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Reflective Practice for Continuous Learning

The ultimate guardians of excellence are not external forces, but internal professional responsibilities.

—Paul Ramsden (1992, p. 221),
Learning to Teach in Higher Education

Learning is the foundation of individual and organizational improvement (Argyris, 1977; Argyris & Schon, 1974; Senge, 1990; Starkey, 1996; Wheatley, 1992). Learning requires reflection. From an individual perspective, “It can be argued that reflective practice . . . is the process which underlies all forms of high professional competence” (Bright, 1996, p. 166). From an organizational perspective, reflective practice is a powerful norm that is required for continuous improvement of teaching and learning practices that results in high levels of student achievement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 2000; Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005; Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1995; Osterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Senge et al., 2000). Reflective practice is the means by which learning, renewal, and growth continue throughout the development of career educators (Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000). Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991) explain the emergence of reflective practice in schools:

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The shift toward an interest in reflective thinking has come about partly as a reaction to the overly technical and simplistic view of teaching that dominated the 1980s. Gradually, however, experts in supervision, staff development, and teacher education have begun to recognize that teaching is a complex, situation-specific dilemma ridden endeavor. . . . Today, professional knowledge is seen as coming both from sources outside the teacher and from the teachers' [*sic*] own interpretations of everyday experience. (p. 37)

Most educators—both teachers and administrators—experience a continuously hectic pace in their daily professional lives. Such a pace is not conducive to reflection and learning. The dominant culture in many schools is one of doing, with little or no time for reflection and learning. The context of teaching has, in fact, been referred to as *hot action*, meaning that “educators must develop habits and routines in order to cope; and [that] self-awareness is difficult as there is little opportunity to notice or think about what one is doing” (Eraut, 1985, p. 128). It is not unusual for teachers to put aside carefully constructed lessons because of unanticipated events, circumstances, or responses. It is also not unusual for those same lessons to become fragmented as a result of the comings and goings of students and staff in classrooms. Educators routinely juggle multiple tasks, process information on many levels, manage a continual stream of interruptions, and make on-the-spot decisions to meet the changing needs and demands in the teaching environment. All of us continually make midcourse corrections based on feedback, monitoring others, and self-referencing our own speed and actions.

In the 1950s, studies conducted by Harvey (1967) revealed that air traffic controllers manage the greatest number of mental tasks and that teachers are number two in this regard. Jackson (1968) says teachers make more than three thousand decisions each day. And we wonder why teachers are tired? The intensity of work for both teachers and administrators does, indeed, compare well with that experienced by air traffic controllers. Teachers keep an eye on the big picture and simultaneously oversee the nuance and details of daily practice. Glickman (1988) describes an inherent dilemma for the teaching profession as having “knowledge but not certainty” (p. 63). Within each specific teaching context lie multiple and unpredictable circumstances that require spontaneous and unique responses. The demand for accountability and the steady flow of curricular and instructional initiatives add to the pressured context of teaching. The critical balance between pressure and support for improvement (Fullan, 2001b) is almost always tilted toward the side of pressure. To change our practices, to change our beliefs, and to alter our own theories of change, we must slow down and have reflective conversations that

allow us to think through possible changes. As Kagan (1969) writes, reflection reduces error rates. Shifting from a culture of doing to a culture of learning and doing, however, is not easily accomplished.

Given these challenging context variables, why is it reasonable to assume that significant improvements in educational practice are possible? What changes in school culture are necessary to support continuous learning by educators? Where does an individual educator start? A primary purpose of this book is to support practicing teachers and principals in the development of capacities within themselves and within their schools to continuously learn and improve by embedding norms of reflective practice into their work. A major premise is captured by the Chinese proverb "Sometimes you must go slow to go fast." Reflective practice cannot be done in the fast lane. Although much of educational practice occurs in the fast lane, educators must locate a rest area to reflect on past practices and to determine adjustments for future practice.

This chapter begins with a brief review of historical and theoretical contributions to reflective practice. Then, multiple perspectives on the meaning of reflective practice are considered. Next, a rationale for the potential of reflective practice to improve schools is articulated and characteristics of reflective educators are described. Presented last is the *Reflective Practice Spiral*, which serves as the organizing framework for this book. This framework suggests that the seeds of reflective practice begin first within individuals and then, with continuous nurturing, spread and take root in the broader educational community.

WHERE DID REFLECTIVE PRACTICE COME FROM?

A tree has a growth spurt, but it is grounded by the depth of its roots.

—Natalie Goldberg (1993),
Long, Quiet Highway: Waking Up in America

Understanding some of the historical and theoretical roots of reflective practice may support and even inspire educators already committed to strengthening their reflective capacities. For others, learning more about the origins and theory may address some healthy skepticism surrounding reflective practice: Is reflective practice new, or even New Age? As one of the latest educational buzzwords, is reflective practice an initiative soon to fade away and be replaced by another initiative claiming to be a panacea for educational problems? Should we simply hold our breath because

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“this, too, shall pass”? Although reasons abound for educators to be cautious of blindly embracing any new initiative, reflective practice has deep roots and is firmly planted historically. Its knowledge base has continued to expand, and we believe it holds much promise for meaningful educator development and school renewal that benefits students.

Thought about reflection and reflective practice has evolved over many decades, if not centuries, through carefully constructed theory and research applications. Numerous philosophers, theorists, teacher educators, and researchers have contributed to this body of knowledge. John Dewey is frequently recognized as the eminent 20th-century influence on reflection in education (Fendler, 2003; Rodgers, 2002; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). His work, however, drew from much earlier Eastern and Western philosophers and educators, including Buddha, Plato, and Lao-tzu. More recently, the work of Donald Schon (1983, 1987) has inspired a resurgence of interest in reflective practice in the field of education.

The collective literature on reflective thinking (see Table 1.1) reveals numerous common themes. Reflective thinking’s origins reach back centuries to early philosophical works. Reflection is viewed as an active thought process aimed at understanding and subsequent improvement. Both personal and contextual variables influence reflective processes and outcomes. Reflection occurs in different ways and for different purposes, yielding different results (Haefner, 2004; Perry & Power, 2004; Pultorak, 1996; Reiman, 1999; Risko, Vukelich, & Roskos, 2002). Reflection that considers social, moral, and ethical perspectives has the potential to affect community values and action.

Most of the perspectives shared in Table 1.1 appear reasonably aligned. There are, however, distinctions of particular interest. In education literature, John Dewey and Donald Schon are two of the most cited contributors to foundational concepts of reflective practice. Careful examination of their views reveals significant differences. Dewey, whose views emerged during the Progressive Era, when scientific advances were shaping education and social science, emphasized not just rigor but specific consideration of scientific knowledge. In contrast, Schon, nearly half a century later, emphasized context and experiential knowledge. His work held strong appeal for educators in the 1980s, when validation of knowledge gained from professional practice served to support efforts aimed at professionalizing teaching. Fendler (2003) observes, “These days the meaning of reflective practice is riddled with tensions between Schon’s notion of practitioner-based intuition, on the one hand, and Dewey’s notion of rational and scientific thinking on the other hand” (p. 19).

Considered in context, the views of Dewey and Schon and the embracing of those views by educators make good sense. Evident in current practice is an integration of these perspectives such that both research-based and experiential, context-based knowledge are viewed as important

Table 1.1 Significant Contributions to Thought About Reflective Practice

Buddha, 624 BC (Nhat Hanh, 1993; Suzuki, 1982)

- A core teaching involves awareness of impermanence and the teaching of transience or change. Because change is always occurring, an emphasis is placed on being fully aware and *mindful* of the present moment.
- Buddhism emphasizes the direct experience of reality. "Direct practice-realization, not intellectual research, brings about insight. Our own life is the instrument through which we experiment with truth" (Nhat Hanh, 1993, p. 8).
- Deep listening and compassionate responses are a part of Buddha's teachings. Encourages an open, nonjudgmental mind, "a mind that is free of defilement and distortion" (Goldstein & Kornfeld, 1987, p. 78).

Socrates (who was born sometime between 471 BC and 469 BC)

- Known for his famous phrase "The unexamined life isn't worth living," as quoted by Plato in *Apology*, suggesting that behind every experience there is room for interpretation of the meaning of that experience. It is through our interpretation of what our life is amounting to that our life becomes worth living (Robinson, 1997).
- The Socratic method has led to a theory of education grounded in skepticism and a "dialectic" approach of questioning and answering with the goal to build more "consistent thinking with a view to consistent action" as a goal ("The Socratic Method and Doctrine," 2002, retrieved March 21, 2005, from <http://www.2020site.org/>. Click on "The Life of Socrates," under "History").

John Dewey, 1933; 1938

- Views the purpose of education as promoting intellectual, social, and moral growth of the individual in order to create a strong democratic society.
- Interested in how people think when faced with real and relevant problems.
- Views learning as a reflective process on a continual series of experiences (described as interactions between an individual and his or her surrounding context) from which continuity of meaning occurs over time.
- Reflective thinking involves a systematic, scientific process of describing experience, articulating questions that arise from experience, generating hypotheses which include considering sources outside oneself, and taking intelligent action to test hypotheses.

Max van Manen, 1977; 2002

- Suggests three levels of reflectivity to describe various aims of reflection: *technical reflection*, which examines the skills, strategies, and methods used to reach predetermined goals (e.g., Are the techniques applied, and are they effective in accomplishing the goal?); *practical reflection*, which considers the underlying assumptions of methods used to reach goals, as well as the effect or outcome for students, and also reexamines the goals themselves

(Continued)

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Table 1.1 (Continued)

(e.g., What are the assumptions and beliefs underlying practices? What are the outcomes for students? Is this a worthy goal to strive for?); and *critical reflection*, which focuses on inquiry about the moral, ethical, and equity aspects of practice (e.g., Does this promote equity, and for whom?).

- Includes significance of “pathic” elements (e.g., relational, affective, perceptual, contextual, noncognitive) of teacher practice that influence effectiveness.

Kenneth Zeichner and Daniel Liston, 1987; Kenneth Zeichner, 1993

- Argues the essential role of critical reflection in education, emphasizing that educators must critically examine how instructional and other school practices contribute to social equity and to the establishment of a just and humane society.
- Challenges the assumption that education will necessarily be better if teachers reflect, because reflection can validate and justify current practices that are harmful to students.

Donald Schon, 1983; 1987

- Describes a “crisis in professional knowledge,” referring to the gap between professional knowledge and actual competencies required for practicing teachers.
- Emphasizes practitioner-generated, intuitive knowledge derived from experience.
- Uses the terms *the swamp* to connote the ambiguity, uncertainty, complexity, and oftentimes conflicting values that define the daily teaching context, and *swamp knowledge* to describe the tacit knowledge teachers develop from construction and reconstruction of their swamp experiences. (Contrasts *swamp* knowledge with *high hard ground* knowledge of researchers who may observe but are removed from practice.)
- Differentiates between *reflection-in-action*, referring to the process of observing our thinking and action as they are occurring, in order to make adjustments in the moment; and *reflection-on-action*, referring to the process of looking back on and learning from experience or action in order to affect future action. Killion and Todnem (1991) expanded Schon’s reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action typology to include *reflection-for-action*.

David Smyth, 1989

- Suggests four forms of action that can guide reflection on practice: describe (e.g., What do I do?), inform (e.g., What does this mean?), confront (e.g., How did I come to think or act like this?), and reconstruct (e.g., How might I do things differently?).

Karen Osterman and Robert Kottkamp, 1993; 2004

- “Emphasizes thought and action as integral processes but extends beyond to consider how context and culture shape both thought and action . . .

respects the autonomy of the learner but recognizes the value of incorporating lessons drawn from theory, research, and practice" (p. xi).

- Contrasts traditional and reflective practice models of professional development: knowledge acquisition versus understanding and competence; transmission of knowledge versus constructed learning; and practitioner as passive versus practitioner as action researcher.
- Brings attention to consideration of the theories or views that individuals talk about (i.e., espoused theories) versus the theories or views that are evident in watching individuals behave (i.e., theories in use); suggest reflective practices as a way to examine and uncover underlying theories and views that affect action.
- Defines reflective practice as an experiential learning cycle, including problem identification, observation and analysis, abstract reconceptualization, and active experimentation; emphasizes data gathering as the keystone of reflective practice.

Georga Sparks-Langer and Amy Colton, 1991; Langer and Colton, 1994

- Identifies multiple influences on the knowledge construction involved in reflective practice: experiential knowledge, professional knowledge, feelings, the surrounding collegial environment, and personal characteristics or attributes.
- Introduces a cyclical process, referred to as the *Framework for Developing Teacher Reflection*, that includes these steps: gather information about an experience or event; conduct analysis by considering multiple influencing variables; form hypotheses; and then test hypotheses through implementation.

Linda Valli, 1997

- Presents typology for reflection in teacher preparation based on literature and review of teacher preparation programs.
 - Includes *technical reflection*, which focuses on general instruction and management practices based on research; *reflection-in and on-action*, which focuses on one's own teaching performance and making decisions based on one's own unique situation; *deliberative reflection*, which can focus on a wide array of teaching related practices and concerns but involves intentional consideration of assumptions, different perspectives, and research findings; *personalistic reflection*, which focuses on one's own growth and relationships with students and involves learning to listen to one's own inner voice, as well as the voices of others; *critical reflection*, which focuses on social, moral, and political dimensions of education and involves making judgments based on ethical criteria (p. 75).
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dimensions of reflective processes. As is often the case, the answer is not "either/or" of Dewey and Schon but "both/and." We need all the internal and external resources we can tap to make the best decisions. As you read the next section, in which a variety of definitions and examples of reflective practice are offered, search for examples of both/and thinking.

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WHAT IS REFLECTIVE PRACTICE?

Reflective practice is as much a state of mind as it is a set of activities.

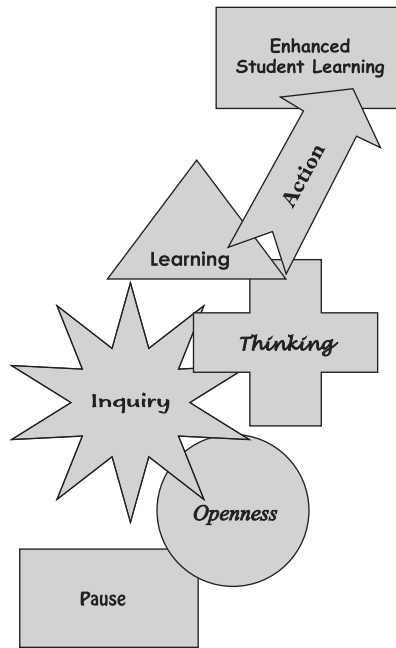
—J. C. Vaughan (1990, p. ix), foreword in Clift, Houston, & Pugach (Eds.), *Encouraging Reflective Practice in Education: An Analysis of Issues and Programs*

There is no universally accepted definition of reflective practice but a multitude of perspectives. In reading definitions of reflective practice, consider your own way of defining reflective practice so that this can become an organizer for your own thinking and learning. What key words or processes stand out in your mind? What kind of thinking is prompted when you engage around a problem, event, or puzzle of practice? Reflective practice can be considered

- “A genuinely critical, questioning orientation and a deep commitment to the discovery and analysis of positive and negative information concerning the quality and status of a professional’s designed action” (Bright, 1996, p. 165)
- “The practice or act of analyzing our actions, decisions, or products by focusing on our process of achieving them” (Killion & Todnem, 1991, p. 15)
- “Deliberate thinking about action, with a view to its improvement” (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 40)
- “The ability to frame and reframe the practice setting, to develop and respond to this framing through action so that the practitioner’s wisdom-in-action is enhanced and . . . articulation of professional knowledge is encouraged” (Loughran, 2002, p. 42)
- “The practice of periodically stepping back to ponder the meaning of what has recently transpired . . . [Reflective practice] privileges the process of inquiry . . . probing to a deeper level than trial and error experience” (Raelin, 2002, p. 66)

It can also be clarifying to articulate what reflection is *not*. It is not “mindless following of unexamined practices or principles” (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991, p. 37). It is not “pointless reflection of one’s navel as symbolized by Rodin’s ‘The Thinker’” (Bright, 1996, p. 166). It is not just talking about work or thinking self-validating thoughts about how to teach or lead.

Drawing on the perspectives offered above and on our own practice, we identify the following elements of a Theory of Action for Reflective

Figure 1.1 Theory of Action for Reflective Practice

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Practice that maps the linkages between thinking, action, and student learning (see Figure 1.1). Each element is described briefly here. (A copy of the Theory of Action for Reflective Practice is available as Resource 1.A.)

Reflective practice requires a *pause*. Sometimes the pause is intentional—a purposeful slowing down to create a space in which presence and openness can emerge. Sometimes the pause happens unexpectedly in response to a crisis or dilemma. As we move through our daily routines, we are often not aware. The concept of “hot action” and the metaphor of educational practice occurring in the fast lane express the familiar, often intense pace of the environment that educators navigate on a daily basis. There is a need to find, create, and intentionally choose opportunities to pause in today’s teaching environments; simply waiting for this pause to happen or waiting for someone else to “hand you” space to pause is unlikely. Kahn (1992) describes the importance of psychological presence as a requisite for individual learning and high-quality performance. Covey (1989) emphasizes the pause between a stimulus

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and a response in which options for action can be considered. Frankl (1959), the renowned physician survivor of the Holocaust, developed an approach for helping people overcome various debilitating conditions. Referred to as Logotherapy, this approach is grounded in the belief that human beings have the capacity to choose their responses to life's experiences even in dire, extreme, and life-threatening situations. An intentional pause is precursor to conscious deliberative thought, response, and action.

Openness—an open perspective and open heart—is an important dimension of our reflective practice framework. Open perspective or open-mindedness (Dewey, 1933; Ross, 1990; Zeichner & Liston, 1996) means recognizing that there are multiple ways to view particular circumstances or events. It means consideration of changing viewpoints and letting go of the need to be right or the desire to win (Webb, 1995). Do we have the ability to see or hear an honest assessment of reality? Openness to other perspectives requires a mindful and flexible orientation. Mindful people are awake (Nhat Hanh, 1993), conscious of thought and action. Being awake includes having an awareness of others and extending learning beyond the immediate sphere. In education, awareness is layered, ranging from immediate instructional circumstances to caring about democratic foundations and encouraging socially responsible actions (Littky & Grabelle, 2004; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991). *Open heart* is a term for acknowledging the constant role of care and connection in the life of an educator. Both openness in thought and openness in relationships are important qualities in reflective practice.

Openness creates the possibility for *inquiry*, the state in which questions about practice are invited and genuinely engaged. Inquiry can be prompted by a dilemma, puzzle, surprise, or feeling. Doubt, perplexity, and tentativeness are part of an inquiry cycle (Dewey, 1933; Langer & Colton, 1994), as is humility. By pausing to see what is happening in a given moment or context and by assuming a curious disposition (openness), questions are allowed to emerge. As Albert Einstein put it, "The important thing is to not stop questioning."

Questions prompt further *thinking*—the active, deliberate, and conscious processing of thoughts for examining goals, beliefs, and practices. *Goals* encompass desired aims, outcomes, or intentions. They can be general or specific. A goal could focus on creating a classroom community in which respect, support, and learning are held as values. A goal could address teaching children how to learn effectively in groups. *Beliefs* encompass people's values, visions, biases, and paradigms. Beliefs stem largely from experience and significantly influence listening, thinking, and behaving. Beliefs undergird assumptions which are often unconscious and unexamined. *Practice* refers to one's repertoire of dispositions, knowledge, and skills across a range of performance domains, such as instructional design, assessment, student interactions, relationships with families, or collaboration

with colleagues and administrators. Embedded in practice are a multitude of daily “in-action” decisions that influence others. Our Theory of Action involves thinking about goals, thinking about beliefs, and thinking about practice.

Creative and critical thinking processes support deliberative thinking. Metacognition, analysis, integration, and synthesis also may be used in a reflective process. Reflection, for example, may take the form of self-observation (Bergsgaard & Ellis, 2002) to gain insight about the reasons for one’s own thinking and one’s actions and their consequences. It may involve group members being aware of their thoughts during a decision-making process (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Higher-level thinking processes provide the means to move beyond a focus on isolated facts, events, or data to perceive a broader context for understanding and decision making.

The intended outgrowth of deliberative thinking is *learning* by the reflecting person. Practitioners gain new or deeper insights that lead to actions aimed at improving teaching and learning processes to benefit students. Understanding provides the basis for considering new forms of action. Awareness and understanding are critical elements for initiating and sustaining changes in practice. New understandings without changes in practice, however, will not make differences in the lives of students. Application of knowledge—*action*—is essential in the reflective practice cycle (Dewey, 1933; Smyth, 1989). Reflective practice leads to improvement only when deepened understandings lead to action.

The ultimate desired outcome of reflective practice is, of course, *enhanced student learning*. Learning is broadly defined to include students’ capacities to think, their motivations to learn, and their effectiveness in engaging constructively with others and contributing to the world around them, along with more traditionally defined measures of student learning. In our push toward measurable forms of accountability, we must not make the fatal flaw of ignoring the broader and less easily measured array of dispositions, knowledge, and skills required for future life in an even more complex and diverse world than today.

In sum, reflective practice is an active process. “Rather than reflective practice being seen as impractical, passive, or irrelevant to action, it can be regarded as centrally important and relevant to the understanding of ongoing action” (Bright, 1996, p. 167). It serves as the foundation for continuous learning and more effective action in educational practice so that children are successful in school and in life. It is a complex process that requires high levels of conscious thought and commitments to change practice based on new understandings.

It is our hope that our Theory of Action for Reflective Practice (Figure 1.1) assists educators in engaging with the complexity of reflective practice by considering these manageable, concrete elements. The Theory of Action is included in the Resources.

WHY REFLECTIVE PRACTICE? AND WHAT IS ITS POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE SCHOOLS?

Increasing evidence suggests what common sense has always told us: student learning is linked with staff learning (Garet et al., 2001; Ingavaron, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005; Lambert, 2003). By engaging in reflective practices, educators can increase their learning and improve their practices. Bright explains (1996), "The main objective of reflective practice is to ensure a more accurate and relevant understanding of a situation such that professionally designed action in that situation is more likely to produce effective, relevant action which will facilitate the occurrence of more desired and effective outcomes" (p. 177). High levels of student learning require high levels of staff competence.

Described below (and listed in Table 1.2) are numerous benefits that can be realized when reflective practices are well implemented in schools:

- *Guidance for new career teachers or educators in new roles.* Aleman (2003) likens the early teacher career period of "waiting to teach" to the preparenting period of "waiting to parent." Regardless of how well teachers are prepared in preservice programs, until teachers begin the actual practice of teaching, they cannot know what it means to teach, they cannot know what they need to know, and they cannot fully comprehend the central place that continuous learning must take in their careers in order to be successful. Before teaching or parenting actually starts, one can be prepared through a variety of means: reading, studying, conversing, observing, even practicing with someone else's children or students. Before actually assuming the role, however, it is all just background knowledge, not knowledge in action. This is also true with administrators. The importance of structuring reflection to support educators as they assume new roles also has been well substantiated (Perry & Power, 2004; Pultorak, 1996; Reiman, 1999; Risko et al., 2002).

- *Continuous learning through integration of teaching dimensions.* For experienced educators, reflective practice serves as the catalyst for continuous learning about educational practice. If educators do not reflect on and learn from their practice, they are likely to continue doing what they have been doing. Recall the old adage "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten." Further, reflective practice is aptly considered the hub of a teaching excellence wheel, the means of integrating the subject-knowledge, teaching-skills, interpersonal-relationship, research, and personality dimensions of teaching (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004).

- *Bridges between theory and practice.* As educators consider externally generated theory and knowledge from the research community and then determine appropriate, customized applications to their specific contexts

of practice, they bridge the gaps between research, theory, and practice. In doing so, they contribute to the overall knowledge base of the profession. Reflective practices can also bridge gaps between what we say (our espoused theory) and what we do. Bridging this gap is at the heart of integrity and authenticity.

- *Consideration of multiple perspectives.* Collaborative reflective practices engage a greater variety of perspectives for addressing the many challenging and complex dilemmas of practice. Consideration of different perspectives and different knowledge bases, including experiential, socio-political, and empirical ones (Kinchloe, 2004), can result in more effective solutions that are more solidly grounded and more broadly understood, accepted, and implemented. (See p. 18–19 for further discussion of Kinchloe’s work.)

- *More productive engagement of conflict.* At the core of conflict is difference. Reflective thinking offers a way to understand differences and to support productive engagement of conflict (Valiga, 2003). Understanding can result in decreased judgment and recognition of different values, experiences, and priorities. It can also reveal points of agreement that often serve as common ground for moving forward.

- *New context knowledge for immediate application.* New understandings that have immediate application in practice are created when experience leverages thinking. Knowledge constructed within “hot action” (Eraut, 1985) contexts of practice is needed to effectively teach the increasing variety of school-age students. By sharing newly constructed knowledge among colleagues, the impact on effectiveness can be multiplied.

- *Embedded means of formative assessment.* When teacher reflection is specifically focused on evidence and indicators of student learning, it serves as a primary means of formative assessment of instructional effectiveness. Such ongoing, embedded assessment results in immediate and relevant instructional accommodations aimed at increasing student learning today. It has also been suggested that formative assessment yields the information needed for educators to determine what Vygotsky refers to as the “zone of proximal development,” the area in which appropriate amounts of challenge and support exist to foster learning and growth of individual students (Ash & Levitt, 2003).

- *Growth in cultural awareness and competence.* Given appropriate guidance in the reflection process, “introspective behavior could lead teachers to better understand and relate to their students of color because they better understand themselves as racial beings . . . Because many White teachers do not see themselves as racial beings and often (idealistically) dismiss notions of race explicitly in their work, the idea of race reflection in cultural contexts could prove effective as they grapple with ways to better meet the need of diverse learners” (Milner, 2003, p. 179). As we

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become a nation with an increasingly culturally diverse student population, in combination with a current majority of Caucasian educators, the call for increased cultural awareness and competence becomes urgent if public schools in the United States are to educate all children well (Delpit, 1995; Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2002).

- *Deepened understanding of role and identity.* That the roles and responsibilities of today's educators are increasingly complex is apparent to even the most doubting of education outsiders. Such role expansion necessitates reflection as a way to articulate and understand the many competing demands and opportunities, to set priorities for focusing action, and to clarify and keep present one's identity and purpose as contributor to the development of today's young people. Such reflection has the potential to support growth of individual professionals and growth of the profession (Wesley & Buysse, 2001).

- *Individual and collective sense of efficacy.* *Efficacy* refers to the belief that one can make a difference in the lives of students. Efficacy increases as educators see positive effects of their actions. As the internal capacities of teachers to learn and make a positive difference are recognized and harnessed, a collective sense of efficacy and empowerment emerges. Teacher empowerment is recognized as a key dimension in school renewal efforts aimed at changes in classroom practice (Marks & Louis, 1997, 1999).

- *Strengthened relationships and connections among staff.* As continuous learning and improvement become a shared goal when reflection becomes embedded in the practice repertoire of educators, isolation is reduced and relationships strengthened. This lays the foundation for schoolwide improvement, because as educators come to know one another, their network of resources for students expands and the coherence of schoolwide practices increases.

- *Greater professionalism and voice.* As reflective practices build capacity for individual and organizational learning, educators grow in their responsibility, competence, and confidence for improvement. Their professionalism increases, which can give rise to greater participation and advocacy in policy decisions that impact education. Too often, the voices of teachers are missing from policy debates and decisions (Kinchloe, 2004).

- *Reduction of external mandates.* Arguably, a history of external mandates in education has diminished internal capacity and fostered a cycle of dependence on such external directives to leverage change (Butler, 1996). As educators noticeably assume a lead role in school renewal policy and practice, it is conceivable that a reduction in the scope and rapidity of external mandates could ultimately result.

Table 1.2 Potential Benefits of Reflective Practice

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- Guidance for new teachers, or educators in new roles
 - Continuous learning for experienced educators
 - Bridges theory and practice
 - Consideration of multiple perspectives
 - Productive engagement of conflict
 - Knowledge for immediate action
 - Embedded formative assessment
 - Growth in cultural competence
 - Understanding of role and identity
 - Individual and collective efficacy
 - Strengthened connections among staff
 - Greater professionalism and voice
 - Reduced external mandates
-

Reflective practice has the potential to significantly improve education if its foundations, assumptions, and rigorous processes are honored. If the integrity of reflective practice is not upheld, its use will be superficial and its results insubstantial. In reviewing Table 1.2, which of the potential benefits of reflective practice seem most compelling in your teaching context?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A REFLECTIVE EDUCATOR?

What do reflective educators look like? How do they behave? How would you know a reflective educator if you met one? Before reading on, pause and generate your own list of reflective-educator qualities. One of the distinguishing characteristics of reflective educators is a high level of commitment to their own professional development (Zeichner & Liston, 1996). They have a sustained interest in learning. Inquiry, questioning, and discovery are norms embedded in their ways of thinking and practice (Bright, 1996; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Their inquiry focuses not only on the effectiveness of their instruction or leadership but also on the underlying assumptions, biases, and values that they bring to the educational process. Reflective educators consider issues of justice, equity, and morality as they

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design and reflect on their practice. Their interest in learning is continually sparked by triggers of curiosity about some aspect of practice (Clarke, 1995). Instead of blindly accepting or rejecting new information or ideas, they carefully examine, analyze, and reframe them in terms of specific context variables, previous experiences, and alignment with desired educational goals (Clarke, 1995; Costa & Garmston, 2000; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). Reflective educators are decision makers who develop thoughtful plans to move new understandings into action so that meaningful improvements result for students (Clarke, 1995; Costa & Garmston, 2002).

Reflective educators recognize that much of the knowledge about effective practice is tacit, meaning that it is learned from experience within the practice context. To learn in and from dynamic, unpredictable, and sometimes ambiguous contexts, reflective educators are keenly aware of their surrounding context, are open to and seek feedback, and can effectively distill the information that should be considered in a reflective process (Bright, 1996). We offer the profile of a reflective educator as one who

- Stays focused on education's central purpose: student learning and development
- Is committed to continuous improvement of practice
- Assumes responsibility for his or her own learning—now and lifelong
- Demonstrates awareness of self, others, and the surrounding context
- Develops the thinking skills for effective inquiry
- Takes action that aligns with new understandings
- Holds great leadership potential within a school community
- Seeks to understand different types of knowledge, internally and externally generated

The last two items on the list, leadership potential and different types of knowledge, warrant further explanation. We begin with a discussion of leadership, including a positive reframing of the term *deviant*. Reflective educators often serve as leaders, formal and informal, who attract others. In doing so, they influence practice beyond their immediate teaching domains. They attract others because of the profile characteristics listed above: they are focused on student learning, committed, responsible, aware, thoughtful, inquiring, and action-oriented.

Given prevailing school and societal norms that fly in the face of slowing down to think, question, and then demonstrate the courage and conviction to act, reflective practitioners represent a countercultural phenomenon. In effect, they can be considered "positive deviants" (Richardson, 2004). The concept of positive deviance grew from the work of Jerry Sternin when working with Save the Children. Sternin (as cited by Richardson, 2004, p. 17) explains,

Positive deviants are people whose behavior and practices lead to solutions to problems that others in the group who have access to exactly the same resources have not been able to solve. We want to identify these people because they provide demonstrable evidence that a solution for the problem exists within the community.

One example involved examination of children's nutrition in Vietnam in the 1990s (Dorsey, 2000). In many villages, children were starving. In one village, however, children were thriving, despite similar environments and resources across villages. Differences were noted across villages in terms of practices for feeding the children. Parents of the healthy children fed them four times a day, instead of just two, which helped digestion because the children's stomachs were small. They also fed the children small crabs and shrimps which were on the end of rice stalks, whereas parents in the other villages did not. The observers, Jerry and Monique Sternin, did not write a paper on raising healthy kids, duplicate it, and hand it out to villagers. They did not hold seminars on raising healthy children or make a 10-point action plan and tack it to huts and field posts. They *did* hold small gatherings that included parents of the healthy children and parents of the unhealthy children. In these gatherings, the parents shared their experiences and practiced the new feeding strategies. Over time, conversations and ongoing support led to changes in behavior and more healthy children. This approach contrasts significantly with typical development approaches in which "solutions" from an outside world are presumptively imported and forced into practice, regardless of how feasible or how likely such foreign ways are to be maintained in the substantially different local contexts.

Think of the implications for passing along wisdom in our own organizations. There are positive deviants in every school and system in which we have worked. Recently, the concept of positive deviance has begun to take hold in some schools (Richardson, 2004). Positive deviants can be thought of as schools or individuals that thrive in situations in which others do not. In the context of reflective practice, positive deviants, be they schools or individuals, "Just do it!" to borrow the slogan from Nike. People who are positive deviants seem to be innate reflective practitioners. They just continue to think, learn, and grow, despite what seem to be constraining forces and conditions around them. Perhaps it is the positive and productive nature of these deviants that serves as the powerful attractor, and that makes them effective agents of change beyond their immediate sphere of practice. Reflective educators, as positive deviants, have great potential to influence and to lead others.

Our list of reflective-educator qualities also includes a valuing of different forms of knowledge. Distinctions have been made between

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reflective educators (or reflective practitioners) and experts, in terms of how knowledge is viewed, generated, and valued (Schon, 1987; Webb, 1995). In addition to the historical, political, and sociocultural knowledge bases that surround us and that influence how we think and live (Kinchloe, 2004), generally speaking, there are two sources of knowledge educators bring to bear on practice: externally generated knowledge and internally created knowledge. Externally generated knowledge comes by way of the research community and usually offers generalized findings, directions, and strategies to be considered by practice communities. This is sometimes referred to as technical-rational, empirical, declarative, or content knowledge. Internally created knowledge comes by way of educators learning through reflecting on their practice and by customizing application of externally generated knowledge to unique contexts of practice, that is, specific schools, classes, and students. This is sometimes referred to as tacit, procedural, experiential, or contextual knowledge.

Reflective practitioners draw largely from an experiential or contextual knowledge base in which "it is impossible to disentangle knowing from doing" (Webb, 1995, p. 71). Content experts draw largely from a technical-rational knowledge base (Schon, 1983). They are masters of content but may not have the practice background that generates tacit knowledge about how to apply, use, or teach content in the classroom. They can share research findings but cannot necessarily model or demonstrate application in authentic settings. Webb (1995) explains that from the technical-rational knowledge perspective of content experts, "Professional practice rests upon an underlying discipline or basic science producing general theory and knowledge which the professional practitioner then applies to individual daily problems . . . [in] professional practice . . . knowing directs doing, and those who know are the experts (p. 71)."

This perspective explains some of the disconnect that educators may sense when learning from experts of content who cannot make the application to the classroom context. It also speaks to the frustration or cynicism that can arise among practicing educators when content experts assume an easy transfer of technical-rational knowledge to contexts of practice.

For some aspects of practice, educators draw on a technical-rational knowledge base, such as disciplinary expertise. Math teachers, for example, draw on the technical knowledge base of the discipline of mathematics. For many other aspects of daily practice, though, educators draw on their experientially and contextually derived knowledge from practice. Schon (1983) explains that when, as reflective practitioners,

We go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of every day life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is we know. When we try to describe it, we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowledge is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the

stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is in our action. (p. 9)

Enriching this discussion of knowledge types is the thinking of Kinchloe (2004). He describes six types of knowledge that inform educational practice: empirical knowledge based on research; normative knowledge of what should be in terms of moral and ethical behavior; critical knowledge, which reflects sociopolitical and power dynamics; ontological knowledge that places oneself in historical and cultural context; experiential knowledge about practice; and finally, *reflective-synthetic knowledge*, which is the knowledge that emerges from individuals who reflect on and synthesize multiple types of knowledge to make appropriate decisions about educating and education. Kinchloe explains,

Since our purpose is not to indoctrinate practitioners to operate in a particular manner but to think about practice in more sophisticated ways, a central dimension of teacher education involves reflecting on and examining all of these knowledges in relation to one another. A reflective-synthetic knowledge of education involves developing a way of thinking about the professional role in light of a body of knowledges, principles, purposes, and experiences. In this process educators work to devise ways of using these various knowledges to perform our jobs in more informed, practical, ethical, democratic, politically just, self-aware, and purposeful ways. At the same time they work to expose the assumptions about knowledge embedded in various conceptions or practices and in the officially approved educational information they encounter. (Kinchloe, 2004, p. 62)

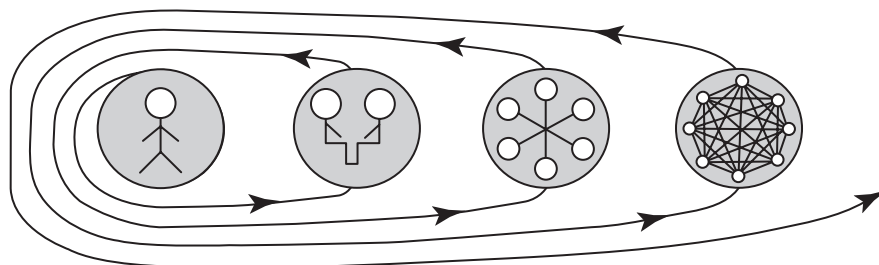
Clearly, there are many types of knowledge influencing and informing educational decisions and practice. It is unnecessary and perhaps even counterproductive to differentially or exclusively value one type of knowledge over others. It is the job of educators to adopt a reflective stance, to continually learn and expand their understanding and repertoire of practice. In doing so they realize a paradox—both humility and joy—vested in lifelong learning: “Significant learning generally involves fluctuating episodes of anxiety-producing self-scrutiny and energy-inducing leaps forward in ability and understanding” (Brookfield, 1992, p. 12). Such is the journey of a reflective educator.

THE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE SPIRAL: LEARNING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The Reflective Practice Spiral (Figure 1.2) presents one way to think about initiating and expanding efforts to embed reflective practices as a cultural norm in schools. It reflects an assumption that the place to begin is with oneself and that learning occurs from the inside out. As shown, the spiral

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Figure 1.2 The Reflective Practice Spiral, Connecting the Individual, Partner, Small-Group or Team, and Schoolwide Levels of Reflective Practice



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has four levels, beginning with the innermost level of individual reflective practice and extending outward to the partner level, then the small group or team level, and finally to the outermost circle, the schoolwide level of reflective practice. The spiral that moves through the levels represents the interconnectedness among the levels, resulting in a cumulative effect on schoolwide practices and learning. (A copy of the Reflective Practice Spiral is available as Resource 1.B.)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, lived experience is perhaps the most powerful influence on the formation of beliefs, which are the driving forces behind actions. The learning and positive growth that individuals experience from engaging in reflective practices provides an informed, experiential foundation on which to advocate and commit to expanding the practice of reflection beyond themselves. As we develop our individual reflection capacities, we can better influence the reflection that occurs with partners and in small groups or teams of which we are members. As more such groups become reflective in their work, the influence and potential of reflective practice spreads throughout the school. A critical mass of individuals who have experienced positive outcomes from their own reflective practice and from reflection within groups and teams can better support widespread adoption. Each level in the Reflective Practice Spiral is described below, along with the respective potential benefits. Specific considerations and examples for teacher and administrator reflective practices at each level are addressed in Chapters 3 through 6.

Individual Reflective Practice

This is the level at which each of us, as an educator, has full responsibility and control. We can choose to be reflective in our work and our

personal lives. Reflection with ourselves provides each of us with the opportunity to realize the following benefits:

- Improvements in our professional practices, given greater awareness of personal performance, practice dilemmas, possibilities that emerge from divergent and creative thought, and effects of our practices
- Enhanced student learning and learning capacities, given improvements in practice
- Increased personal capacities for learning and improvement, as the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for reflective practice become embedded in our way of thinking and doing
- Restored balance and perspective, given the time out created for reflection and learning
- Renewed clarity of personal and professional purpose and competence, given a sense of empowerment to align our practices with desired intents

Some ways to reflect alone include journaling, reviewing a case, reading literature, developing a teaching portfolio, exercising our bodies to free our minds, taking a personal retreat, and observing or listening to one's own practice through use of videotapes or audiotapes. Chapter 3 contains additional considerations and specific examples of reflective practice with oneself. When we begin to learn through personal experience about reflective practice and its potential, we are also beginning to increase our capacity to effectively support others in developing their reflective capacities.

Reflective Practice With Partners

Joining with another person in the process of reflection can result in greater insight about one's practice, especially when trust is high and the right combination of support and challenge is present. When reflecting with others, we realize the truth in the adage "What goes around comes around." Partner reflection can also introduce an element of fun. Humor, when appropriately interjected, reminds us not to take ourselves too seriously and that mistakes are an inevitable dimension of the learning process. In addition to the gains realized at the individual level of reflection, adding one or two partners to the reflection process can result in

- Expanded learning about our own practice, given the different perspectives of another person and when coached through the process of reflective inquiry
- Increased professional and social support and decreased feelings of isolation at work, given the presence of a strengthened collegial relationship

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- An increased sense of who we are and how things work in our school, given the connection and exchange with another person who practices in our place of work
- Greater commitment to our work and our work environment, given an increased sense of competence, confidence, and connection to another person in our place of work

Some ways that two or three people can reflect together include interactive journaling, cognitive coaching, conversing about instructional design possibilities, talking through steps of an inquiry cycle related to specific events or dilemmas, reading and talking about articles or case studies, examining student work, and online dialogue. Chapter 4 contains additional considerations and specific examples of reflective practice with partners. The increased sense of competence, support, and connection that can emerge from reflection with a partner positions us on more solid ground to extend the practice of reflection to small groups and teams.

Reflective Practice in Small Groups and Teams

There is a big shift from reflecting alone or with partners to reflecting in a small group. Although the potential impact of reflection increases, so, too, does personal risk. Because more people are in a group, the sense of safety and connection between individuals is different than with partner reflection, often more variable and diffuse. Groups and teams also are frequently appointed or mandated, whereas partner reflection is often voluntary and self-organized. In appointed or mandated groups, there is frequently less control over who joins the group and their desire to participate. Composition and commitment affect interactions and outcomes.

Despite the risks involved in expanding reflective practice to such groups, good reasons exist to venture forth into this domain. When reflection becomes part of educational practice within small groups or teams, its members can realize the following gains:

- Enhanced learning and resources for learning about practice, given more people, each of whom brings varied experiences and expertise in life, learning, and education
- Increased professional and social support (including fun), given the expanded and more varied network of collegial relationships
- More effective interventions for individual students or groups of identified students, given shared purpose, responsibility, and expertise among members of a group
- An emerging sense of hope and encouragement that meaningful and sustained improvements in practice can occur, given group members committed to working and learning together

- Improved climate and collegiality, given greater understanding of our own and others' experiences and perspectives about our shared place of work

Some ways to reflect in small groups include action research, study groups, regular grade-level or content-area meetings to review and design instruction and assessment procedures, examining student data and work, and case-study reviews. Reflective practices can also enhance committee work by intentionally examining about past practices and future possibilities and by soliciting the perspectives of people representing broad interests in the work. Arguably, committees that form to address schoolwide concerns such as space, scheduling, extracurricular activities, and remedial supports for learning would be more effective if reflection and learning were an embedded part of the committee process. Refer to Chapter 5 for more considerations and specific examples of reflective practice in groups or teams.

At the small-group level of reflective practice, the potential to influence educational practices throughout the school gains momentum. Small ripples of change frequently become the impetus for much broader changes, even when that was not an original intent (Garmston & Wellman, 1995; Wheatley, 1992). The potential to improve educational practices significantly increases when increasing numbers of groups and teams embed reflective practices in their work. A culture of inquiry and learning begins to take hold on a grander, schoolwide basis.

Schoolwide Reflective Practice

The greatest potential for reflective practice to improve schools lies within the collective inquiry, thinking, learning, understanding, and acting that result from schoolwide engagement. Over the past decade, emphasis on schoolwide, as opposed to isolated, improvement efforts has increased (e.g., Calhoun, 1994). Isolated efforts (e.g., initiatives taken on by individual teachers, or applying to specific grade levels or content areas) typically result in only isolated improvements, with few cumulative gains realized once students or teachers move on from those experiences. Furthermore, effects do not spread to other groups of students without intentional efforts to design and implement new practices with those students. These are some of the reasons for the emergence of practices intended to promote professional community focused on increasing student learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2000a; Hargreaves, 2001; Hord, 1997; King & Newmann, 2000; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). When reflection becomes part of educational practice on a schoolwide basis, the following gains are possible:

- Significantly expanded learning opportunities and resources for achieving schoolwide advances in practice aimed at student achievement

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- Enhanced sense of common purpose and shared responsibility for all students
- Greater shared knowledge, planning, and communication about students among teachers throughout the school, resulting in greater instructional coherence
- Increased professional support realized from the expanded network of relationships and the extensive expertise revealed within the network
- Enhanced understanding of school culture, specifically what influences policy and practice and how schoolwide improvement efforts can be successful
- Increased hope and possibility for meaningful and sustained improvements in practice, given an expanded awareness of the commitments and talents of staff throughout the school and given the strengthened network among staff members
- Lessened sense of vulnerability to external pressures and, paradoxically, more reasoned consideration of opportunities that might result from external partnerships

Reflective practices at the schoolwide level can take many forms. An entire school staff may be involved in study groups on a common topic, such as reading in the content areas, instructional strategies, or performance assessment. There might also be groups or teams across the school with varied purposes. For example, interdisciplinary groups could form to share disciplinary expertise and to create a set of integrated student outcomes that would be addressed within each of the content areas. Cross-grade-level teams might explore the best practices for effective student transitions between grades or schools. Some issues require schoolwide attention and participation, so group composition should be intentionally designed to connect people across grade levels or curricular areas to bring forth different perspectives and relationships between individuals who may not typically cross paths during a school day. It is neither possible nor essential to include every staff member in every learning or shared-work initiative. What matters is that staff members are involved in some type of collaborative learning that coheres and contributes to overall educational goals and experiences for students. Chapter 6 describes additional considerations and specific examples of schoolwide reflective practices.

Moving Outward in the Spiral

There is greater potential to achieve schoolwide improvements in practice as reflective practices grow from the individual level of the spiral toward the school level. The potential at the outer levels is based on the premise that individuals continue to enhance their individual reflection

and learning. Resources, information, perspectives, ownership, commitment, relationships, and shared responsibility and leadership increase substantially given greater numbers of staff members learning together.

As reflective practice spirals out from the center, challenges to effective implementation are greater. Complexity is dramatically increased as a result of the greater numbers of people involved. Interpersonal dynamics become a greater force. Logistics, such as scheduling time for reflection, become more difficult. Individual risk is greater because an individual's perspectives are exposed to a greater number of people with whom there may be varying degrees of trust, respect, and commitment. The surrounding context and climate of a school also have a greater effect as practices expand to include more people. There are long-standing structures that reinforce isolation. The history and established cultures within and across groups create invisible barriers to interaction. Multiple and often competing priorities for time and professional development can fragment focus, effort, and people. In short, as the individual moves out in the spiral, there is more potential but also more complexity and less control.

Recognizing the presence of significant, complicating variables at the school level can raise serious doubts about the feasibility of reflective practice. The inherently complex nature of schoolwide change can easily feel overwhelming. This is one of the reasons for proposing the Reflective Practice Spiral as a guiding framework. Each of us can choose to remain committed to our own professional learning and improvement by embedding reflective practices in our own lives. We can at least engage in reflective practices at the individual level. Choosing to assume a responsible, proactive stance toward our own development adds positive energy to our lives and to the environments in which we work. As individuals, we reap the benefits of continuous learning and we increase our professional competence. Learning also renews our spirit. Our human needs to learn and grow can be met, in part, through reflective thinking. A commitment to individual reflective practices benefits us as individuals and also has an indirect effect on others.

Beyond the individual, the potential for improvement in schools increases with each additional person who chooses to make a commitment to professional learning and improvement. Understandings about how organizations or systems evolve suggest that significant changes arise through the relationships and interactions among people (Garmston & Wellman, 1995; Wheatley, 1992). Also suggested is that change happens in ways we cannot predict or control. As each of us continues to learn, and as we reach out to connect and learn with others, relationships form and strengthen, thereby increasing the potential large-scale improvement. Gradually, we sense being part of a much larger whole that has the power and momentum to positively affect the lives of students. Schoolwide engagement helps keep energy high and hope alive.

Combinations of different groups of staff members learning together throughout the school result in expanded and strengthened relationships

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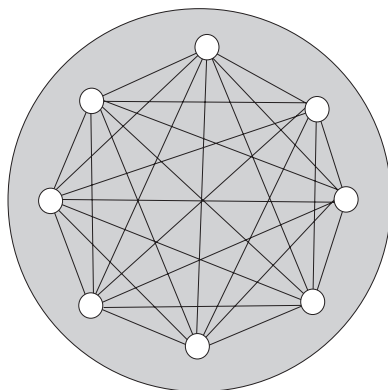
among all staff members. In effect, a web of relationships forms to facilitate communication and connection throughout the school community (see Figure 1.3). This web of relationships serves several very important functions:

- *A safety net is created for students*, who are less likely to feel anonymous and fragmented because staff members are in better communication about students, especially those who are struggling in school
- *A rich network of resources*—people and information—is formed and any member of the school community can tap it; if someone in our immediate network does not know something, we are likely to be connected to someone in another network who may know
- When we are more tightly coupled with others in our work, there is a greater likelihood of more *comprehensive, effective, and rapid response* to schoolwide issues, ranging from safety concerns to adoption of new curricula

To enhance the web metaphor for school improvement, consider that the threads of weaver spiders are one of the strongest organic materials that nature produces. In laboratories, scientists harvest the threads and weave them into bulletproof vests. Thus the web is an apt metaphor for the durable and protective community that emerges and spreads from the spinning of many individuals.

To envision how the web of relationships can accomplish these important functions, look at Figure 1.3 and think of it as representing a well-connected and effective community of educators in a school. Now picture

Figure 1.3 Visual Representation of Relationship Web Among Staff Members, Strengthened by Reflective Practices



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something falling onto the web. The specific something could be a student with unique challenges, a new program or curriculum, or new teachers. Because of all the interconnections, whatever falls onto the strands of the web is caught. The web flexes to accommodate its presence, so it does not fall to the ground underneath. Every connection (relationship) in the web knows that something new has arrived and can offer resources and support. Without these connections, whatever lands in the school (web) falls to the ground and is on its own to stand upright and establish the connections needed to survive. A web of relationships can embrace a new presence, connect it to the broader community, and bring forth resources needed to effectively interact with or respond to the new presence in the web. Reflective practice is one significant means of forming and strengthening the relationships, which are the verbal, social, behavioral, and emotional connections that constitute the web. (A copy of the Web of Relationships is available as Resources item 1.C.)

CLOSING

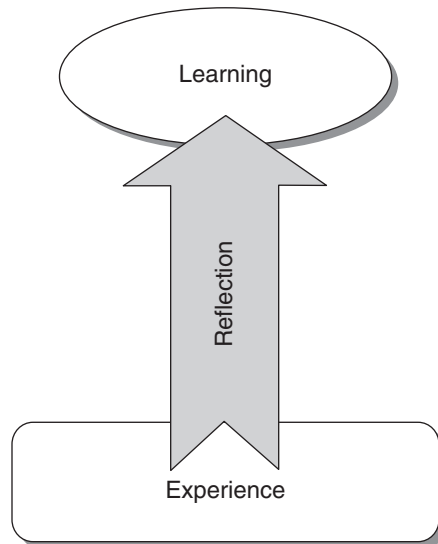
Education is about learning—not only student learning but also staff learning. Learning is a function of reflection, as depicted in Figure 1.4. “Adults do not learn from experience, they learn from processing experience” (Arin-Krupp, as cited in Garmston & Wellman, 1997, p. 1). Dewey asserted years ago that experience itself is not enough. Ten years of teaching can be 10 years of learning from experience with continuous improvement, or it can be 1 year with no learning repeated 10 times. Learning and improvement can no longer be optional. Reflection, therefore, must be at the center of individual and organizational renewal initiatives.

Reflective practice offers one powerful way for educators—individually and collectively—to stay challenged, effective, and alive in their work. The greater the number of people involved, the greater the potential to significantly improve educational practice and, therefore, the greater the potential to enhance student learning. When educators in a school join together to reflect and learn, they make a difference by harnessing the potential of their collective resources: diverse experience and expertise, shared purpose and responsibility for students, expanded understanding of students throughout the school, professional and social support, and hopefulness about meaningful and sustained improvement. Despite the hectic pace and the steady demands, increasing numbers of educators are making it a priority to create space in their professional lives for reflection and learning. In doing so, they are being nurtured to grow and are expanding their repertoire of effective instructional practices. They are moving from a culture of doing to a culture of learning with doing.

You are invited to use the Chapter Reflection Page (Figure 1.5) to make note of significant learning or insights sparked from reading Chapter 1. (A copy of the Chapter Reflection Page is available as Resource 1.D.) In the

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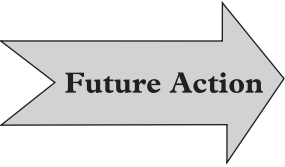
Figure 1.4 Learning Occurs by Reflection on Experience. (Inspired by Judi Arin-Krupp)



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following chapter, Chapter 2, the focus shifts away from providing a background and framework for reflective practice to focus on fundamentals for generating capacity and for designing reflective practices. Chapters 3 through 6 will then focus more sharply on specific considerations and strategies for advancing reflective practices at each level of the Reflective Practice Spiral. According to Peter Block (2002), "the value of another's experience is to give us hope, not to tell us how or whether to proceed" (p. 24). We intend that the value in offering examples will inspire ideas, energy, and action, realizing that our examples cannot tell you how or whether to proceed. That decision must come from within.

Figure 1.5 Chapter Reflection Page

Capture Your Thoughts	
 <p>Big Ideas</p>	 <p><i>Insights</i></p>
 <p><i>Questions</i></p>	 <p>Future Action</p>

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