employ interest-based bargaining or a similar consensus-building approach, especially in the very early stages of collaboration.

7. **Forward, Together: Better Schools Through Labor-Management Collaboration (Futernick, McClellan, & Vince, 2012).**

A research team at WestEd conducted a follow-up study to the February 2011 national labor-management conference to help identify: (1) conference lessons, (2) factors that strengthen and weaken labor-management collaboration, (3) effective labor-management collaboration practices, and (4) labor-management collaboration achievements. Researchers sent surveys to all conference attendees and conducted follow-up interviews with 34 of the approximately 125 survey respondents. These interviewees were selected to reflect experiences from a geographically and demographically diverse set of districts. This study does not provide an in-depth examination of district experiences, but it provides insight into factors motivating LMC and emerging trends in LMC practices.
Key findings include the following:

- To initiate collaboration, all stakeholders must be motivated to reform existing relationships, practices, and policies. Changes in leadership or unanticipated events can often act as a trigger for increased collaboration.
- In developing and strengthening collaboration, trust building and communication are critical. Effective stakeholder leadership is also critical, especially during the early stages of collaboration.
- Barriers to initiating collaboration include negative perceptions of stakeholders and their interests, leadership shortcomings, and a lack of essential resources (e.g., time).
- Barriers to sustained collaboration include broken promises, lack of transparency, inability to manage conflict, leadership turnover, external policies, external constituents, reduced budgets, and poor implementation.
Appendix B: Case Study Districts and Schools by State

Alaska:
- Chugach School District (Futernick et al., 2012)

California:
- ABC Unified School District (Eckert, 2011; Futernick et al., 2012; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010)
- Green Dot Public Schools (Eckert, 2011; Futernick et al., 2012)
- Lindsay Unified School District (Futernick et al., 2012)
- Poway Unified School District (WestEd, 2011)
- San Juan Unified School District (Qazilbash et al., 2009; WestEd, 2011)
- Twin Rivers Unified School District (Futernick et al., 2012)

Colorado:
- Denver Public Schools (Eckert, 2011; WestEd, 2011)
- Douglas County Schools District (Eckert, 2011; WestEd, 2011)
- Jefferson County Public Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)

Connecticut:
- New Haven Public Schools (Eckert, 2011; WestEd, 2011)

Florida:
- Hillsborough County Public Schools (Eckert, 2011; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010; WestEd, 2011)
- Volusia County Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)

Indiana:
- Evansville Public Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)

Iowa:
- Des Moines Public Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)

Maine:
- Sheepscot Valley Regional School Unit (Futernick et al., 2012)

Maryland:
- Baltimore City Public Schools (Eckert, 2011)
- Montgomery County Public Schools (Eckert, 2011; Qazilbash et al., 2009; WestEd, 2011)
Massachusetts:
- Chelsea Public Schools (WestEd, 2011)
- Revere Public Schools (WestEd, 2011)
- Springfield Public Schools (Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, 2012; Futernick et al., 2012).
- West Springfield (Futernick et al., 2012)

Michigan:
- Detroit Public Schools (WestEd, 2011)

Minnesota:
- Minneapolis Public Schools (Qazilbash et al., 2009)
- St. Francis Independent School District (Eckert, 2011; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010; WestEd, 2011; Futernick et al., 2012)

Montana:
- Helena Public Schools (Eckert, 2011; WestEd, 2011)

Nevada:
- Clark County School District (Rice, 2007)

New York:
- Cattaraugus-Little Valley Central School District (Futernick et al., 2012)
- Dobbs Ferry New York Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)
- Geneseo Central School District (Futernick et al., 2012)
- Islip Public Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)
- New York City Public Schools (WestEd, 2011)
- Plattsburgh City School District (Eckert, 2011; Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010; WestEd, 2011)
- Rochester City School District (Qazilbash et al., 2009)
- Spencer-Van Etten Central School District (Futernick et al., 2012)
- Syracuse Public Schools (Qazilbash et al., 2009; WestEd, 2011)
- Watkins Glen School District (Futernick et al., 2012)

North Carolina:
- Winston Salem/Forsyth County Schools (Eckert, 2011)

North Dakota:
- West Fargo Public Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)

Ohio:
- Cincinnati Public Schools (Qazilbash et al., 2009)
- Toledo City School District (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010; Qazilbash et al., 2009)
Oklahoma:
- Oklahoma City Public Schools (WestEd, 2011)
- Tulsa Public Schools (WestEd, 2011)

Pennsylvania:
- South Pittsburg High School (Futernick et al., 2012)

Tennessee:
- Hamilton County School District (Rice, 2007; WestEd, 2011)

Vermont:
- Lamoille Union District (Futernick et al., 2012)
- Windsor Southwest Supervisory Union (Futernick et al., 2012)

Virginia:
- Fairfax County Public Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)
- Norfolk Public Schools (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2010)
- Westmoreland County Public Schools (Futernick et al., 2012)
Appendix C: Factors That Contribute to Effective Labor-Management Collaboration

WestEd’s analysis of case study research found the following 21 practices or structures contributed to effective LMC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor-Management Collaboration Practices Across 36 Districts(^1)</th>
<th>Number of Occurrences in Case Studies Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose and solution driven</td>
<td>36 (all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration extended beyond district office</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative leadership (e.g., listening, caring, mediating)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared data and budget transparency</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A consistent focus on student achievement</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint-learning opportunities</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint planning and problem-solving groups</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-party assistance from a university, foundation, or other support provider</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking/sharing across schools and districts</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular (weekly/monthly) meetings</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal dialogue (typically over meals and/or coffee)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal training in communication processes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documented collaboration goals and/or behaviors</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of parents and community</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and coaching on collaboration for teacher leaders and administrators</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad input/feedback mechanisms</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest-based bargaining</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative and involved school board members</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffused leadership (shared responsibility and risk taking)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple memoranda of understanding, side agreements, and/or continuous contracts</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and/or state union support</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Initially, 50 district cases from seven source documents were analyzed, and 14 districts were removed because they did not meet the following criteria: (a) general applicability to multiple district regions or states, (b) at least 18 months of uninterrupted experience with LMC, and (c) sufficient detail on LMC practices.