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Creating Connections Within Schools

The Fall and Spring issues of *Curriculum In Context* will explore the theme of the 1993 WSASCD Conference, *Creating Connections*. School improvement comes from all participants in the educational enterprise...clients, constituents, communities. New connections are needed within the schools...between and among teachers, administrators, students and parents. To educate our students to appreciate and capitalize on diverse populations and perspectives the local “community” school must also connect with the publics outside their local community with agencies, universities, legislatures, businesses and global society itself.

The Fall issue of *Curriculum in Context* emerged from the resounding and enthusiastic responses from educators and school stakeholders throughout the state of Washington who passionately wanted to share their successes in creating unique connections within schools to provide a better education for their students. The articles in this issue represent the broadest range of perspectives, from parents, teachers, principals and superintendents...truly a community of leaders wishing to improve schools from within — through several connections.

- **Within School Connections.** Collegiality is the key to reducing adversarial roles and building connections among the community of leaders. The lead article by two teachers from Spokane School District, Staci Vesneske and Sharon Becker, focuses on how teachers, together with the principal, seized the opportunity time for change and built a philosophical and psychological foundation for a new schoolhouse. Sherrelle Walker’s article adds to the theme by showing how the idea of inclusion in Federal Way fostered internal connections to create “inclusive” elementary schools.

- **Connections Between Schools.** Opportunities for partnerships are sometimes right next door. Central Kitsap principal, Priscilla Orcutt, tells of a cross-age tutoring program where At-Risk junior high students tutored the neighboring elementary students, with the hope of increasing the tutors’ self-esteem and performance.

- **Connections Within School Districts.** While collective goal setting and consensus decision making may not be the prescriptions for school improvement, they are a metaphor for staff empowerment. Allen Kopf and Joanne Martin, Walla Walla central office administrators, explain how years of experience in shared decision making has connected teachers, aids, secretaries, cooks, and custodians in their school improvement plan.

- **Parents As Partners.** Parent partnerships with schools represent one of the most significant contributions to enhanced student outcomes. Cliff Tyler, Superintendent of North Thurston, demonstrates benefits of connecting parents with teachers and students. The Student Parent Interactive Classroom Environment program, outlined by Susan Brumback provides a parent’s perspective of the benefits of an alternative classroom environment in which parents assist teachers in developing learning programs.

- **Connections With Technology.** Media such as television represents a powerful social force and agent of change. Mike O’Donnell and Robert Force from Chimacum portray how they have used the video connection to promote student learning, self-esteem, a broader world view, and lifelong tools.

- **Cross-Cultural/Bilingual Connections.** A very practical set of principles and guidelines for educators to use with second language learners and cross-cultural understandings is provided by Gisela Ernst and her colleagues. As Washington State begins to focus on diversity and multicultural awareness, such guidelines offer useful strategies.

- **Connections With the Community.** Links with the community, local businesses and government, to provide a natural bridge to the classroom are the key to educational success, argues Superintendent Parsley of Vancouver. The links allow students to transcend the factory schoolhouse into the community to expand their learning and share knowledge.

Appropriately, this Fall issue concludes with Jan Patrick’s insightful review of Roland Barth’s book, *Improving Schools from Within*. Ideas and practices are put forward on how to “connect” with each other and form partnerships in a true community of leaders.

While the Fall issue focuses primarily on connections within Washington schools, the Spring issue will look outside schools and search for successful connections with universities, businesses, international enterprises, and culturally diverse agencies and programs. We invite you to share your ideas, innovations and unique partnerships with your colleagues in Washington and throughout WSASCD’s national network.
A New Foundation for the Little Red Schoolhouse

The house we grew up in was fine, but we don’t want to live there anymore.

Staci Vesneske and Sharon Becker

History has shown that when really important changes occur, it is because communities and countries embrace the right ideas at the right time with the right leader. At Shadle Park High School in Spokane, Washington, we found ourselves in just such a time. With the community and business leaders around us demanding change, with a new principal willing to support change, and with a staff of beginners and veterans wanting change, it was time to find pathways to act on our opportune moment. As we now reflect on the beginning of that journey, we realize that the process is much like building a new home. The house we grew up in was fine, but we didn’t want to live there anymore. Clearly, new perspectives were needed.

The contractor of our home was our principal, Mr. Michael C. Dunn. He envisioned an educational Field of Dreams: “If you build it, they will come.” Like any good contractor, Mr. Dunn called for the help of some of the finest architects in our city of Spokane: the teachers of Shadle Park High School. At a faculty meeting one Tuesday morning, he gave us an informal questionnaire which asked us to brainstorm, “Who are we?” and “What do we want to become?” We had a month between faculty meetings, during which time we discussed among ourselves the picture of our ideal school. At the next faculty meeting, we sat in small groups, further defining our hopes for Shadle. While there was a good amount of skepticism about this new “flavor of the month,” it was a beginning. Mr. Dunn then requested that a committee of volunteer teachers use the responses to examine the endless alternatives for our school’s future excellence.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

As in most architectural firms, each teacher on the “Visions Committee” brought his/her own set of ideas to our discussions. For six months, we tried to mesh the individual agendas. We talked, we argued, we rolled our eyes, vented frustrations and swore often that the foundation would never be laid. Finally, we realized that our Visions Committee couldn’t build the foundation all by itself. Our bricks had only become the cornerstone for change. So because foundations are best formed from the bottom up, we went to our colleagues. Using the information from the original surveys about how our staff visualized the future at Shadle, we compiled a list of characteristics and used that information to plan for an upcoming inservice day. At the inservice, we first used a video about changing paradigms (Barker, 1989) to motivate the staff. We then grouped the entire staff, including custodians, secretaries and other support personnel, by diversified groups. We asked them to choose and prioritize three of the most important characteristics from our compiled list so that as a group they could narrow to three main focuses for Shadle’s vision statement, which would be our focus for change.

After choosing characteristics, we had them list the following: “What does a student/teacher/school look like who is... (whatever characteristic the group chose).” Then, they picked the most important characteristic and had to visually represent that idea on poster paper. As the staff walked around, saw, and made comments on each other’s posters, it became immediately apparent that the staff was becoming excited, unified, and was beginning to believe not only that change could happen, but that change would happen.

Before compiling the data, the committee honestly felt the faculty would all have very different agendas, like we did. Surprisingly, we found that the faculty’s thoughts were remarkably similar to each others’. Developing Self-Esteem, Life-Long Learning and Global Awareness became our three controlling focuses. The foundation was laid.

DRAWING THE BLUEPRINTS

We quickly realized, however, that now we had a strong foundation, it was up to those who would live.
and work in the house to design the blueprints of the individual rooms. To that end, the Visions Committee then took the important characteristics chosen by the faculty and categorized them into seven areas of interest:

- assessment: How do we evaluate educational progress?
- flexible scheduling: How do we best offer learning opportunities?
- instructional strategies: How do we best create learning opportunities?
- integration: How do we facilitate integration?
- requirements: What could be changed in our graduation requirements?
- technology: Where does technology fit into the educational process?
- tracking: Does ability tracking best suit the needs of our students?

Coming to the end of our first year, we asked the faculty to sign up for one of the seven self-regulated sub-committees so that planning could begin for the next fall. Now that we had our three controlling focuses and seven interest groups, we felt it was finally time to write a visions statement which would provide both a focus for the seven sub-committees and a transition for the following year's blueprints. During the summer, we invited newly hired staff to join one of the seven teams which would meet during the preparation days in the fall. To facilitate a successful beginning, each of us researched an area and were ready with possible ideas should the teams need them. In order to kick off the house "razing" party, we brought in guest speaker Dr. Brian Talbott, superintendent of Educational Service District #101, who was one of the innovators of the Satellite Telecommunications Educational Program (STEP). Dr. Talbott echoed our unified desire to raze the old house and build a new one. He spoke not to adopting others' plans, but to discovering our own architectural design. The interest groups eagerly began building the framework of the rooms in our new house.

**BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK**

While each sub-committee was responsible for the blueprints and framework of one room, the inevitable blending of the teams led to stronger construction. Therefore, the rooms became the design of the staff. Meeting with our contractor, Mr. Dunn, we decided to begin with the den, because it was a room we could continue to come back to for ideas.

- the den is where people get together, feeling comfortable to discuss their viewpoints. Since the central office staff of our district provided two early-release days for collaborative planning, we used the first of those days for our committees to


- Since the bedroom is where the daily routine goes on behind closed doors, the Instructional Committee planned our February collaborative day. They asked resident experts to present mini-workshops on effective methods of instruction. School board members were invited to attend, and they saw teachers teaching newer instructional methods to take behind classroom doors.

- People are nourished in the kitchen so the Integration Committee wanted to offer omelettes, not just eggs; stew, not just steak. They spent most of the year examining all possible methods of integration both dealing in meshing existing curriculums and bringing in multi-cultural aspects.

- Because records are kept in the office, the Assessment Committee focused on how we communicate students’ assessment to their parents. They worked with an existing suggestion to implement a mid-quarter progress report which would go to all students. Secondly, they changed the computerized report card comments to reflect a more realistic representation of student progress.

- The library is where information is processed and stored. The Technology Committee has the ongoing responsibility to make the decisions about how computer monies are spent. They also maintain our computer center and continue to train faculty in new software.

- Nourishment is offered in the Dining Room and the Flexible Scheduling Committee felt that education should be offered based on student need. After discussing possibilities, they decided to move toward a seven period day instead of our current six period day. This would allow teachers to have a traditional preparation and a second collaborative period, while allowing students more scheduling choices.

- The Hallways guide students to the different rooms. The Tracking Committee was interested in determining whether ability grouping was the best method to guide students into different levels of courses. They read and read and read, and made their recommendation to the Advanced Placement teachers.

WORKING WITH CONSTRUCTION DIFFICULTIES

Toward the end of the second year we met to evaluate progress. We found three areas of difficulty: definition of sub-committee roles, teacher involvement, and delays and barriers. First, in asking committees to set short and long-term goals, we discovered that group members held differing ideas as to the purpose of their self-regulated work team. For example, the members of the Integration Committee found themselves divided on whether they should work to integrate cultures or curriculum. In addition, members of the Tracking Committee found that after making their recommendation to advanced placement teachers, they saw no further purpose for their group. We solved these types of problems by suggesting that teachers join to create a new team if their interests had changed. While many chose to change, most stayed with their original group.

Secondly, teacher involvement over the two years has fluctuated. As a Visions Committee we hope that the reshuffling of committee members will rekindle teacher ownership in the process of restructuring. We see that one of our main focuses is finding ways to motivate teachers to manage the changes which will ultimately affect them.

Finally, we have encountered irritating delays and outright barriers during the construction process. When a delay occurred, it was easy for us to see a barrier, forgetting for a moment that building quality education takes an astonishing amount of time. To remind ourselves, committee members continually encouraged each other to look past minor delays. For example, the Flexible Scheduling Committee has had to be patient in meeting with central office staff, creating parent surveys, and running trial schedules through the computer. Though few, barriers also presented themselves. Our Requirement Committee, for example, decided that its goals could only be achieved through a legislative process not a site-based process. With recent legislative openness, however, this committee is going to remain intact for another year and take a second look at possibilities.

MOVING IN?

Looking toward the third year, we find that the foundation is laid and we grow impatient to move in. The reality is, however, that we are a long ways from placing the last shingle on the roof. We have a mission statement, working sub-committees, and a continued belief that if we do not create our change, someone else will do it for us. As we continue to look for new blueprints, and reevaluate old programs and methods, we gain momentum as we slowly see changes occur. Truly, then, we have moved into a new philosophy, if not our new house.

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Creating Connections and Partnerships Within Schools

Clifford E. Tyler

Parents as partners within schools will continue to constitute the most important component for enhanced student outcomes, and will help realize public education's major vision for change and restructuring for the twenty-first century: improved public support for education. This partnership design provides benefits to students, schools, and parents through different means. Success stories in a Washington State school district, and how to initiate school/parent partnerships will be discussed.

The message from research is consistently clear: The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement. (Fullan: 227). Research over the last two decades in the United States, Canada and Great Britain confirm the necessity of parent and community involvement for classroom and school improvement. (Ziegler, 1987, Epstein, 1988). Parents' encouragement, activities, participation at school, and their interest at home all positively contribute to their children's performance, personal and academic development, even after family socio-economic status is taken into account.

Another research illustration is a new paradigm for parent involvement at two elementary schools, Daniel Webster Elementary in San Francisco and Hoover Elementary School in Redwood City, California in the Accelerated Schools Project developed by Henry Levin of Stanford University. The purpose of this program is to get all children in poverty-affected, largely minority schools up to grade level by the end of 6th grade. The program was highly successful because parents were involved in a variety of school, home and community activities. This spirit and intensity was accomplished from a restructured site-based management concept, which could not have been mandated by top-down bureaucratic directives. (Seeley: 47-48)

The Atlanta (Georgia) Partnership has also been a success story. It was formed in 1975 at the initiation of the Atlanta business community in an effort to turn around a tarnished school system, suffering from a severe case of white flight and free falling student achievement test scores, and a community in an economic tailspin from the 1973 Arab oil embargo.

Once a commitment was established, school district staff conducted meetings throughout the community with over 10,000 citizens to establish several top priorities. One of those was to improve communication between school staff and the public, staff and students, and among school staff members themselves. In short, the success of these priorities over the next ten years included an increased PTA membership from 2,000 to 18,000, social services and tutorial partnerships with religious groups and the higher education community, and extensive school/business partnerships. (Danzberger, Usdan: 394-395)

**TYPES OF PARENT PARTNERSHIPS IN SCHOOLS**

1. The parenting category is where the schools hold all families responsible for establishing home environments to support learning. For example a school may provide suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level. Workshops, videotapes, computerized phone messages on parenting and child-rearing issues at each grade level may be conducted.

2. The second category is volunteering at school, where parents are recruited and organized to provide help and support at school. The school volunteer program or class parent committee volunteer for each room. There may be a parent room for volunteers with resources for parents. An annual postcard survey may be conducted to identify all available talents, times and locations of volunteers.

3. The third type of school/parent partnership is

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Dr. Tyler is Superintendent of North Thurston School District.
parent involvement in learning activities at home, where the school provides ideas to parents on how to help children at home. Information is given to parents on skills in each subject at each grade. A regular homework schedule is provided once per week, twice per month, etc., that requires students to discuss schoolwork at home. Calendars with daily topics for discussion by parents and students may also be provided. (Brandt, 1989)

4. The fourth school/parent partnership category is home-community/school communications, where more effective forms of communications are designed to reach parents. Teachers conduct conferences with every parent at least once per year, with a follow-up as needed. Translators for language-minority families may be provided. Weekly or monthly folders of student work are sent home and reviewed and comments returned. Students may also attend and participate in the parent-teacher conferences.

5. The fifth category is the governance category, where parents are recruited and trained as parent leaders. Parents participate as leaders in PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, including advisory councils or committees, such as curriculum, safety, and personnel. (Fullan: 227)

**PARENT PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN SCHOOLS**

Studies have shown that there are outcomes of greater security for students, greater respect for parents, improved student attendance, and a greater awareness of the importance of school. There is greater student participation in parent-teacher conferences, and in the preparation for conferences. In addition, better decisions about courses and programs take place.

With volunteering, students increase learning skills due to receiving individual adult attention, and students are more at ease in communicating with adults. Parents also receive additional ideas on how to help their child at home. Students complete their homework, gain a greater self-concept of ability as a learner, and are able to practice their skills achievement. Student rights enjoy greater protection, and students receive specific benefits linked to specific policies.

**BENEFITS FOR PARENTS**

Studies have shown that in the case of parenting responsibilities, parent outcomes include greater self-confidence in parenting, knowledge of child development, and a greater understanding of home as environment for student learning. Parents have a greater understanding for school programs, have better interaction with teachers, and are able to better monitor their child’s progress with a higher comfort level. Parents enjoy a greater input to policies that affect their child’s education, and they feel a greater control of the environment. (Brandt, 1989)

**BENEFITS FOR THE SCHOOLS**

Parents are a key component of shared decision-making in providing input to the school site principal and teachers in the planning, implementation, evaluation and communication of school restructuring for the twenty-first century. They are integral members of the planning teams in helping to identify student needs, develop goals and tools for restructuring, i.e. higher order thinking skills, student outcomes, technology, instructional time, etc. (Lewis: 170)

Teachers also directly benefit from the school/parent partnership connection. They have a better understanding of family cultures, goals, talents and needs. They are also more aware of parent interest, in schools and children, and willingness to help. Teachers have more respect and appreciation of parents’ time, ability to follow through and reinforce learning. Finally, there is an equal status interaction with parents to improve school programs. (Brandt, 1989)

**SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS**

One of the success stories of connections within school districts of parents with schools has been in the North Thurston School District in Lacey, Washington. Under the leadership of Barbara Schneider, Community Relations Coordinator and Kitty Carlsten, Parent Volunteer Coordinator, the District has developed an extensive school/parent partnership program. Parents are regularly in-serviced and trained as to how to be effective in the classroom in their grade level of interest. Approximately 1,170 parents volunteered their services for the 1991-92 school year in a variety of capacities, i.e. classroom assistance, chaperones, resource teachers, advisory committee members, etc.

Other successes of school/parent partnerships in the North Thurston School District have been in advisory capacities both at the district and school site levels. At the district level, parents are full partners on advisory committees for curriculum development, vocational education, special education, strategic planning and action teams, gifted education, levy/bond campaigns, multi-cultural/human relations, and school facilities planning. On the Strategic Planning/Action Teams, under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent of Planning, Sue Shannon and Director of Staff Development, Jeff Peltier, parents and community members constituted approximately 40% of the 200 volunteers.
who planned and assembled a five year blue print for the District, which was approved by the Board of Directors just last July.

At the school site level, an outstanding success story has been the school/parent partnership in school restructuring. At North Thurston High School, a staff/parent "Time Team" was put together several years ago by principal, Jim Koval to review and question whether or not the traditional grades 9-12 six period schedule was meeting the current needs of students. This team submitted a "Tetris Time" schedule to the Superintendent and the Board of Directors. In short, the schedule broke away from the traditional six period schedule by establishing double periods for some courses, and a counseling/guidance/activity period during mid-day. Under this schedule, teachers could focus more energy and time on only half as many students.

Another story has been a restructuring planning team for the construction of new schools in the North Thurston School District. Under the leadership of Principal, Carol O'Connell, parents and staff worked closely together to develop a mission, vision, and an innovative curriculum and instruction program unique to the culture and personality to that school community. This effort was completed at Seven Oaks Elementary School, currently a nationally recognized technology school, and more recently at Komanchin Middle School, Horizons Elementary School and for the District's new high school.

The most significant school/parent partnership has been in the District levy/bond campaign effort. A highly organized parent/staff North Thurston Citizens for Education Committee, under the leadership of Jackie Sanders, a dedicated parent, and with assistance from Roy Pedersen, Associate Superintendent ran two successful community levy/bond campaigns in the 1991-92 school year, which resulted in the passage of a $70 million school facility bond issue, $2 million school bus levy, and a maintenance and operations levy for the next two years.

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

According to Lareau and Benson, while the partnerships are generally considered advantageous, their success may vary considerably between working class families and middle class families. In a case study comparing schools in Colton, California, a working class community, and Prescott, Arizona schools, a middle class community, conclusions were drawn that school activities did not penetrate family life with Colton families as much as with Prescott families. (Lareau, Benson, 1984)

**STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL PARENT/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS**

Briefly, the key components start with Board of Director and district administration interest and long-range commitment to a partnership; to innovative risk-taking; identification of school/parent partnership needs for students; and organization and establishment of goals of school/parent partnerships based on student and school needs. When these important first step components are established, new roles of empowerment are established for teachers and parents. Participative decision-making can then be practiced. School sites receive more authority for school site decisions, and are held accountable for the results. Finally, the superintendent and Board must be willing to get directly involved in a supportive role.

There is no question that school/parent partnerships within the schools can enhance the shared goal of success for all students. Schools without the partnership commitment or goals become stagnant schools, which experience limited student success. Parent involvement allows parents to exercise the one key item of their agenda: a good education for their children. The solution is for staff and parents to work together in sharing problems, the ultimate demonstration of support for each others efforts and intentions.

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Validating Video Chimacum’s CVTV Program

Mike O’Donnell & Robert Force

By the time a child in this country is twelve years old he or she will have watched an average of 12,000 hours of television—one thousand hours for each year of their lives—and will continue to do so for each additional year of their life!

Most educators see this as a constant threat—a liability to today’s students. The very medium appears to be odds with the educational process by promising quick and easy “sound-bite” solutions to complex issues. Not only do we have to contend with superficial understanding, but we also must weather the buffeting of pop culture spin-offs in the actions and attitudes of our students.

It’s easy to wring our hands and point at television as a primary source of corruption to our educational goals:

• Lack of attention span in students (sound-bite syndrome)
• A source of questionable standards of behavior
• A great waster of time
• A device which encourages shallow thinking and herd mentality
• A fantasy machine which erodes personal initiative
• Ultimately, a destroyer of individualism

We’re not saying these things aren’t true. Unfortunately in the main part, at this point in our society, they are true.

We do tend to forget, however, that even though it seems that television has been with us for most of our lives (and for all of the lives of today’s students) it is actually a technology that is in its infancy. Likewise, as a social force and agent of change, we are now only beginning to realize its possibilities.

The same omnipresent, soul-gulping, flickering blue tube that is in most American’s livingrooms has also been to the greatest depths of the ocean, beyond the orbit of the sun and inside of the human body. Is that bad?

Any technology taken at its lowest common denominator is at best a drug to the senses. However, applied in the direction of the advancement of human knowledge and potential, it can become an exciting tool for discovering ourselves and the world in which we live.

What we’re talking about here is the validation of perception. Our children know that TV is good. It feels good. It’s fun. It’s exciting. It’s easy. They haven’t begun to dream the previous generation’s nightmares about electronic automatons and “Big Brother” societies. We need to let go of our fears and recognize what they already know intuitively—that here is the greatest learning and teaching tool in the history of the planet. Shame on us for not recognizing that through the fog of our preconceptions.

If we feared the written word, we would not teach writing. Let us not fear the “boob tube” and instead, teach television.

Each child out there has an unconscious knowledge that we need to tap into. They know good TV from bad. We can validate that knowledge and help bring it to the forefront. 12,000 hours spent doing anything results in learning something. How do we dig at and release that “something?”

TEACHING TELEVISION

The way that we began the process at Chimacum was serendipitous. Four years ago we had a pull-out model of 8th grade LAP (Learning Assistance Program) students who had the bit in their teeth. School was a point-blank drag. Period. They were disruptive in mainstream classrooms and performed minimally any task assigned to them—if at all.

Junior High Principal and LAP coordinator, Mike O’Donnell, had the idea to separate these eight students from the rest of the student body for two hours a day and give them a chance to experience success in a less-structured environment. They were put in a remote classroom (out behind the custodian’s facilities) with teacher Mary Missig and learning assistant, Robert Force. The real issue confronting the team was how to create a desire to learn—how to break through their apathy and sense of unconnectedness by throw-

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Mr. O’Donnell is Director of Curriculum and Student Services, and Program Director of Chimacum Distance Learning Center. Mr. Force is Site Coordinator of Chimacum Distance Learning Center, Chimacum School District.
ing out the learning methodology that had failed them. They made pizza with them; let them draw while reading John Steinbeck and Jack London to them; took the time to listen to their grouches and complaints about school and life. Eventually a project was conceived to build a greenhouse and grow flowers. The academic side involved math and measurements, horticulture for science and vocabularies tied to the experiences and so forth—not unlike any other group and self confidence building process. But still, there was one student they couldn’t reach. It always seems to be that way.

Prior to becoming involved with secondary education, Robert Frose’s background was in media production. Almost in desperation, he put a video camera into the student’s hands and told him to videotape what everyone else was doing since they couldn’t get him to physically join in himself. And the light went on. Not just for the student, but for the team as well.

They began to learn from the student. He could “see” the world! He could frame it and bring it to everyone’s attention in ways we couldn’t quite see. By stepping away from the action, he had stepped into it.

From that spring day in 1989, Chimacum began to teach TV. The next school year a class was added in the junior high. Kids fell over themselves to get into it. We had them create cooperative learning “production companies” of four students each. They were responsible to come up with a logo for themselves, storyboard an idea for production, present it to the “network” (the team teachers), scriptwrite, film and mix a 3 to 5 minute video.

They were taught the mechanics of camera and framing and were guided through the steps of brainstorming and mind-mapping. Storyboarding and scriptwriting was taught. Students were running all over the school—setting up hallway shots, outside shots, arranging sets. They were loose—but they were also attentive and responsible with the equipment, sensitive to the environments they were invading, and extremely involved and productive.

Just when we thought that we were really teaching them something—higher order thinking skills, organizational ability, writing—they really began to teach us instead.

They sorted themselves out according to their own predilections, strengths and abilities. The segmented, concrete (learning style) individuals made ideal camera operators. They perceived the world in monovision, unhurried in their visual transitions. The hyperactive types were directors. Innumerable possibilities and scenarios were spinning through their multi-track brains, and they were on top of all of them. The fastidious detailers were the producers, organizers and editors. The quiet ones became for the most part the writers, setting down the visions. Actors and actresses popped up from the ranks of the kinesthetic.

We had discovered Gardner’s seven intelligences, or rather, by exemplifying those traits, the students had discovered them for us.

Most importantly, we had a vehicle. We could validate what they already knew and help to refine the techniques whereby they created and actualized their world viewpoints. For the first time, students experienced success from both their peers and within themselves. The worldly and practical came to par with the academic and scholarly. We were able to make the learning process relevant to their lives as developing individuals.

The issues they set for themselves to study were tough and confusing issues like drug abuse, teen drinking, child abuse, AIDS, environmental concerns and homelessness. Far beyond the mechanics of the media and television itself, they created responses to the world they were living in. By examining social problems, they were able to utilize and integrate another level of self-knowledge. They became vested partners in their own educational experience.

They began to incorporate this new awareness into other aspects of their school day. As soon as multimedia became an available tool for them, many began to elect to do video reports in areas of core curriculum. This in turn led to “video students” being asked by other teachers to come and document projects that other grades of classes were doing.

Soon these “vid-kids” became mentors to those in the lower grades. Not only were they organizing their own knowledge to the point of successfully being able to pass it along to others, they were doing so in the context of having to discover entirely new modes of interpersonal skills. As the student body became used to the presence of video cameras as part of an ordinary school day, the more students were able to document school life. What a fertile field to be able to view the educational process from the inside!

**INTEGRATING SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY**

From this core of activity in the junior high, we grew to filming school and community events. As the interest and visibility of the program increased, we entered into a partnership with the local cable company and went “on the air” with CVTV (Chimacum Valley Television) a student-generated weekly television show. We were able to show the inner workings of our school to the community as a whole.

As our school has moved toward an integrated curriculum, the video program has continued to ex-
pand to fill the needs of a multi-disciplinary approach to education. At some point it becomes impossible to separate what is done “for school in school” from what is done both in and outside of the school environment for the sake of learning and doing itself.

Students are filming county commissioner meetings, search and rescue exercises, visits by the governor, field trips, sports—every kind of event imaginable outside of the school. Inside the school, they are making video reports (as alternatives to written ones), helping teachers to document classroom activities, creating video yearbooks and mentoring younger students.

The skills of camera shooting, editing, mixing, care of equipment, etc. have actually been secondary byproducts. The real results can be found in the areas of critical thinking skills and creative problem solving. Pride in the program also plays an important part. In four years of operation we have not had a single piece of equipment broken or stolen.

Recognition of their efforts is also a central part of the program. Not only do they get to see their work broadcast to the community, but in some cases, students have won awards in several states for their productions as well as having had a clip “booted” to CNN and broadcast nationwide. Fourth graders video documented an award-winning school program that was subsequently presented this year at the National School Directors Association Conference in Florida. It always helps to see your name in lights.

We’re in an Information Age. Whether we like it or not, the perceptual values of our students have been mostly set long before they step inside a school for the first time. Television has had a central and formative role in almost every young American’s life—it’s part of our culture. We can’t afford to view it as a wasteland, for it all comes back to the fact that you can’t tell someone that everything they know is wrong and then expect them to be interested in giving you their best.

If you can give a child a VCR remote control and have them flip through thirty channels in less than a minute and be able to tell you what is on each channel, you know you’re on to something. Therein lie the seeds of perception that is driving an entire generation. As educators we need to recognize that this subliminal knowledge exists and that our job is to help direct it onto broader interests.

The essence of Chimacum’s program is recognizing that each student holds within them this sure and innate knowledge which can be tapped. By doing so we promote their self-esteem, validate their world view and provide them with some useful lifelong tools academically, socially and for some, vocationally.
Teaching in Multilingual/Multicultural Settings: Strategies for Supporting Second-Language Learners

Gisela Ernst, Margaret Castle & Lauren C. Frostad

It is now very likely that regular classroom teachers will work with students for whom English is a second language. According to the latest census figures more than eight million school-aged children live in homes in which languages other than English are spoken. Between 1980 and 1985, 639,000 foreign-born children legally immigrated to the United States (Waggoner, 1987). In the state of Washington over 40,000 students were enrolled in some kind of second language program during the 1990-91 year. Given these scenarios, it is not venturesome to assume that every classroom teacher, at some time during his or her career, will have at least one student who speaks English as another language — whether assigned to that role or not. This article is written for those teachers and their administrators.

In what follows we offer a set of selected principles and guidelines that we feel are most important for teachers and future teachers to know about second-language learners learning as they relate to classroom practice. These suggestions are the result of a collaborative effort between the English as a Second Language (ESL) specialist in the district, a student teacher in bilingual education, and a bilingual/ESL faculty member at a state university. It is basically a response to the increasing number of requests for information about the “secrets” of working with language minority students.

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Fall/Winter 1992

LANGUAGE LEARNING: PRINCIPLES THAT MAKE FOR GOOD PRACTICE

1. Learning a new language is a complex process. Language acquisition is one of the most important developmental tasks. All human cultures use language as a highly organized and systematic way of symbolically representing experience. Language is a product of culture and an instrument of thought. Undoubtedly, language enhances and refines intellectual development and is necessary for higher abstract reasoning. According to research on second language acquisition (Cummins, 1986), there are two dimensions of language proficiency. The first dimension is basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). This first dimension is face-to-face or oral language communication and takes two to three years to acquire. The cognitive academic language proficiency skills (CALPS), on the other hand, involve abstract language skills. These are the skills required to succeed in content-area classes. It takes six to seven years to acquire these skills.

2. Language develops best in a variety of settings that promote talk and interaction. Talk and interaction are not only important for understanding new concepts; they also provide a scaffold for learning through the other language modes of reading and writing. Through talking and listening to each other (not only to the teacher) and working on activities involving reading and writing (not only their own), they are able both to develop increasing facility in all language modes and increasing control over their use for social interaction, thinking, and learning.

3. Literacy is part of language, thus reading and writing develop alongside speaking and listening. According to Goodman (1982), “The two most important resources that any learner brings to learning to read and write are their competence in the oral language and their undimin-
ished ability to learn language as it is needed for new functions. The role of literacy instruction in school is to facilitate the use by learners of these resources” (p. 256). For students who are in the process of learning English, this means that they need time to sort out and talk through the complex process of responding to different academic demands. It is thus clear that LEP students gain from working in classrooms where speaking and listening are regarded as integral to the process of negotiating knowledge, exchanging personal experiences and thoughts, and the development of language and literacy abilities.

4. Educational programs need to include what students bring with them. In other words, we need to focus on what students have rather than on what they lack. Teaching and learning can be extended and enhanced when participants’ own experiences (vis-a-vis their language and culture) are mixed with those generalizations and conceptualizations offered by schooling. It is after only such acknowledgment that stimulates learning and helps students construct meanings by making connections between what they already know and what the new environment offers them (Ernst, in press).

5. Appreciation and respect for cultural diversity. Providing equal opportunities for all students depends essentially on the degree to which classroom teachers are able to institute classroom practices and curriculum development which systematically respond to the diversity represented in their classrooms. But implementations of these practices is in fact dependent upon supportive school staff and programs, district guidelines, and state language policies which recognize diversity as an asset and not a handicap.

STRATEGIES FOR CONTENT-AREA TEACHERS

Classroom Environment and Attitude

1. Relax and Enjoy. Language is more caught than taught. Your relaxed, receptive, interested concern will be the magical ingredient for enhancing the teaching and learning process.

2. Provide a warm, encouraging environment in which help is readily available to LEP students.

3. Books that are sensitive to the adjustments of the new student can be shared with the class (e.g., Crow Boy by Yashima; I Hate English by Levine; What Does the Rooster Say, Yoshio? by Battles).

4. Fill the room with meaningful, relevant print. These are springboards for discussion and the rudiments of second language literacy.

5. Label as many objects in the classroom as possible and invite your students to provide labels in their own language.

6. Increase possibilities for success by using a satisfactory/unsatisfactory option for grading until students are able to successfully complete classroom assignments.

7. Try to avoid anglicizing your students’ names. Sometimes their names are the only connection they have with their native language, culture, and country.

Cross-Cultural Communication and Understanding

1. Become informed about the different cultures and languages represented in your classroom. This can be done by designing activities wherein your students become the “experts” by sharing part of their culture with the class.

2. If you find a student’s behavior to be unusual or disconcerting, you might ask students or parents to clarify its meaning (e.g., Native American and Asian American students avoid eye contact with authority figures out of respect). This could prevent misunderstandings further down the road.

3. Try to talk individually with your students as much as possible. This lets them know you are interested in them as individuals, not just as students.

4. Avoid forcing students to speak and allow a wait time for students to answer.

5. LEP students need instruction to be clear and interesting. By using exaggerated facial expressions, a slower speech rate, abundance of gestures, and enunciating clearly you can reach more students. Many times our expressions and gestures can help students understand what we are saying when our words do not.

6. Try to incorporate tutors who speak students’ native languages.

7. Start by asking questions (backed by visual aids) that can be answered with yes or no. Then move, little by little, to questions requiring slightly longer answers.

Instructional Techniques and Strategies

1. Whenever possible, try to use a variety of formats that go beyond the traditional lecture format. This will enable you to target different learning styles in your classroom.

2. Organize, when possible, cooperative learning activities. Small groups give second-language learners a chance to use their second language skills in a non-threatening environment.
3. The use of videos, films, drama/role plays, manipulatives (great for math), pictures, artifacts, posters, music, nursery rhymes, games, filmstrips, maps, charts, and fieldtrips can enhance teaching and learning.

4. Your school ESL specialist is a wonderful source of knowledge and information about what to do and what materials to use with your LEP students.

5. Encourage students to indicate when they are confused or do not understand. Students may feel more comfortable indicating understanding rather than acknowledging confusion.

6. When testing we need to be sensitive to students' cultural background. Culturally biased tests are a major hurdle for second-language learners. Standardized tests can be a common culprit. Misinterpreting terms, directions, or situational cues can cause your student's test performance to drop drastically.

7. When planning lessons or assignments, think about the following questions: What background knowledge do students have? Will the assignment use academic language or critical thinking skills unfamiliar to your students?

8. Restate, rephrase, summarize, and review frequently.

**Literacy and Oral Language Development**

1. Keep in mind specialized vocabulary which is content specific. Each content-area has specific terminology which can confuse most second-language learners. Math, for example, has several terms for the function of addition (e.g., add, plus, combine, sum, increased by).

2. Whenever possible define key terms in several ways.

3. Make use of pictionarys.

4. Encourage the use of bilingual dictionaries, materials, and content-area books in students' first language. They can help students understand new concepts both in their native language and in English.

5. Consult your media specialist for books appropriate for student's reading/comprehension level.

**SUMMARY**

In this article we have provided a set of practical suggestions for content-area teachers and administrators, who may not be familiar with ESL methods or second language acquisition strategies but, who, nevertheless are enthusiastic about working with language minority students.

**GLOSSARY**

**Bilingual Education** — The use of two languages, one of which is English, as the medium of instruction for the same student population in a well-organized program.

**Content-Based Instruction** — A content-based syllabus integrates the teaching of subject matter content (e.g., mathematics, science, social studies) with language teaching aims: the language curriculum is based directly upon students' academic needs.

**English Proficiency** — The capability of an individual to understand (listening, reading) and use (speaking, writing) English in a communicative, and therefore functional, setting.

**ESL** — (English as a Second Language) Methods and techniques for teaching English as a second language, including components of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**ESOL** — (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Same as ESL.

**Language Minority Student** — A student with a home- or native language other than English.

**LEP** — (Limited English Proficient) A student from a language minority population with less than native proficiency in English.

**Linguistic Competence** — The mastery of the elements and rules of a language, knowledge of its sounds, words, phrases and sentences.

**Mainstream** — To place the LEP student in the curriculum activities designed for fluent speakers of English in a regular classroom setting.

**NEP** — Non-English Proficient

**Sheltered English** — This program provides limited instruction in content areas through English. Content-area teachers use simplified English (slower rate of speech, controlled vocabulary and structures, visual aids, demonstrations, mime, gesture, and conversational interaction techniques) to teach both content and language skills.

**TPR** — (Total Physical Response) A technique for teaching ESL and foreign languages proposed by James Asher which entails giving commands to students.

**REFERENCES**


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INVITATIONS TO LEARNING:
Creating the Connections

1993
WSASCD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

February 4, 5, and 6
Seattle
We are in the midst of a phenomenal time in the education profession. The focus on restructuring and paradigm shifts has expanded our vision beyond what we previously thought possible. As a result the culture of schooling is changing. Teachers and students alike are engaged in active learning activities which build on past experiences and are scaffolding understanding to new heights. Past conflicts over teaching content versus processes have subsided as we realize the need for both in meaningful learning activities that will prepare our students for the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for the twenty-first century.

As educators we are embracing the commonly held belief that all students can be successful learners in an environment that does not restrict students’ opportunities. Pursuit of untapped potential is an exciting venture as new strengths are discovered in the students we teach.

The 1993 WSASCD Conference is designed to help make the connections that link our current restructuring projects with new directions. Presenters are encouraged to expand our thinking and create new possibilities.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Elliot Eisner, Stanford University, will challenge conference attendees to evaluate for themselves the goals of America 2000 and current federal reforms. Do we want the standardization the reports suggest or is education more about dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity and learning how to savor the quality of the journey? Dr. Eisner reminds us that schools are cultures for growing minds and the direction this growing takes is influenced by the opportunities the school provides. Decisions that are made about the school’s priorities are also fundamental decisions about the kind of minds children have the opportunity to develop.

Linda MacRae Campbell, Antioch University, has trained thousands of teachers in Multiple Intelligence theory. Bruce Campbell, a teacher in Marysville, has set up his classroom so his students learn seven different ways. The Campbells will team up for a conference action lab to show how Howard Gardner’s theory has shifted the educational emphasis from a single form of cognitive intelligence to multiple intelligences.

We celebrate a rich heritage of diversity in schools. The variety of cultures, ethnic groups, religions and languages enrich and expand learning. Keynote speaker, John W. Alston III, an experienced teacher, administrator and counselor will challenge his audience to prepare our youth for the new face of America. His theme is Making America Work. Mr. Alston has received national acclaim for his presentations to both educators and business communities on diversity and change.

The Northwest Regional Laboratory will share experiences and strategies in an all-day action lab on the Child-Family-Community Programs which strengthen the services for children.

Another action lab will feature a successful portfolio assessment project which centers around students’ self-reflections. This will be shared by Dr. Jill Hearne, Principal, Adelaide Elementary in the Federal Way School District. Conference Program Chair, Claudia Buckner has encouraged colleagues submitting conference proposals to emphasize new connections for learning. Exhibit Co-Chairs, Debbie Helm and Ben Dillard are also expanding conference exhibits to include non-profit organizations which provide excellent resources for schools.

The conference committee wishes to extend to our colleagues a special invitation to learning — join us February 4, 5, 6, 1993, at the Sea-Tac Red Lion Hotel.
How Do I Change Thee, 
Let Me Count the Ways...

Sherrelle J. Walker

In the midst of public outcry for change in American schools, the Federal Way School District stands at the beginning and intermediate stages of many changes to public education.

One idea that has caught 'fire' in the District and fostered many internal connections is a focus on "inclusion." Our connections involved elementary schools (initially), Chapter 1 and Learning Assistant Programs, Transitional Bilingual Education, and Special Education.

The concept is not a new one but maybe one with a different look: a look that attempts to teach all students in their home school with appropriate support regardless of need.

So what is "inclusion" or an "inclusive school?" Stainbeck and Stainbeck, 1990, say:

An inclusive school is one that educates all students in the mainstream. It also means providing all students within the mainstream appropriate educational programs that are challenging yet geared to their capabilities and needs as well as any support and assistance they and/or their teachers may need to be successful in the mainstream. But an inclusive school also goes beyond this. An inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, is accepted and welcomed, supports and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community...

This focus for the District began three years ago with a committee of teachers, and administrators discussing this concept and the barriers to implementation. After a year of planning and coordination, an "inclusive schools approach" was implemented in the District. As a result of this work a focus statement was developed:

The Federal Way School District will focus on an integrated educational model to provide for the success of all students in special programs. This

will be achieved through staff and community involvement, on-going communication, program evaluation, and staff training.

The action plan from the group included the following:

- communication plan for staff, parents, and community;
- special programs needs assessment;
- a recommended model after reviewing and visiting integrated approaches to special programs delivery;
- a review of existing resources;
- a review of student and staff placement;
- training for staff; and
- implementation, monitoring and evaluation of program.

INDICATORS OF INCLUSION

After the work of the action plan had been completed, it was important for district staff and parents to understand these ideas about "inclusion."

Inclusion isn't:

- sitting at the back of the room all day by oneself
- one to one assistance all day
- evaluating students as if they were not handicapped
- grouping by disability, and
- interfering with friendships.

Inclusion is:

- a participating member of a regular classroom
- meeting individual needs (adapting curriculum and materials)
- age appropriate placement with peers in home, community, and school
- having normative expectations for all students
- having support when needed
- making friends, and
- providing opportunities for success.

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Federal Way School District.
PLANNING FOR INCLUSION

Any school interested in the Inclusion Program used the following guidelines for program planning:

Outcomes • What will have happened for students because of your efforts? For staff? Parents? What is your purpose?

Goals and Objectives • What are the steps you will take to reach the purpose and outcomes above?

Quality Planning • Who will be involved in the planning and how will it occur?

Individualization • How do you make sure that the program for each student is individualized (i.e., that the program fits the student vs. the student fits the program)?

Classroom format and/or structure • How will the classroom environment look different? Team teaching? Consulting? Multi-grade? Other?

Instruction • How will teaching look/be different? Cooperative learning? Other instructional designs?

Building Support • What commitment will the building give to ensure the project’s success? How will the building plan contribute to these efforts? What kind of training will staff/parents need?

Plan for restructuring support • What is your plan to review the level of additional support provided by the central office? The vast majority or inclusion of integration projects are built around existing resources (sometimes after an initial boost).

Evaluation • Knowing if it works—What will have happened if your project was a success? How do you know if this did or didn’t happen?

EXAMPLES OF INCLUSION

Each school in the District involved in this process has had the opportunity to design their inclusion program to meet the needs of their students and the readiness of their staff. As a result we have a variety of inclusion activities at various steps on a continuum. A few schools are described indicating beginning, intermediate, and advanced steps, as well as school wide programs with the involvement of the school and the community.

Woodmont Elementary: The staff at Woodmont decided to keep three students in their building who would have been sent to self-contained classrooms in other schools. Two of these students had behavioral disabilities and one was learning disabled but was having difficulty in the resource classroom. By keeping these students in the regular classroom, teachers were able to team teach and the educational assistant time afforded these students remained in the regular classroom. This has proved successful for the three students and the classroom that they have integrated.

(beginning step)

Panther Lake Elementary: The focus at Panther Lake centered around students with moderate and severe disabilities. A first grade regular education teacher team taught with a primary teacher of students with severe disabilities. A few hours of additional educational assistant support was added because of safety and behavioral needs of the students, not because of the inclusive model. This assistance would have been added for these students in any model of instruction. Students in the moderate and severe class who were of second grade age were also part of the regular education second grade class with the existing educational assistant support accompanying the students.

(intermediate step)

Twin Lakes Elementary: The intermediate staff at Twin Lakes focused on integrating all 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students in special education, Chapter 1 and regular education in each class. They used existing resources which included educational assistant time from special education, a basic skills teacher, Chapter 1 resources, and existing building support. All teachers at these grade levels taught all students. In addition, one special education teacher served basically as a roving consultant to all other teachers in the project. She has actually been seen on roller skates in getting around to provide support to so many classes.

(advanced step)

Mark Twain Elementary: The entire staff at Mark Twain decided to integrate all of their
### Inclusion Multi-Year Support Plan

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<td>Elementary - 12 original sites</td>
<td><em>10 + 18 days</em>&lt;br&gt;plus training menu (290)</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td><em>5 days</em>&lt;br&gt;plus training menu (60)</td>
<td><em>3 days</em>&lt;br&gt;plus training menu (60)</td>
<td><em>5 days</em>&lt;br&gt;plus training menu (60)</td>
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<td>Elementary - Other sites</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #18-#21 = 10 + 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #3-#17 = 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #13-#17 = 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #13-#21 = 5 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;School #23 = 10 + 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;School #24 = 10 + 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;School #22-#24 = 5 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
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<td>Junior High</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #1-#3 = 10 + 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #1-#3 = 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
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<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #1-#3 = 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #1-#6 = 5 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #4-#6 = 5 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #6 = 5 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
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<td>Senior High</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;1-2 events</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #1 = 10 + 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #1 = 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #1 = 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #1 = 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #3 = 10 + 10 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
<td><em>1 event</em>&lt;br&gt;Schools #2-#4 = 5 days&lt;br&gt;monthly principals' meetings</td>
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Students and to have a completely inclusive school. They have a core team of teachers who monitor, coordinate and evaluate the success of the program. Students in grades 1-6 are taught in the regular classroom including Chapter 1, transitional bilingual, special education and regular education students. Each teacher has a half-time educational assistant who supports the variety of student needs in the classroom. These educational assistants have come from the combined resources of Chapter 1, Transitional Bilingual and Special Education programs.

(school-wide step)

Twelve of the 20 elementary schools in the District are currently involved in an inclusive schools project. With this level of focus there needs to be consistent planning and support services for staff. We are continuing the effort because of the level of success we have seen in teacher attitudes, outcomes for students, building changes in retentions, attendance and referrals for self contained services, and the effectiveness of staff training.

Support has been a key component for those involved in the program. Resources have been used from the building, special education and Chapter 1/Learning Assistance Programs to fund 28 release days for staff along with a long range plan to support the inclusive movement in junior and senior high school. The chart above shows the number of days of inservice support that will be given to each school, when additional support will be brought on line (including existing elementary schools 13-21 as well as new schools 22-24 and junior high #6), and how that support eventually becomes less needed as the program matures.

How did I change thee, let me count the ways...There have been many, all changing learning needs of our students.
Six years ago, Ridgetop Junior High School was constructed on a 26 acre site; four years later, Silver Ridge Elementary, immediately adjacent, opened its doors. Opportunities for partnerships, for sharing faculty and facility, and for other cooperative efforts abounded. The following narrative is about one shared program which, while not entirely successful, holds much promise.

The opportunity selected for initial concentration was a cross-age tutoring program. Specifically selected junior high students would travel the few yards to the elementary school for one period of 55 minutes each day. The tutors would report to the same teacher and would tutor a younger student or students on a regular basis. The anticipated outcomes were for the tutors to increase their self esteem, increase academic performance, increase attendance and reduce rates of disciplinary referral. In addition, we hoped a positive atmosphere between staff and students at Silver Ridge and Ridgetop would result.

THE FIRST YEAR

Silver Ridge was opening its doors for the first time, staffed by a faculty who had planned together but not taught together. The teachers had agreed to the concept of the tutoring program, although participation was voluntary.

The principal of Silver Ridge and the assistant principal of Ridgetop, as initial designers of the project, met several times in the summer before the opening of Silver Ridge. It was decided that the junior high tutors would be At-Risk students — defined as those students who had difficulty finding a place in the junior high, as evidenced by poor attendance, truancy, continual disciplinary problems and/or academic failure. Another need envisioned during the initial planning was for someone to monitor the students, help them with problems, and track their progress. We felt the position could be filled by a four-hour, classified teaching assistant financed with At-Risk funding from Ridgetop. (Initially, a teacher-coordinator was also assigned to the project. When that individual was assigned different tasks due to readjusted priorities, the position disappeared with no noticeable consequence.) Our prediction for the number of students was between 24 and 30 per day; this projection proved to be accurate. It was agreed that the elementary teachers would receive some in-service training in the use of tutors as part of the start-of-school activities. Finally, the need for some regular training for the tutors themselves was established and a potential calendar for that training was developed.

At the start of school, about two weeks were allowed

Ms. Orcutt is Principal at Ridgetop Junior High, Central Kitsap School District.
to identify a starting number of At-Risk students for initial training to occur the third week of school. Once these students were identified, they needed a place to be until the training session was conducted. They were, for lack of any other area, sent to the elementary school where they completed many needed tasks: duplicating, compiling, covering bulletin boards, sorting materials. Their first introduction to the program was as helpers or assistants rather than tutors; their first chores, however, were not always viewed as meaningful by the students.

By the time of the first training session, about fifteen tutors were scheduled into the program. These individuals completed the beginning session and were assigned to teachers. As the first month of school ended, more tutors were identified, usually one at a time. Since these students had missed the training sessions, they were introduced directly to the classroom. The composition of the tutorial staff changed often during the year and the training and introduction of new tutors was always a problem — perhaps more for the adults than for the tutors.

Another problem that surfaced early arose from the fact that days in school often vary — an assembly schedule, a late day for snow, parent conferences, early release, state-wide testing — all cause irregularities in school schedules and in tutor time. Lack of consistency, while motivational for some, often played havoc with the At-Risk students who were too often willing to take advantage of the confusion.

The need for weekly meetings had been anticipated and proved necessary. During those meetings, attended variously by both administrators, the tutor supervisor and the teacher-coordinator, the conversation usually addressed the tutors as people with successes or problems. This time to talk and analyze was invaluable. At times individuals tutors attended if their presence would contribute. From these mostly “adult” meetings came the plans for a combined meeting of tutors and “adults” to evaluate and improve the program. These meetings, after some practice in group process skills, were essential as the student viewpoint was often quite different from what the adults had anticipated. For instance, the main fault of the program from the tutor’s point was that they did not get enough time with the younger students, that they were too often used as teacher assistants.

**EVALUATION**

The first year we attempted to do a comparison on attendance patterns, grades, and behavior referrals. As data accumulated, an interesting side-light emerged. Of the 36 students in the program, nine or 25% had incomplete files. At-Risk also meant mobility, incomplete records and even an incomplete academic experience. Designing the program to give these students an important place in the school district apparently had merit.

In the area of attendance, student absences from the prior year were compared with absences through the third quarter of the present year. These figures are only trends and should be viewed in that manner. The 27 students included showed a trend toward an average increase of 6.6 days present. Female overall attendance increased 3.8 days; the male trend was an increase of 11 days.

In the academic realm, records were not available for eight students and again, the figures indicate trends only. Overall computation showed an increase of .242 in GPA. The females increased +1.99 and the males +.91. Whether or not these trends were a direct result of the program remains uncertain. Of course, some of the rise in GPA was due to the good grades the students received for their fine work as tutors.

With one exception, the experiences of the tutors at the elementary school were successful. The students were graded (most received A’s with a few B’s and an occasional C), but also received narrative reports from their teachers and the supervisor. These reports were positive and talked of specific successes of the tutor. This kind of feedback should be done more often than quarterly and perhaps on a more formal basis. Another motivational event for tutors came in the form of pizza lunches. Once a quarter, all tutors would have pizza in the library with their elementary teachers. We hoped that this informal camaraderie would contribute to the self-esteem of the tutors as well as provide a chance for conversation among the program participants.

As the program at Silver Ridge became known through word of mouth at the junior high, students began to request assignment at the elementary school. The need for “a place of recognition” was not limited to the At-Risk student; many of the self-referred students were not so labeled. Since the limit of the program was 28 to 30 students, an afternoon session was added. Because the junior high dismissed at two and the elementary at 3:10, there was a chance for students to tutor after school as well. This development was not anticipated and required some extra time to collect permission slips and provide transportation. Despite the lack of formal attendance procedures, the students who worked after school on their own time were punctual and dependable.

**THE SECOND YEAR**

As a result of evaluation findings from the first year, changes were made, especially the incorporation of definite training for elementary teachers in the use of
tutors prior to the start of the school year with several follow up sessions during the year. The same trainer who worked with the teachers presented the initial session to the tutors in September.

A major goal, emanating from the suggestions of the tutors, was to have them work with students on a regular basis and to delete the concept of teacher assistant from the program. This occurred and tutors were pleased with the change.

Other unanticipated changes adversely affected the program: the coordinator, much liked by the tutors, took another job; the assistant principal became a principal and the task of overseeing the program at the junior high became amorphous, done at one time by a counselor, another time by someone else.

The tutors the second year were more of a challenge themselves. With one or two exceptions, this group was entirely new to the program. Whether or not they were less interested or committed to their tasks was never determined; they emphatically asserted that they liked Silver Ridge and that they liked to tutor. Nevertheless, some were prone to wander if not consistently supervised. Regardless of their behavior all tutors except one remained in the program for the time they had registered.

Generally, the evaluation of the program was the same: it became more and more evident that the elementary teachers, while able to participate in the initial training of the tutors, did not have time to give them the constant extra supervision and attention that some needed.

The need for adjustment in the job of tutor supervisor also surfaced. It became apparent that the effectiveness of the position depended on the person, not the job description. Certain skills are needed: particularly the judgement to see when a tutor is in need of help and the understanding to know what that person needs whether it be conversation, advice, help with the children, approaches to tutoring, or approaches to life.

**THE IDEAL PROGRAM**

As the program was re-evaluated and discussed at the end of the second year, suggestions for those instigating or refining an ideal cross-age tutoring program emerged.

- Involve teachers and students in the design of the program. Not only will additional points of view be added, but also the expectations of those groups can be considered from the onset.
- Design specific training for the tutors. Create meaningful activities for tutors until training is conducted. Additionally, train students who are added to the program during the year.
- Plan for days that deviate from the regular schedule. It is important that there always be specific expectations for the tutors to encourage responsibility thereby creating “a place” which adds to self-esteem.
- Hold group evaluation sessions attended by all participants as often as is practical, but on a quarterly basis at least. Such evaluations, proved valid, add to the improved self-esteem of the students.
- Provide lots of positive feedback to the tutors. Immediate verbal is great, but consider notes, certificates, bulletin board displays, pictures, letters home, buttons and more.
- Include in the design methods to insure carry-over success. Affording public recognition at the junior high is of minimal effect. One possibility is, rather than employ a classified coordinator at the elementary school, pay teachers to monitor an established number of tutors. For a stipend, teachers would meet with the tutor and the elementary teacher and among them establish how the partnership would operate. Quite possibly, one result of the meeting would be a written contract delineating the expectations of all involved. This arrangement, planned in more detail, should enable junior high teachers to learn of the tutors’ success and help break stereotypes.

Because of the apparent lack of carry over, the status of the program is now uncertain. Nevertheless, the concept of cross-age tutoring and our knowledge of the importance of responsibility, place and esteem will be a part of new programs we develop.
S.P.I.C.E. (Student Parent Interactive Classroom Environment) West Valley Parents’ Timely Answer to the Challenging Concerns of Educating Our Children

Susan Brumback

As an “average” parent, it is an exciting task to write about our alternative education program at West Valley School District, Spokane, Washington. With input from our parent association I wish to demonstrate to those interested in enriching and expanding their students and children’s education a well-tried alternative to our “American” traditional classroom environment.

I am not an expert in any way within the professional educational community except as a parent of four, ages 13, 11, 8, and 6. As this is the sole requirement to enter into contract in the S.P.I.C.E. Program I am therefore qualified to expand on the views I share with many other parents with regard to what we are looking for within the classroom environment and in so doing what we are prepared to “give” of ourselves to do so.

A reoccurring theme in educational literature is that teachers are not expected to JUST teach anymore. “Is possible to meet the needs of 150 individuals a day? Just as teachers and administrators ponder this nagging and ever-expanding challenge so too do parents. Our generation of parents are asking some very pointed piercing questions. Why is education as we have known it not working as it should? What are the chances things can change from within the system? What can be done to effect change and in what direction? How are our children being affected? Are our kids enjoying their schoolday? Are they learning, challenged, having their needs met? Do our kids fit the mold? What is the “mold”? The questions could go on and on but here is the clincher — what if anything can individual parents do to change this perplexing status quo?

Six years ago some local parents and a teacher, Mrs. Sherry Wagemann (our current 4/5 classroom teacher) put their heads together and came up with our solution to that challenge. S.P.I.C.E. has two major goals.

1. To create a learning environment which will provide opportunities for children to be creative, inventive discoverers.
2. To provide an opportunity for children to develop basic intellectual skills, personal growth, and interpersonal relationships.

This is accomplished by offering children hands-on learning, a variety of speakers, field trips, learning centers, cross-age grouping and one-on-one instruction. S.P.I.C.E. allows for even the most basic skills to be presented in this way, as special attention is given to the concept that each child has his/her own learning style and pace. Therefore, the child’s level of competence and skill is compared to his/her previous attainment levels, not necessarily to others.

We have defined our roles as follows to ensure a smoothly run organization. Teachers are responsible for the overall classroom instruction. They coordinate classroom materials, instructional strategies and determine individual and group objectives. Our teachers are creative, innovative and willing to make teamwork of S.P.I.C.E. a reality.

Furthermore S.P.I.C.E. emphasizes the integrity of the parent-child relationship and the central and key role of the parent in the child’s education. To do so the parent assists the teacher in developing programs for learning, carrying them out through individual or group instruction, supervision, and preparation of material.

The result is that teamwork and a sense of commu-

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nity is achieved as the teacher and child work together to accomplish these goals. Sounds fantastic! It is. Our own family is in its fourth year of involvement with the program. I can report our personal satisfaction and success in our children’s educational experiences.

S.P.I.C.E. is not the Utopia of all education. We are not without our growing pains. But as each year rolls by we have developed our program more clearly and have met our challenges head-on coming up with positive and moving-on solutions.

Currently our program involves grades 1-5 and all children are welcome to be a part of S.P.I.C.E. Open to any child, the in-district students are enrolled first with any openings remaining filled with out-of-district students. The program is not specifically for gifted children. All children of all skill levels are involved. We feel this is a strength and will more truly mirror society that the children must encounter on entering the workforce. People who choose this program are seeking an educational philosophy in which personal direction and independent learning experiences are emphasized. Thus they are willing to commit time and energy to participate in the program.

**BENEFITS OF S.P.I.C.E.**

A parent should ask—what benefit would S.P.I.C.E. be to my child? S.P.I.C.E. by its very goals and objectives, hopes to enrich what your child brings to school: their own heritage, sense of self and intellectual skills. Through the teamwork of parent, teacher and child S.P.I.C.E. can assist in the development of your child’s academic and “life skills.”

Our program must meet the expected Student Learning Objectives set by the District. The school principal supervises the planning, implementation and operation of the S.P.I.C.E. program.

S.P.I.C.E.’s structural format is that of a non-profit organization within W.V. School District governed by the S.P.I.C.E. voting members, its elected officers (Executive Board) and appointed committees. It is guided with bylaws and a Program Description approved by the District. Please note our excellent progress would not be possible without the encouraging and very visible support of our Administration led by our Superintendent, Dr. Dave Smith.

Cost effectiveness is a major concern for any innovation. What does S.P.I.C.E. cost? For the parent the only “cost” is continued participation on the “team”, i.e., time and energy. Flexibility has become our motto as we bend and change to encourage single and working parents to look into this classroom model as an alternative for their child. We receive normal district allotment for each classroom. Additional funds for trips, equipment and supplies, etc., are provided by the parent efforts through fund raising projects. We try to keep it to one major effort a year.

The time and energy requirements are guided by a model where 90 hours of volunteer time per family is required. A general rule-of-thumb is 30 hours minimum classroom hours and 60 hours in committee work, events and activities. The so-called “cost” is in fact quite small when compared to the enriching opportunity parents have to participate in a meaningful way in the transition from home life to classroom setting in their child’s life.

It has been my experience over the last few years to note an additional benefit that was not anticipated by the originators. The focus was of course on enriching the children’s activities. The teachers naturally benefit as they have the many extra person-hours to incorporate in the planning of their schedules. An unexpected outcome has been the marvelous net-working, personal-growth and mind-expanding factors that have come about for our parents. Like a small community the parents (if they choose) become friends helping each other find out when personal challenges occur, i.e., terrible illness, small children challenges, etc., encouraging each other to go back to school or start a career.

In a world of ever-increasing mobility, where people barely even know their neighbors, it is a welcome joy to be able to get-to-know the families of your child’s playmates. Thus while solving a dilemma in our educational world the S.P.I.C.E. people are also serving the community as role-models and community leaders.

Hopefully this article has given the reader a complete enough picture of how and why parents can contribute in a significant manner to the education world. Change is inevitable. It is how we meet and embrace the tides of change to produce healthy and stable educational environments that count. In my opinion we have reached a crisis in history where each individual must take a significant part in the raising of their own children. The classroom is a large slice of time that the children experience in their developmental experience. Therefore, it is necessary for parents to find acceptable and intelligent ways to ensure an excellent education and in so doing help solve the crisis in education.

S.P.I.C.E. IS WORKING! As a representative of this program I would encourage and indeed challenge you to check out programs like this across the country. Get involved! Speak up! They’re your children, too!
Demolishing the Myth of the Factory Schoolhouse: Vancouver School District Builds a Foundation for Community Learning

James F. Parsley

Picture the historic site of Vancouver, Washington. Victorian houses along Officers' Row still stand as sentinels over acres of grassy park and a gazebo. The restored Fort Vancouver looms on the same river-front property that once teamed with Hudson's Bay Company trappers. Nearby, fruit still blossoms on the oldest apple tree in Washington state. At times, the past seems very much the present.

Some of the old school buildings in Vancouver — Hough Elementary, John Rogers Elementary — also evoke images of the past. One look at the sturdy, old brick walls, and it's easy to imagine the traditional school institution in the 1920s and '30s and '40s — students sequestered within the four walls of a classroom, desks in neat rows, and all eyes on a teacher who lectures from a textbook. Back then, students ranged from age five through 18. School subjects were divided neatly into time slots that fit snugly between the 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. bells.

Now picture Vancouver School District's schoolhouse of today. For one high school student, the school setting is the Veterans Administration Hospital complex where she is learning clerical skills in nuclear medicine. For another student “school” is the marshy shores of Gee Creek where he gathers water samples to provide ecological data for county planners. For a group of fourth grade students, classroom walls span the globe as they are linked by computer and satellite with students in Russia for a reciprocal study of cultures.

Today's classroom in Vancouver School District is transcending the walls of brick and mortar as education bears less and less resemblance to the past. Students are going into the community to expand their learning and share knowledge. Community members and business leaders are becoming intensely involved in the education of our youth.

Students in Vancouver are also no longer limited to children in grades K-12. Increasingly, students include parents who are upgrading skills to get better jobs, or former high school dropouts working toward their GEDs. Senior citizens are taking advantage of adult learning centers to learn keyboarding skills or study various parts of the world in preparation for travel. For them, the concept of lifelong learning is already a reality.

Time allocations for subject-matter study and class schedules themselves are becoming less rigid as students and teachers integrate subjects to make them more relevant. Under a restructured pilot program at Hudson's Bay High School, students are working under contracts and taking their studies into the community — to City Hall, to the Washington State School for the Deaf, and to shelters for the homeless. Computer centers with Integrated Learning Systems are being made available during evening and weekend hours for individual adults who want to upgrade skills and for businesses who wish to conduct employee training sessions.

We are making a concerted effort to restructure education to meet the needs of students for the 21st century and beyond. Memorization of facts is no longer enough. Students must learn to be productive citizens in an every-changing society. Students currently enrolled in school are predicted to have between five and seven totally different occupations and work for 10-15 different employers during their working careers. With information multiplying at lightning speeds, students must become life-long learners. As educators we face a formidable challenge: We must redefine education to make it relevant and meaningful; we must redefine our learner outcomes; and we must redefine our concept of the student.

Links with the community, local businesses, and

Dr. Parsley, is the Superintendent of Vancouver School District
government are providing a natural bridge to the classroom. Advisory groups of educators, parents, students, and other community members are helping determine learner outcomes. Work and service experiences are providing students with hands-on, real-world experiences. Mentors from the community are involved in student assessments. In the past three years, ties between the school district and the community have mushroomed, and this is just the beginning of a new dimension in public education.

**CAREER FOCUS/VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The Career Focus Program provides job-site training for credit throughout the Vancouver/Portland area. The 80 students enrolled in last year's program worked in electronics shops, manufacturing plants, and physicians' offices. Some repaired hydraulic pumps, some set up computer programs, and other learned clerical skills in nuclear medicine.

The program originally began as a limited effort to keep high school students in school. It offered practical work experience for credit, and it sought to help students who were deficient in credits, behind in classes, or disillusioned and ready to drop out of school. Under the direction of an on-the-job supervisor and mentor, students work in a local business in place of a class period or as an extended part of the school day.

Career Focus and other community-based vocational programs — job shadowing, apprenticeships, and mentoring — are now being expanded to serve a wide range of students who have discovered the benefits of community work experience and practical applications of classroom learning. Because of the initial successes of these efforts, an off-site coordinator has now been hired for each high school in the district.

**COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS**

Vancouver School District’s first adult learning center opened last spring at Washington Elementary School. This joint effort by Vancouver Schools and our local Business/Education Roundtable is providing education opportunities to adult members of the community.

Utilizing a 28-station computer lab that was already in place at the school, adult education software was added and staff was trained to oversee the center during non-school hours. Financing of start-up costs came from community fund-raisers and donations. Evening classes are now offered in Adult Literacy, Adult Basic Education, High School Diploma Preparation, and Keyboarding/Word Processing.

Jostens' Integrated Learning Systems are now being installed in each of Vancouver’s 27 elementary and middle schools, and the Business/Education Roundtable’s Buck-A-Byte subcommittee is continuing efforts to purchase adult software for these systems and open more adult learning centers at school sites throughout the district.

**AT-RISK PARTNERSHIPS**

Vancouver School District's “Small Children Need Big Friends” program links the hearts of community members with children at five of the district's core-area schools. Numerous organizations and businesses have adopted classrooms, or entire schools, to provide everything from tutoring to winter clothing for students in need. Church members continue to work directly with students, they host dinners for parents who have completed five-week parenting classes, they sponsor a “giving tree” during the holidays, and they donate school supplies.

**EAGLE’S WING: RESTRUCTURED HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION**

At Hudson’s Bay High School, nearly 200 students and six teachers are participating in a pilot program to restructured secondary education. The student mix is a representative cross section of the school’s population and includes all four grade levels, all ability levels, and various ethnic groups.

A restructuring task force first met in October 1991 to answer the question: “What should be done about the crisis in American education at Hudson's Bay High School?” Since then, a committee of over 60 staff members, parents, and students have researched and developed new ideas for enhanced learning. Through a decision-making process involving everyone, a different kind of educational system is evolving. Here is how Eagle’s Wing is different than the typical “high school, U.S.A.”:

1. **Relevance**
   - For studies to be relevant to today’s learners, students are given more choice and encouraged to do in-depth studies.
2. **All students can learn.**

   Based on the assumption that all students can learn, but no one method of instruction is best for everyone, alternative delivery systems, individualized instruction, and a variety of instructional settings are used.

3. **High standards/quality**

   Quality is emphasized — in student work, in relationships, and in the learning environment. Students are encouraged to demonstrate their knowledge before their peers, educators, and community members.

4. **Teacher roles**

   Teachers act as guides and counselors rather than lecturers. At Eagle’s Wing, a teacher tends to be a “guide on the side” rather than “a sage on the stage.”

5. **Student roles**

   Students are encouraged to be active participants in the educational process. The “student as worker” is stressed, over the “student as listener.”

   Requirements for graduation include job shadowing in the work place to obtain “real world” experience and volunteer community service. Upon graduation, students will be issued documents which specify the proficiencies they have acquired. Diplomas will also carry an educational warranty: If a graduate is unable to perform any of those certified skills, the school will retain the former student until he or she is proficient in that area.

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**SERVICE LEARNING**

Vancouver schools and the local community are becoming more tightly intertwined with this year’s implementation of a Service Learning Program. Through links with local businesses and community organizations, students of all ages will be provided opportunities for service work which will enhance their classroom studies.

The Service Learning Program is based on a belief that participation in meaningful acts of service will help students develop social competencies, positive values, and a sense of purpose in school and life. Teachers and community members are now brainstorming to develop specific hands-on, meaningful projects for students. Here’s a look at what’s to come:

- Elementary students will “adopt” grandparents at a retirement center. Kids and their foster grandparents will share information and ideas through a computer network.
- With the help of local governmental organizations, middle school students will conduct environmental research on acid rain and water quality.
- High school students will work with the City of Vancouver to construct a revitalized waterfront park.

The Service Learning Program will operate in conjunction with a new student recognition program to encourage and support high school students who are productive citizens committed to a drug/alcohol-free life. Local businesses have vowed to support the All-American Teens Program by offering incentives and discounts for students who demonstrate high academic achievement, take a vow of abstinence from drugs and alcohol, and volunteer their time for community service.

Our primary purpose in building community partnerships is to strengthen educational opportunities for our youth and expand educational engagement for all community members. In the process, we are providing meaningful service to the community. Our educational system is producing more responsible citizens and a better educated work force. From our standpoint, our students are the real winners. When the community wins as well, the victory is even sweeter.

The factory schoolhouse is being replaced by a community of learning — a schoolhouse with no walls and unlimited opportunities for everyone.
Effective changes have taken place in Walla Walla Public Schools. The new management philosophy is modeled on the belief that staff members can take responsibility for an improvement process that will change the whole school system. The vision of this philosophy has allowed staff members to develop a new picture of themselves, one in which they are empowered to make decisions and change things. This improvement process promoted new connections which had previously not been explored among our school staff. Teachers and other staff members have come together to plan collectively, which has significantly changed the schools. What we and others know is that teachers are the ones who will change schools. In What's Worth Fighting For, Fullen and Hargreaves (1991) state it this way ..." The heavy burden of responsibility for change and improvement in schools ultimately rests on the shoulders of teachers."

While there have been numerous changes in our school district over the past ten years, we want to review those that have been integral to our improvement process, a process that has provided new connections in our district. These processes are goal setting, site-based management, and decision-making.

GOAL SETTING

One of the first steps in this change process was to make goal setting a priority. Administrators learned how to set goals for the district and were encouraged to model the process and involve the staff members in their schools, departments, and work units in goal setting. The power of this process was that frontline staff members, such as teachers, instructional aides, secretaries, cooks and custodians, realized that their individual input was valued and became part of the action plan for school improvement. As a result they were committed to carry out the plan that they had designed for their schools.

School improvement is an individual as well as a group process. Therefore, each staff member was asked to write individual professional goals. These goals set expectations for improvement, and they increased the individual's skill level, which collectively benefits the organization. Dollars were allocated to each building to help staff members achieve their goals. There is no better way to enhance professional esteem than to assist staff members to write goals, motivate them to achieve the goals, and then provide money so that they can meet the goals.

SITE-BASED MANAGEMENT

Site-based management was initiated through the goal-setting process. As each school went through the goal setting process, staff members developed an improvement plan. The plan was carried out by a school improvement committee consisting of administrators, teachers, and classified staff. School improvement committees were provided money to be spent for goal-setting retreats and action-plan activities. Site-based management has allowed staff members at each building site to develop their own unique plan of improvement, to solve their unique problems, and to create solutions for schooling their clientele.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

We believed that to make major change, the decision-making process had to be different from what had been used traditionally in our district. Over the past ten years, our school district has been involved with three major changes. In each instance, a committee was formed and charged to study the issue and make

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recommendations to the Board of Education.

These committees were broad-based with membership from community, administrators, teachers, and support staff. The majority of committee members were teachers, because we believe that teachers ultimately carry out the task of school improvement.

The decision-making committee process is a sophisticated process that has been standardized in our district. The first step is data gathering in which the committee hears a status report, expert testimony, practitioners’ viewpoints, and community views. During this step, the committee’s work is to listen, to reflect, and to discuss the ideas. In the second stage, the committee works together to create a document which is a plan for change. A third stage is to take that document to the community. This is done by holding a variety of open meetings to listen to public concerns about the plan. During these open meetings, our goal is to make “real” connections with the public. We have found that the best procedure is to have each committee member sit at a table with a small group of community participants to listen and record their concerns. This procedure is very powerful because each participant has the opportunity to discuss his/her concerns face-to-face within a small group in a non-threatening way. The final step is a written plan submitted to the Board of Education for approval.

The entire decision-making process is a unique experience for the participants involved. While a neighboring school district may develop a plan that on the surface seems comparable, the important value of this process is that the participants have received input, internalized the concept, and developed a plan of action tailored to the needs of our school district. The power of this, as in any good learning experience, is that those who have accomplished the task have ownership, commitment, and enthusiasm to make the plan work and see it through to fruition.

IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The decision-making process has worked with the planning of our middle schools, development of our technology plan, and the district restructuring effort. When our district decided to study middle level education, a decision-making process was used in which members from the community, parents, administrators, staff, and students had input. When the committee made its final report, one of its goals was to ensure that those implementing the change would have enough time, information, and ownership to make the change successful. The district undertook a three-year process to give staff time to study and develop middle schools that truly were different from junior high schools in philosophy and practice. Staff members had an integral part in planning and developing the program and the curriculum of the middle schools.

Our first technology plan was developed in 1988. Each school chose representatives to serve on a steering committee, which is made up of teachers and administrators. The steering committee developed the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the plan. Each school also has a technology committee, which assesses the needs of the school, develops a plan, and submits it to the steering committee for approval. Once the plan it approved, each school is allowed to expend its technology budget.

In 1992, a decision-making process was begun to study restructuring in our school district. The committee selected to carry out the process, like those before it, had a wide representation from our community. Members of this committee met daily for two weeks listening to presentations from various sources and has now begun to develop a process that will guide the future restructuring effort in our district. At this time, the committee has disseminated its restructuring document, Vision for the Future, to the community for their perusal and response. Vision for the Future is evolving as new insights are gained from the connections that we make within our district and community.

STAFF EMPOWERMENT

The activities that are taking place in our district today are part of a long process that connects us back to the past decade. Goal setting, site based management, and the decision-making process are not prescriptions for school improvement. They are simply a metaphor for staff empowerment (Smith, 1988). Staff empowerment places the responsibility for decision making where it should be — closest to our customers, the students. Empowering our staff to be active participants in a decision-making process did not happen instantaneously, rather it is a long, slow process that is developed over time, connecting us to all the successful steps that have been accomplished in the past.

REFERENCES


Book Review
By Janily Patrick


"Changes in schools may be initiated from without, but the most important and most lasting changes will come from within."

"The success of a school, I believe, depends above all, on the quality of interactions between teacher and teacher, and teacher and administrator."

"Professional isolation stifles professional growth. There can be no community of learners when there is no community and when there are no learners."

"...relationships among adults in schools are the basis, the precondition, the sine qua non that allow, energize, and sustain all other attempts at school improvement."

You will enjoy picking up a copy of Barth’s book, Improving Schools From Within. Barth’s book is a practical, up-to-date, easy to read book built around the key philosophy that schools must be communities of learners and leaders.

According to Barth, the learners in the community should be not only the children, but also the teachers, staff, administrators and parents. This same community must take the responsibility for becoming the leaders in school reform. It is his overriding belief that if we, in the schools, do not take positive, successful steps to improve, then the “improvement” will come from without in the form of state legislatures, universities, federal government and the business world.

Roland Barth is an ideal person to write about school reform. He is currently a senior lecturer in education specializing in school improvement and leadership at Harvard University, and has experience “in the trenches,” having taught and served as a principal for fifteen years. He was the founding director of the Principals’ Center at Harvard and has been the project director of the National Network of Principals’ Centers. Throughout the book it is easy to see that Barth’s heart is in the classroom and his connections to the public school are current and invasive.

The opening chapters of Improving Schools From Within deal with the situation within the schools as Barth sees it today. He speaks not only of the public’s lack of confidence in the schools but also the public’s lack of commitment to public education and confidence in its educators. Barth addresses the adversarial roles that have grown up among teachers and between teachers and principals. He speaks of the profound knowledge and insights that teachers have gathered over years of teaching and working within a school system, yet for various reasons (competition, not wanting to sound pretentious, unwanted recognition, jealousies) these teachers operate under a taboo that prevents them from sharing such knowledge in the workplace.

A new principal usually begins as sympathetic and supportive of his/her teachers but in a short time changes from advocate to an adversary, or in Barth’s words “becomes...all too often part of teachers’ problems rather than their solutions.” (Barth. p. 21)

Collegiality is the key to eliminating the adversarial roles and building the community of learners and leaders that Barth proposes as necessary elements of successful schools. The major part of the book is devoted to these concepts. The importance of collegiality is also emphasized by Theodore Sizer in his foreword, defining collegiality as “respect of teachers and principals for themselves and for each other.” (p. xi) Barth

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feels so strongly that collegiality is the basis of school reform that he says it should be at the top of all national agenda for school improvement. “Unless adults talk with one another, observe one another, and help one another, very little will change.” (p. 32)

A healthy school, Barth points out, is one that includes the elements of collegiality; adults in schools talk about practice, observe each other, work together on planning, designing, researching and evaluating curriculum and teach each other. Collegiality is further built through teachers working together to make important school decisions. When teachers are left out of decisions it adds further to the feeling of isolation and inefficacy which are already pervasive in the teaching profession.

To build a community of learners, Barth emphasizes that the schools must go beyond “list logic” and build from a vision of those within the schools that will “value and honor learning, participation and cooperation above prescription, production and competition.” (p. 43) If conditions in the school favor learning for the teachers and the principal then the fact that some learning is going on is more significant than attempting to follow specific lists of what the school culture should be. To be part of a community of learners, adults in schools should be engaged in researching and learning about teaching at the same time that they are helping teachers by observing and being observed by other teachers. Staff development, says Barth, is every teacher being a staff developer for every other teacher through giving and taking and working together.

Principals, especially, should benefit from reading Barth’s book. He shares many suggestions for establishing a school culture which encourages collegiality, empowers teachers and principals to become leaders with vision in the process. Barth includes chapters devoted to this subject because he believes the principal is the most important reason why teachers grow or are stifled on the job; the principal is the most potent factor in determining school climate.

In this reviewer’s opinion, Barth saved the best for last two chapters — “Visions of Good Schools” and “A Personal Vision.” Barth sees the lack of visions as being the main ingredient missing in improving schools. Visions are best derived by dreaming of a school for one’s self or one’s children. Barth states “each of us must have a vision (that is) uniquely ours. For until we have a vision to share, we can’t understand anyone else’s.” (p. 159) We find that vision inside of our self, not from outside our self. Personal visions based on practical insight and knowledge combined with research from the academic community set the stage for considering school improvement that is lasting.

Barth leaves his readers with a challenge. He feels that too many of our efforts are spent trying to help others accept the unacceptable instead of trying to change the unacceptable. Barth encourages those from within the schools to join him in what he feels is “an important, a timely, and above all a hopeful journey” to improve school from within.