

## Classroom Case: The Realities of Teaching

- **The Setting:** Working-class neighborhood in a midwestern city of about 300,000.
- **School Profile:** Thirty-five percent of students are members of an ethnic minority. The school has the state's largest Native American enrollment. Fifty percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. For the last two years, the school has not met No Child Left Behind's criteria for adequate yearly progress.
- **The Students:** According to data gathered by teachers, about 30 percent of students are "at risk" (i.e., they possess two or more at-risk characteristics such as "erratic attendance," "signs of abuse/neglect," "assignments not turned in or incomplete," or "chronic behavior problems").
- **The Challenge:** Accepting new leadership roles and responsibilities to promote school improvement and increased student achievement.

You are a member of the site-based council (SBC) at your school. SBC members include the principal, two assistant principals, five teachers, and two parents. Two weeks before the school year ends, the SBC is meeting to discuss activities for next year.

As you enter the conference room and take a seat, the chair of the SBC, a mathematics teacher, says, "So, today, we've got to plan for next year. As we decided at our last meeting, next year's goal is to make AYP."

One teacher---an active, vocal member of the teachers' union---nods her head in agreement and says, "Remember, other teachers, most of whom belong to the union, want the SBC to continue representing their interests next year. As professionals, all teachers play a key role in providing leadership for school improvement."

"I agree," adds another teacher. "We've worked hard for three years---developing a new curriculum, a mentoring program for new teachers, a peer coaching pro-gram ... We've made a lot of progress."

The teacher next to you adds, "Teachers must be at the center of the change process. Teacher leadership is essential if we're going to make AYP next year." Several members of the group, including the principal, who is very supportive of teacher leadership, nod in agreement.

Thinking about the leadership opportunities you've had since starting to teach three years ago, a feeling of satisfaction emerges within you. Granted, it will be a challenge to reach AYP next year. However, the willingness of each SBC member to take on new leadership roles and responsibilities to attain that goal is impressive. You are proud to be a member of the teaching profession and anxious to share with the SBC your plan for a schoolwide approach to increasing student achievement.