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The Importance of Early Learning
The First Three Years Last a Lifetime

Mona Lee Locke
wife of Washington Governor Gary Locke, co-chaired the Governor's Commission on Early Learning, which was charged with ensuring that every child in Washington state goes to school prepared to succeed. The commission focused on helping all caregivers get the tools they need to maximize the growth and development of children from birth to age five. In 1999, Mrs. Locke co-produced and narrated a local Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentary on early learning in China based on a cross-cultural exchange trip to China that she led. Mrs. Locke currently serves as the Washington Early Learning Foundation Board president. Governor and Mrs. Locke are the proud parents of Emily Nicole, born in March 1997, and Dylan James, born in March 1999.

A child's first words, first steps, and first days in school are exciting and wondrous for parents and children alike. Amazingly, by the age of three, a child's brain is more than twice as active as the brain of an adult. Sights, sounds, touch—all are important elements in a child's early education. Scientists now believe that these "wonder years" of early childhood are the most critical time in developing the brain's capacity for later learning.

After the birth of our children, Emily and Dylan, Governor Locke and I became firm believers in the importance of early learning. We were amazed at how quickly kids, like sponges, soak up information. We remain fascinated by how our children learn. Public policy makers spend many hours discussing school-age education and higher learning. The same degree of attention, if not more, needs to be placed on a child's first years of learning.

Kindergarten teachers often express concern about the number of students who come to their classrooms ill-prepared to learn. These same students will likely continue their school years at a disadvantage. A greater emphasis on understanding how a child's brain develops and the types of experiences that lead to school readiness are crucial to help change that cycle before it starts.

School readiness, self-esteem, self-control, and the ability to communicate are the keys to success in the K-12 education system. Early learning impacts all these factors. Robin Karr-Morse, author and child development expert, points out that a human baby is born with 25% of its adult brain weight. By age three, the brain is 90% developed. That means two-thirds of brain growth occurs during the first three years of life. The extremely rapid growth and organization of a child's brain puts particular emphasis on the need for quality stimulation and nurturing during this important time.

The Governor formed the Governor's Commission on Early Learning in June, 1998, and appointed Melinda Gates and me as co-chairs. For two years, we met with parents, educators, health care providers, large and small business owners, and bi-partisan government representatives to consider a wide range of issues that affect early learning in children. During this process, we learned a lot about how a child's brain develops and how important it is to learn by experience.

A Baby Comes Into This World Learning

Before birth, a baby knows the smell and sound of its mother. This is early learning. After the baby is born, she learns to breathe and cry. Waving her arms, the newborn turns toward the sound of the mother's voice and grips her finger with a tiny hand. The parents count the toes, speak lovingly, and kiss the baby's head. This joy and attention are exactly what every baby needs to become a healthy happy child.

The newborn's peaceful face hides intense activity going on inside her head. Brain cells are responding to love, security, comfort, and good care by building bridges from cell to cell. Everything the baby sees, hears, and feels sets off this activity in her brain. Add interesting things for the baby to see, touch, and do, and more bridges are built between brain cells.

This brain building activity races ahead at breathtaking speed until the child is about three years old. Studies show there will never be a greater opportunity to develop the connections between brain cells. During these first three years, every person who understands the brain building power of love, comfort, joy, security, play, singing, and talking, can help this child develop and succeed in school.

Children's attitudes about learning and other people are shaped in early childhood. Babies and young children are naturally curious and eager to learn. Everything is new. In a few months they learn to recognize faces. In a little more than a year, they learn a foreign
language — the language their parents speak. In just three years, they learn to play with other children and hold a pencil. If early childhood experiences encourage children to keep on exploring, they will go to kindergarten loving to learn.

**Windows of Opportunity**

There are windows of opportunity for everything from learning to tie shoe laces to learning to speak Nepali. Both of these tasks can be learned later, but they are easier to learn during the window of opportunity for that skill. Kathryn Barnard, a member of Commission and a Professor at the University of Washington, regularly reminded the Commission that some of these windows stay open longer than others. Some, like the window for learning to see, close quickly.

It may seem odd to think of seeing as a learned skill, but studies show infants who don’t learn to see from birth to four months old will never see. During the first few months of life, newborns are programmed to spend every waking moment developing the synapses and neural pathways for clear vision. That is why it is important to test a newborn’s vision early to correct problems, such as infant cataracts, before this window of opportunity closes.

At birth, a newborn cradled in its father’s arms can clearly see his face. Everything else is out of focus. Over the next four months, the infant practices “seeing” by gazing into faces and staring at things close by. Adults and children instinctively put their faces close to an infant. They may not know it, but this reaction helps the baby learn to see. Babies love to look at faces.

**Helping a Baby Learn to See is Early Learning**

Getting close to the baby and looking into his eyes encourages early learning. So does making silly faces. Knowing about the window of opportunity for vision helps parents understand that newborns need to stare. So, they stimulate that growth by putting interesting objects nearby and hanging the mobile over the crib within the newborn’s range of focus. Understanding windows of opportunity explains why learning to tie shoelaces frustrates a young child. The window of opportunity for tying a bow may not have opened yet. It also explains why babies can learn more than one language at a time, while a teenager might struggle to pass French. The window of opportunity for the baby is open to any language, and it closed long ago for the teenager.

This does not mean the teenager can’t learn a new language; but, it will take a lot of hard work. Developing curriculums around windows of opportunity would increase success in school and create happier students.

In 1994, experts studying the care of American children under three warned of a crisis. Starting Points [Carnegie Corporation of N.Y., 1994] linked rapid brain development from birth to age three to the quality of early care. The study described a crisis in the emotional, physical, and mental development of young children. It also pointed out that this stage of brain development is more rapid and more crucial to social skills and the ability to learn than at any other time in life. The study recommended ways to improve early childhood care and education to avoid the social costs of doing nothing.

**Creating a Place For Early Learning**

Children thrive on love, care, and attention in a safe place to explore. For newborns, that place is in the arms of parents. As children grow, their learning environment expands outdoors and into play with other children.

Whether a child’s place for early learning is at home or in a child care center, there should be interesting things to see and do. To become good at learning, children need confidence, curiosity, freedom to explore, persistence, self-control, a sense of belonging, and plenty of praise. They must be free to do the child’s work of play.

Parents and child care staff, who know about brain growth and early learning windows of opportunity, see early childhood as the gateway to a lifelong love of learning. Encouraging early learning opens that gate. Anyone can create a place for early learning, but it helps to know how young children learn. In the meantime, talk to infants. Read to them. Be expressive. Praise toddlers. Sing with them. Be loving and responsive. Pay attention to them and surround them with sights, sounds, and textures that are curious and exciting. Encourage early learning, because it is exactly what young children need in order to grow into eager students and fulfilled adults.

**Parent Forums**

Armed with this information, the Commission on Early Learning searched for the best way to support parents and families to encourage their children in positive ways. During Fall, 1998, and Winter, 1999, the Commission hosted parent meetings in Bellingham, Yakima, Tri-Cities, and Spokane. Nearly 1,000 parents attended. The same five issues came up in every city:

1. **Child Development**

   At every meeting, parents said they wished they had more information about child development and how to help their children get a good start in school. They would like an easily accessible resource or reference guide, and would like support groups or classes on parenting.
2. Stable Affordable Child Care
Parents cannot afford to pay more for child care, but they said the low quality of care was linked to low wages and lack of professional education of child care workers. They said children developed better with a stable caregiver, and care for infants and toddlers was very difficult to find.

3. Health Care
Parents believed that health and learning problems were related. In Spokane, parents wanted newborns to be screened for hearing. In Yakima, parents wanted the visiting nurse program to run through age three. In Bellingham, parents talked about gaps in services for children with special needs.

4. Support from Employers
Parents wanted flexible work hours to participate in parent/child programs. They wanted policies for family leave, time to spend in child care, and guarantees that they can leave on time to pick up their kids. They would also like drop-in sick child options.

5. Early Learning
Parents were aware that the early years were important and they wanted to know more about early learning. They wanted an information phone line. They believed a public awareness campaign would increase discussion and boost support for early learning.

Survey of Parents and Child Care Providers
Additionally, the Commission conducted a survey of 400 parents and child care workers in January, 2000. This study was designed to measure public knowledge about early learning and brain development. The study compared beliefs and attitudes about caring for babies and children under age five. The results were used to develop a public engagement campaign on early learning.

Public Engagement Campaign
With support of the Governor and the Washington State Legislature, the Commission was able to develop a public engagement campaign. This campaign is designed to assist parents and other people who care for young children to obtain information about the importance of early childhood development.

The Commission worked with Rob Reiner and the I Am Your Child Foundation to develop a campaign that includes practical ways to support a child's early learning. There will be newspaper, magazine, and television advertising. We are also partnering with retailers, health care providers, libraries, and other organizations to distribute informational materials in each community.

Washington Early Learning Foundation
In April, 2000, the Commission formed the Washington Early Learning Foundation, a non-profit corporation, to help every child in Washington state go to school eager to learn and ready to succeed. The Foundation will focus on improving the quality of child care, increasing the accessibility and quality of parent education, and providing resources and information on early childhood development of children from birth to age five.

Support for Child Care Providers
Washington Kids Count 2000 reports that almost half of all children in Washington state between the ages of birth and four years old are in some form of child care. The average wage for a child care provider in this state is between $6.50 and $7.50 an hour. The staff high turnover rate is about 40% per year. The low wages and high turnover cannot help but affect the overall quality of care.

The Washington Early Learning Foundation will sponsor the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (TEACH) Early Childhood Project Washington. This scholarship program will enable child care providers to attend community colleges to pursue higher degrees in early childhood development. TEACH includes a compensation component to create incentives for participation.

Parent Education
The Washington Early Learning Foundation will provide funding to support local programs providing parent education. The goal is to increase access to parenting programs and inspire parents to attend. Information about brain development and the importance of experiential learning must be shared with parents and other caregivers. The parent forums and survey results indicate that they are anxious to learn.

Simply put, a culture that supports learning must include babies and toddlers in its goals.
Evaluation of Reading on a School-Wide Basis
Implementation of Curriculum-Based Measurement in Reading at the Elementary Level

Michael Jacobsen
is a Student Support Services Coordinator for the White River School District. He is a former school psychologist, Past President of the Washington Association of School Psychologists, and current adjunct instructor at the University of Washington. His main areas of interest and inquiry are reading improvement for at-risk students, early literacy, improving results for special education students and implementation of CBM in general and special education.

Jim Bolton
is principal at Southwood Elementary in the Enumclaw School District. He is a former special education resource room teacher. His main areas of interest and inquiry are assessment techniques that inform instruction and implementing strategies to promote literacy.

Gayl Hinshaw
is the principal of Sunrise Elementary School in the Enumclaw School District. It is a K-3 school with a literacy focus where reading, writing, and communication are emphasized across the curriculum. Before becoming a principal in 1991, Gayl taught first through sixth grades over a 22-year span of time. Her areas of interest and inquiry have always involved best teaching practices to meet the individual needs of children.

The authors wish to express appreciation to Jyoti Achria, Director of Pupil Services, Enumclaw School District for her support of the CBM process. We would also like to express our deepest thanks to our professional and dedicated team of CBM administrators: Kay Erickson and Fran Watt, Special Education teachers, Linda Sykes and Sharon Thompson, Title One/LAP teachers, Monica Lavey, School Counselor, Marsha Reutter, Peggy Hoffer, Natalie Struiksma, Lori Clark and Lynne Kuzar, Educational Assistants.

Background

Over the past decade there has been increased emphasis on teaching all children to read. Although most children learn to read with accuracy, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports that a significant percentage of American school children have major difficulties learning how to read, and a significant number of students are reading below their grade level. In the most recent NAEP report (1996), 40% of fourth graders, 30% of eighth graders, and 25% of twelfth graders were reading below their grade levels. Moreover, 32% of white children that were reading below the basic levels were from homes where the parents had graduated from college. Other reports have suggested that 25% to 40% of American children are at risk because they do not read well enough, quickly enough, or easily enough to ensure comprehension in content areas in their classrooms. According to the latest results in the state of Washington, 34.2% of our 4th grade students were not proficient on the WASL (Educational Profile, OSPI, 1999).

Increased Emphasis Upon Fluency

Several recently released extensive reviews of reading at the Federal level (Snow report, 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000) have
documented the importance of word recognition and fluency skills as critical components in the development of reading skills. “Because the ability to obtain meaning from print depends so strongly on the development of word recognition, accuracy, and reading fluency, both of the latter should be regularly assessed in the classroom, permitting timely and effective instructional response when difficulty or delay is apparent” (Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, Executive Summary, 1996). The National Panel on Reading notes that fluency is often the forgotten critical component of reading instruction.

For most readers, the development of reading skills is a fluid, almost incidental process with little conscious awareness. For others, the development of reading skills is not automatic at all; rather, it can be a laborious process of attempting to pronounce words that are not in the child’s sight vocabulary and whose sounds do not seem to correspond with the printed word. These struggling, at-risk, or delayed readers lack an understanding of the alphabetic nature of English. In addition, a number of studies have identified phonemic awareness and letter knowledge as the two best school-entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first several years of school (National Reading Panel, 2000). Once alphabetic understanding, phonemic awareness, and rapid letter recognition skills are developed, word recognition skills are facilitated. For most students, fast and accurate word recognition skills lead to good comprehension.

Assessment of Reading

In addition to the increased emphasis on teaching all children to read, there has been increased emphasis on the assessment of reading. One of the major ways reading is assessed is via use of standardized, norm-referenced tests. However, many standardized, norm-referenced measures suffer from several significant limitations. Standardized, norm-referenced tests have traditionally had limited relevance for instructional planning. Often, just a few items per grade level or subject level are included, and these measures are typically not aligned with the school’s curriculum. Test items are selected from a national database and assumed to be reflective of grade or subjects. Standardized norm-referenced measures are typically insensitive to student progress. Because these measures have limited items that are not necessarily reflective of the local curriculum, it is often difficult to make valid statements about children’s progress from one year to the next. Due to these concerns, the field has been searching for alternative assessment approaches.

Curriculum-Based Measurement: An Overview

One promising approach that has been developed over the past 20 years is Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM). Also known as Curriculum-Based Assessment, the two terms are used interchangeably, and the term “assessment” will be used in this article. CBM is a set of procedures for evaluating student growth and competence in basic academic skills. Based on research conducted at multiple locations over 20 years, CBM is a process of using the local curriculum to evaluate students’ skills in basic academic areas (Deno, et. al 1980).

CBM specifies procedures for sampling test stimuli from local curriculum, for administering and scoring those assessments on a routine basis, and for summarizing and interpreting the results. CBM procedures have been developed for basic reading, written language, spelling, math, and early literacy skills. This article will focus on use of CBM in basic reading skills.

CBM in reading, for first grade and beyond, is based on oral reading fluency (ORF). For kindergarten students, it is the number of letters read and number of phonemic segmentations. What is measured is the correct number of words, letters, or phonemic segmentations read per minute. CBM offers a set of empirically-based procedures that measure student progress in basic academic skills. CBM, especially in the area of reading, has extensive research support. The correlation between ORF and the Gates-MacGinitie Total Reading is $r = .86$, ORF and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension is $r = .86$, ORF and the Metropolitan Achievement Test Total Reading is $r = .79$, and ORF and the Metropolitan Achievement Test Comprehension is $r = .82$ (Jenkins & Jewell, 1993). (Here is a quick refresher on this type of data: the closer the number is to 1.00, the stronger the correlation.) We have examined the relationship of ORF to performance on other measures of reading, including the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Gates Mac-Ginitie, and the WASL. The relationships between ORF and performance on the traditional standardized measures noted above is strong. CBM procedures have been used in districts throughout the country to monitor student progress in basic skills.

How to Conduct CBM

This article will describe the development and implementation of CBM in two of Enumclaw’s six elementary schools. CBM reading fluency norms were developed for each grade level. Kindergarten
Table 1: Comparison of CBM and Norm-Referenced Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Curriculum-Based Measurement</th>
<th>Traditional, Norm-Referenced Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meets standards for reliability, validity, and population sampling</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear directions for administering and scoring</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligned with local curriculum</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
<td>No ❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive to student growth</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
<td>No ❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness for instructional planning</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
<td>No ❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful for ongoing or continuous assessment</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
<td>No ❌</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time efficient administration and results are available quickly</td>
<td>Yes ✔️</td>
<td>No ❌</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

students were asked to identify a random list of mixed upper and lower case letters, and were asked to pronounce the sounds/phonemes in a list of words presented orally. Each grade level used unique reading passages taken from the reading curriculum appropriate for that grade level. The fourth-grade reading curriculum was published by Silver Burdette and Ginn (Pearson et al., 1989). Passages used only for norming procedures were selected from the middle of the basal for each grade level. Teachers agreed not to use them during their instruction so students would not be exposed to these passages prior to CBM testing. The assessment procedures followed those procedures described in Shinn’s Curriculum-Based Measurement materials (Shinn 1989, pp. 239). Individual students were given a 250-word passage and were asked to “do their best reading out loud.” Each of the students were then timed for one minute. Only the number of correct words read was recorded. A score was then recorded for each student. The norming process used six test administrators: the learning assistance program and special education teachers, their respective educational assistants, and the first author. We felt that the CBM process was important enough to cancel the special education resource room program and learning assistance programs for three half-days. All test administrators were trained and supervised by the first author, who coordinated the assessment efforts. The timed readings were conducted in the library in one building and in the special education and learning assistance classrooms in the other building. Six stations were set up in the library or classroom and each assessor was given a class list. The coordinator would bring the first six students from one classroom. Upon completion of the timing, each student would be given the name of the next student. This student would then go back to the class and ask for the next student. This approach served to minimize waiting and provided a generally quiet environment for the oral reading assessment probes. Following completion of the norming, we entered the students’ results on an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Each teacher was provided with a class and appropriate grade level rank ordered list of students’ ORF rate. Individual classroom and grade level medians were identified. Median growth rates were also identified. The students’ names were entered in the first column in the Excel Spreadsheet with separate columns for fall, winter, and spring results. This provided teachers with an easy way to visually track student progress across the year. Teachers were also provided with graphs developed in Excel that allowed for various comparisons, including the previous year’s performance, or the results from other buildings or school districts. Norming took approximately 15 minutes per classroom. CBM norming occurred three times per year at the end of September, January, and May.

Use of Results

CBM results have been used in several different fashions in the two buildings. We have used CBM results as a way to monitor overall reading progress, and as a benchmark assessment predictive of WASL performance. Our CBM results indicated that fourth grade students who were reading at less than 100 words per minute in the fall were significantly at risk for not meeting standards on the WASL. This is consistent with recent research (Stage & Jacobsen, 2000, in press). Special education teachers also used ORF in IEPs to reflect present levels of performance. In addition, CBM results helped identify which special education students were ready to exit based upon ORF rates that were within the classroom median range. CBM results were also used to evaluate the effectiveness of remedial reading programs. For example, the first author compared the ORF gains of students who were placed in the Read Naturally and Read Well programs and compared these gains with students who received no specialized instruction. Individual classroom teachers have used classroom and individual student results to determine which students were in need of further evaluation or intervention services. Selected interventions include: readers theatre, in which students take turns reading out loud, with performances monitored by the entire class, setting individual targets for fluency based upon the class median rate, developing a reading plan for home use, developing a peer tutoring program, providing leveled reading materials at the students’ instructional level, repeated reading of passages, listening preview, (where the students listen to somebody else read the passage who is more fluent), oral preview, (where the student reads the passage to herself or himself first), and placing the student in a specialized remedial curriculum such as Read Well, or Read Naturally. Sev-
eral teachers sent letters home to parents identifying the classroom median ORF rate and their child’s individual rate with suggestions for increasing ORF if their child’s rate was below that of the classroom. Another popular intervention was “folding in” or controlling the rate of new or unknown words. After having a student read a passage out loud, the teacher or parent would write ten words on 3 X 5 cards. Three of the ten words were unknown words — words the student could not decode accurately. The teacher or parent would then present the cards to the student with the first three words as known words (correctly pronounced), the fourth word was the first unknown word. Following a stretch and shrink approach, where individual phonemes were sounded out, the next two known words were presented, followed by an unknown word, followed by an unknown word, and finally followed by an unknown word — the tenth and final word. Keeping this ratio of three new words to seven known words and maintaining this order of presentation helped students remain motivated. Research supports maintaining a high level of previously known material when presenting new material (Roberts, Turco & Shapiro, 1991).

**Concluding Comments**

CBM has given us a practical method for evaluating the reading progress of two elementary buildings. It was designed for ongoing evaluation of basic skill levels in reading, it can be administered and scored in an efficient fashion. It meets technical standards for reliability and validity, and it is sensitive to intervention effects. CBM offers a reliable and time efficient way to rapidly assess the “reading temperature” of the building. It lends itself to use at the district, building, classroom, and individual student levels. Future plans include using kindergarten CBM data to assist with identifying which students were in need of systematic, explicit phonological awareness training by mid-year.

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www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/pubskey.htm


READNAT@aol.com

Read Well-Spris West, (303)651-2929, www.spris.west.com


School Psychology Program - College of Education, 5208 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403. CBM materials can be purchased from this address.


A Critical Analysis of the Grade Four Washington Assessment of Student Learning

Dr. Donald C. Orlich

is an Adjunct Professor in the Science Mathematics Engineering Education Center at Washington State University. He is co-author of Teaching Strategies: A Guide to Better Instruction, 6th edition, and Designing Successful Grant Proposals, along with 18 other books.

His public education career spans 45 years. Orlich is the past-president of the Washington Science Teachers Association and the Washington Educational Research Association. Honors include: American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education “Special Recognition Award” (1967) and their “Distinguished Achievement Award” (1973). The WSASCD honored Orlich with “Special Recognition as an Outstanding Educator in the State of Washington” (March 1979). In 1983, the University of Montana recognized him as a “Distinguished Alumnus.”

Introduction

The Washington State Legislature charged the Commission on Student Learning with developing an assessment system to measure student achievement in grades four, seven and ten. This paper reviews only the distributed Example Test Grade 4 (9-04088). Thus, all findings and comments relate to that version of the state-mandated assessment, since the actual tests are confidential and kept secure. My assumption is that the actual assessment instruments are highly correlated to the examples in length, content, scope, and difficulty.

Methodology

Every item in the Grade 4 example test was analyzed using Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956) and the Herman T. Epstein and Jean Piaget cognitive development scales (See Table 1: Orlich, 2000). The mathematics items were also screened via the National Assessment of Educational Progress Scales (1998). The reading, writing, and listening test items were also screened using Harold L. Herber’s scales (1978). (See Notes 1 and 2.)

WASL test makers asked students to write a newspaper-style article explaining their ideas. A reasonable question must be asked: Do Fourth graders even read a newspaper?

In May, 1999 (Note 3), I predicted that between 60 and 65 percent of the fourth grade students taking the test would score satisfactorily. And I predicted that a significant number of fourth graders, approximately 35 to 40 percent would do rather poorly due to the high level of analytic skills needed to complete the listening and writing assessment items.

My predictions were based on the number of test items that require formal levels of thinking, that is, can children understand logic and can they separate form from content. At grade four, virtually no students are thinking at the formal level. Those 1999 predictions were almost perfect, as the state average meeting the arbitrarily set standards was 50.1 percent for reading and 71.1 percent for listening. However, 67.4 percent failed to meet the writing standard. (Refer to Note 4.)

Writing a Special Case or a Dirty Trick?

Due to scoring errors, the Riverside Publishing Company had to re-score the writing assessment at a cost of $600,000 to their bottom line (Harris, 1999). But guess what? The fourth graders were required to
synthesize a story (level six on Bloom, 350 on NAEP). The WASL test makers asked students "to write a newspaper-style article explaining their ideas" (Pullman Community Update, June 2000).

State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) Terry Bergeson publicly proclaimed, "With more rigorous quality control now in place, we feel good about the state of the test today compared with three years ago. It reflects the critical skills students need in writing. It is a challenging test, we've sharpened the focus, but we have more work to do to help kids achieve in writing" (Pullman Community Update).

A reasonable question must be raised: "Do Fourth graders even read a newspaper?" My own experience is they read the comics section and sports pages. It is highly probable that neither any fourth graders nor their teachers analytically examine the styles of newspaper writers. Further, by examining the NAEP 350 writing scale, nationally, none of the fourth graders could write "effective responses containing details and discussion," and only one percent could meet NAEP level 300, "to write focused and clear responses to tasks."

I do not wish to "knife the corpse," but if virtually no fourth graders can write at this level nationally, then what kind of ill-informed or illogical thinking takes place in the minds of the SPI and others responsible for this attack on youth? The WASL writing assessment is a clear illustration of educational malpractice.

**Mathematics**

The fourth grade mathematics test had 45 items. Using two different sets of criteria by which to classify the test items (Bloom's Taxonomy and the National Assessment of Educational Progress Proficiency Scale), between 30 and 37 percent of the test items appear to be appropriate for children who are 10 or 11 years old. Contrarily, between 60 and 70 percent of the mathematics test items are clearly beyond the mental capacity of fourth graders. In general terms that means that about one-third of the math test items could be classified as using knowledge, comprehending the information, or solving a problem. Those would be appropriate test items for grade four. However, at least two-thirds of the mathematics test items require higher level thinking skills such as analysis, identifying abstract relationships, establishing criteria by which to judge, or solving a unique problem. Again, these sets of problems require the application of formal reasoning skills similar to those discussed previously. Fourth graders do not have adequate cognitive skills to understand and solve these problems (again, refer to Table 1).

In May 1999, I predicted that approximately 65 percent of the fourth grade children would fail the test in no uncertain terms, and 62.7 percent did fail.

How can I be so confident about the predictions? The evidence comes from the best tests used in the United States of America— The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). As reported by the NAEP (1998), no aged 9 (grade 4) pupils taking the tests could answer questions posed at the level requiring analytic thinking. Zero percent of the fourth graders (that’s Z-E-R-O) could answer the highest levels of test questions that required children to establish criteria or to make logical judgments; that is, formal reasoning (refer to Table 1).

Back to the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) test given to fourth graders. In the mathematics test, two-thirds of the test items were classified as belonging to the highest levels of thinking as already noted. The NAEP test items are of parallel difficulty to those asked in the WASL.

At the national level, if no children or only one percent of the children could answer questions of that difficulty, then how can the children of Washington be expected to do any better? Answer: They won’t and they cannot!

**Math: Another Dirty Trick?**

My evidence of unfair item construction and violation of the canons of criterion-referenced testing comes from the copyrighted article by Richard S. Clayton, staff writer for The Columbian, a newspaper serving the Vancouver, Washington area.

He cited Charlotte Hartman, a Vancouver School District administrator as saying "questions [in the math assessment] were included that would be too hard for average fourth-graders or students who could meet the state standard. These questions measure the ability of students who can exceed both benchmarks." The SPI, Terry Bergeson, apparently endorsed this questionable practice by noting in the same article, that the WASL isn’t too hard, "Schools are still learning to teach students these skills: problem-solving, understanding math concepts; and writing explanations, not just answers, for math questions."

Let us review those NAEP national findings, once again. No fourth graders can solve problems at the 350 level and only two percent can solve math problems at the 300 level. Yet, state policy makers ignore national data and continue to espouse the cliché of "raising the bar." I’d say they are beating the children over their heads with the bar!

**Is the WASL psychologically damaging?**

The WASL is creating negative reactions among parents, children, teachers, and school administrators, in addition to the negative aura illustrated in the media. But the best evidence of psychological damage comes from Spokane. On May 11, 2000, Wendy Harris, staff writer for The Spokesman-Review, ran a story titled "WASL a 'monster' of a test." I shall quote the first two paragraphs of that piece.
"According to Spokane fourth-grader Alan Guthrie, the state’s new assessment test is a ferocious monster with sharp fangs and claw-like daggers. "My WASL is a huge monster that eats children and gets stronger from their fear." Guthrie wrote beneath a picture he drew of the brown, furry beast."

This child’s teacher, Michael Duley, asked the students, to draw a picture of what the WASL looks like and to write a description of it.

I interviewed a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology asking, "Is this a projective test and do you infer psychological damage?" The answer was affirmative to both parts. Test anxiety has always been a part of assessing, but the WASL is creating an aversive test anxiety. I predict that continued use of the WASL will lead to destructive educational and social behaviors that will be manifested against other children, their teachers, and the schools.

Conclusions

The fourth grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning has a reading, writing, and listening component that is rather challenging and yet reasonably difficult. At least one-fourth of the children can be predicted to fail due to the somewhat higher proportions of formal reasoning skills needed to pass it. The majority of fourth graders should pass the test, that is, reach the arbitrary standard set by the state. This conclusion was made before the writing exam “dirty trick” was exposed.

The language arts aspects of the WASL could provide some feedback to fourth grade teachers who could then stress the technical skills needed to improve overall language proficiency. Used as a diagnostic tool, children could benefit from focused instruction on writing and listening skills.

Clearly, the fourth grade WASL mathematics test is developmentally inappropriate. The difficulty levels of at least two-thirds of the test items are beyond the mental capacity of most fourth graders in Washington state, or any other state. No amount of teacher help or parental coaching can improve student achievement on this test. The children of this age are not mentally developed to process the kinds of higher reasoning skills needed to be successful. There is nothing wrong with the fourth graders. They are simply children: Not simple children! There is everything wrong with the fourth grade WASL mathematics test!

To paraphrase from the current state superintendent of public instruction, "we are raising the bar." Dick Fosbury could set the high jump standard at seven feet and clear it in one try. The math bar is set even higher for Washington fourth graders. Guess how many will clear it—on any number of tries?

I predict that NO fourth grader in this state will ever get a perfect score on the WASL. (It is possible for a high school student to get a perfect score on the SAT. And with criterion-referenced tests it is assumed that many students will achieve 100 percent.) Further, I predict that only about one percent of the fourth graders will have scores in the 90th percentile level on this test. (The reader must realize that WASL scores are not reported in any percentile ranks.)

The WASL sets no standard. This is an outrageous assault on the children, their teachers, and their parents. If there is a message in the bottle it reads, "You fourth graders are dummies." Isn’t that a great motivator to encourage kids to succeed in school? You bet!

What is more disconcerting to me is that knowledgeable professionals know that the NAEP tests have shown the aptitudes of fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders. Why did the state superintendent and the Commission on Student Learning completely ignore or disregard the NAEP results?

I conclude that the fourth grade WASL is actually a sixth grade aptitude test. More importantly, the Washington State Legislature should demand a verification of the validity of the WASL.

The fourth grade mathematics assessment is unreasonable by any developmental or fairness criteria.
Implications

The WASL has a disturbing moral dimension. Is it moral to use the police powers of the state to coerce all fourth grade children to experience a test that has little chance of being passed? How moral is it to watch children and teachers spending between eight and 20 days to prepare for and administer the WASL? Approximately one in five students exhibit some form of behavioral, educational, emotional, or physical disability (Fuchs & Rekils, 1992). Where are these factors considered in the WASL? The entire arena of disabilities and non-English speaking children has been virtually ignored by the SPI. Examine the worst five performing school districts on the WASL and they are primarily comprised of Hispanic children, that is, English-Language-Learners! Fairness to these pupils is lacking in the WASL.

An ethical issue addresses the hopeless feelings of parents who try to tutor their children night after night. State school authorities have deliberately misguided all. Fourth graders do not have the cerebral connections at this stage of their young lives to think and operate at the higher cognitive levels. Give these youngsters two or three more years to develop and the vast majority of them will begin to think analytically. Growth and maturation processes coupled with positive school learning experiences help children to evolve cognitively.

There is one ray of hope. The tiny Stehekin School Board has forwarded a resolution to the SPI and Legislature requesting no further expansion of the WASL until 70 percent of the children can score satisfactorily on the reading, writing, and mathematics assessments. (Refer to Note 5.)

The Washington Assessment of Student Learning is an ill-conceived, unreasonable, and degrading attack on children!

There are several other implications that must be addressed in order to stop this travesty against youth.

- Why was such a difficult and developmentally inappropriate assessment instrument ever released when early field trials showed flaws?
- What political agenda is being served by knowingly administering a test that clearly is not in reach of the vast majority of fourth graders?
- Why is the state legislature continuing to expend tax dollars on a reform system that predictably is showing adverse effects on children?
- Why haven't other professional groups analyzed the appropriateness of these tests, for example the Washington Education Association or the American Federation of Teachers?
- Why are "special education" students required to take this test? Their mental aptitudes predict failure. Is the SPI violating the civil rights of all children for whom Individual Education Plans have been filed?
- What is the state SPI trying to prove by continuing to use a test that borders on adult irresponsibility and exploitation of youth? For example, student mobility runs as high as 50 percent. It is unfair to include these children in the general school reports.

There appears to be a strong socio-economic bias operating against relatively poor children who take the WASL. Psychometrically there are five flaws:

1. Subjective scoring and setting of arbitrary standards must be challenged.
2. Giving a Zero to any student who misses this "experience" is arbitrary and capricious.
3. Violation of criterion-referenced canons is obvious.
4. A new test is prepared each year making group comparisons invalid.
5. The arbitrary "standard" will be raised each year, thus creating a "compound interest" feature so that scores of infinity will ultimately be the standard. Education professionals must speak against this perversion of assessment. The fourth graders can't fight back!

### TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AT PIAGET'S COGNITIVE LEVELS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Intuition (a)</th>
<th>Concrete (b)</th>
<th>Advanced Concrete (a)</th>
<th>Entry Formal (b)</th>
<th>Middle Formal (b)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>J</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>27</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>6-7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>53</td>
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<td>Adult</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### A Final Word

To quote from Secretary of Education, Richard Riley (2000), "If all our efforts to raise standards get reduced to one test, we've gotten it wrong." Washington: You've got it all wrong! 🍎

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Table Notes and References on following page...
Table Notes and References

1. Level (a) in each category is composed of children who have just begun to manifest one or two of that level’s reasoning schemes, while level (b) refers to children manifesting a half dozen or more reasoning schemes.

2. Table by Herman T. Epstein, personal letter, June 8, 1999.


A—Arlin, P. Personal Communication with H. T. Epstein


Notes and References

Note 1. Table 1 is a compilation prepared by Herman T. Epstein and provided to Donald C. Orlich on June 8, 1999. It is the first time that the full cognitive development table has been published in North America.

Note 2. “Education Reform and Limits to Student Achievement” (Orlich 2000) shows high correlations of the Epstein/Piaget Table 1 with NAEP science, mathematics, reading and writing tests.

Note 3. The original analysis of the WASL was requested by Linda Shaw of the Seattle Times and was impounded until the story was featured in the joint Sunday edition of the Seattle PI and Seattle Times, October 10, 1999.

Note 4. A set of 20 tables is available via E-mail, MacWord attachment with all data reported showing the full item analysis of the Grade 4 WASL completed by the author in May 1999. Request from orlich@wsu.edu.

Note 5. The Lake Washington School Board will require seniors to critique a paper in The Scientific American. Lake Washington, If you want "World Class Standards" make those seniors publish in The Scientific American. The Lake Washington School Directors illustrate the absurdity that is now being advocated under the rubric of school reform. Common sense has clearly been abandoned.


Epstein, H. T. (June 8, 1999). Percentage of Students at Piaget’s Cognitive Level, Table 1.


Pullman Community Update. (June, 2000). Getting Writing Right.


U. S. Department of Education.
WSASCD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 8-9-10, 2001 • DOUBLETREE HOTEL, SEATAC

REGISTRATION INFORMATION INSIDE

Your invitation . . .

On February 8-9-10, 2001, some of the nation's foremost and exciting education experts will convene at the Washington State ASCD's Annual Conference. You won't want to miss this unique event, focusing on education reform and the critical issues of instruction, curriculum, assessment, and accountability.

Thursday's premiere Action Labs, Friday's keynote speakers - the renown Ruby Payne and the provocative Cynthia Barnes, an array of concurrent sessions showcasing Washington district and schools, and a special full-day Saturday workshop with Ruby Payne are paired with ample networking opportunities to make for a phenomenal professional event!

The conference committee is confident that your participation and learning will be time well spent. Invite a friend and join other Washington educators for an exceptional conference!

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Monte Bridges, Puget Sound ESD
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FEBRUARY 8-9-10, 2001
DoubleTree Hotel, SeaTac
The Washington State Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development

Annual Conference

February 8-9-10, 2001

conference agenda

Thursday, February 8
7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  Registration
8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  Action Lab Sessions
11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m.  Lunch
3:30 - 5:00 p.m.  Bookstore/Exhibits/Job Fair/Author Book Signing

Friday, February 9
6:45 - 7:30 a.m.  Continental Breakfast/Exhibits/Job Fair
7:45 - 8:45 a.m.  Keynote – Ruby Payne
9:00 - 10:15 a.m.  Concurrent Session I
10:15 - 10:45 a.m.  Break/Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Job Fair
10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  Concurrent Session II

Friday, February 9, cont.
12:00 - 1:30 p.m.  Lunch, Poster Sessions/Exhibits/Job Fair
1:45 - 3:00 p.m.  Concurrent Session III
3:15 - 4:30 p.m.  Concurrent Session IV
4:30 - 5:00 p.m.  President's Reception & Social
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.  Keynote – Cynthia Barnes

Special Day with Ruby Payne – Saturday, February 10
7:30 - 8:00 a.m.  Registration
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  Workshop – “A Framework for Understanding Poverty”

Action Lab Presenters

Tom Guskey
Professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation, University of Kentucky
Tom will provide participants with ideas on Grading and Reporting Student Learning.

Alan November
Senior Partner, Educational Renaissance Planners
A nationally-known leader in technology, Alan will familiarize participants with Empowering Students in a Digital World.

Edie Holcomb
Education Director, Seattle Public Schools
The author of Getting Excited About Data: How to Combine People, Passion and Proof and Asking the Right Questions: Tools and Techniques for Teamwork, Edie will teach participants about Using Data for School Improvement.

Heidi Hayes Jacobs
Educational Consultant
A well-known educational consultant on issues and practices pertaining to curriculum reform, and the author of Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation, Heidi will focus on Curriculum Mapping.

Catherine Taylor
Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Washington
A performance assessment guru for pre-service teachers, Catherine will conduct an action lab for higher education content and methodology faculty to help them develop Performance Assessments for Pre-Service Teachers.

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These rates will be available until January 17, 2001. After this date, reservations will be accepted on space and conference rate availability only.
Progress, Persistence, Passion: The Quest for Balance

**Friday, February 9, 7:45 a.m.**

**Keynote Speaker – Ruby K. Payne**

Ruby Payne has been an educator since 1972, a consultant, an elementary principal, a high school teacher, a department chairperson, a central office administrator, and has served on state level committees. She received her doctorate from Loyola University in Chicago and has given hundreds of workshops and presentations both nationally and internationally.

Does your campus have fights over “Yo mama” comments? Do some students laugh when they are disciplined? Economic realities create ways of thinking and behaving. The closer one is to merely “surviving,” the less time there is for the pursuit of learning. Hidden rules of behavior, language registers, resources, interventions, discipline, and creating relationships are the major topics to be discussed in understanding and successfully teaching children from generational poverty.

**Friday, February 9, 5:00 p.m.**

**Keynote Speaker – Cynthia A. Barnes**

Chief Empowerment Officer, Learning for Change

“We CAN – and MUST – Get There From Here!! Putting the Pieces Together for Teaching and Learning Success.” We may be A Nation at Risk, but we can – and must – get “there” from here! Co-creating the student success puzzle requires putting the myriad pieces of our collective work together. Facilitating student-centered learning and promoting high achievement for all students must be done now. If we are to teach in ways that help all students learn, then we must fit the puzzle pieces of our sacred work together. We must. We can. We will.

**Sampling of Friday Concurrent Sessions**

- Do you really know what your district curriculum includes?
- How to guide a materials selection process in the education reform era
- Overcoming barriers to educational reform
- Creating a community of readers, district reform of reading instruction
- Adaptations are essential
- Effective discipline workshop
- A conversation with Ruby Payne

**plus ...**

- Poster Display Sessions
- Exhibitors
- Author Book Signing
- Bookstore
- Job Fair
- President’s Reception & Social

**Special Saturday Workshop, February 10, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

**Ruby Payne: A Framework for Understanding Poverty**

This workshop will enhance your learning through:

- 10 key points in understanding poverty
- resources and case studies
- registers of language
- story structure
- cognitive development
- hidden rules
- discipline interventions

This workshop applies to all educators at all levels.

**about WSASCD**

The Washington State Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development’s Mission is to identify and promote quality education practices that enhance the growth and development of all educators and students.
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conference fees (PER PERSON)

○ ACTION LABS & CONFERENCE (THURS. & FRI., FEBRUARY 8-9)
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  CONFERENCE MEMBER* $295
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○ CONFERENCE ONLY (FRI., FEBRUARY 9)
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  CONFERENCE MEMBER* $190
  LATE FEE (AFTER JAN. 30) $40

○ FULL-TIME STUDENT (FRI., FEBRUARY 9 ONLY)
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  CONFERENCE MEMBER* $60
  LATE FEE (AFTER JAN. 30) $20

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  NON-CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS
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  CONFERENCE MEMBER* $125

* INCLUDES WSASCD MEMBERSHIP THROUGH NOV. 1, 2001

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○ CHECK, PAYABLE TO WSASCD

○ CREDIT CARD: ___ MASTERCARD OR ___ VISA. NAME ON CARD

  CARD NO. ____________________________ EXP. ______

Cancellation Fee = $40  No Shows = No Refund

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1) Telephone 360-357-9535
2) Fax registration form to 360-352-2043 or
3) Mail it to WSASCD, 825 Fifth Avenue SE, Olympia WA 98501.

THIS FORM MAY BE DUPLICATED. PLEASE MAKE A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.
Know Thy Self

The Formation of Educational Leaders

Dr. Dennis Arthur Conners
is an Assistant Professor and Program Director of the Leadership Formation Program at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.

Dr. William A. Mester
is the Superintendent of the Mead School District, in Mead, Washington, and is Faculty Tutor in the Leadership Formation Program at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington.

“To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.” Hamlet, Act I, Scene 3.

Introduction

Providing leadership for schools that effectively meet the needs of tomorrow's students is more challenging than ever. As one statewide study group (Warner, 1992) noted, if we begin with a vision of schools as learning organizations where all members, adults as well as children, groups as well as individuals are constantly engaged in the process of learning and supporting each other's learning, the sharp distinctions we traditionally draw among the roles of students, teachers, administrators, and parents are clearly blurring. Although each group views the process of instruction through a different lens, it is incumbent upon all these groups to collaboratively blend their often disjointed images of schooling into a harmonious, quality picture of schooling for the students of the community.

At the center of this complex picture are those formally designated as private and public school leaders — the site-level school principal, the program director, and the district superintendent. While a substantial body of knowledge continues to support the significance of formal leadership as a critical ingredient of the process of schooling (Cotton, 1995), the roles and competencies of school leaders are clearly evolving and call for a concomitant evolution in the image of leader preparation (Murphy, 1993). Taking into account these realities as well as recognizing the dynamic complexity of school organizations and the ever-changing demands within school communities, the Leadership Formation Program at Gonzaga University has experienced a complete restructuring.

This article details the results of that restructuring process in which future educational leaders are not trained nor are they simply prepared, rather they are formed. The concept of formation connotes a process or an evolution in which the administrative candidates make a commitment to continually grow in their understanding of themselves and those around them.

Beliefs About Leadership

The central question consistently placed before our candidates is this: What is the meaning of educational leadership to the individual leader and what is the meaning of educational leadership to those who are being led (Mitchell, 1990)? We believe that understanding what educational leadership is requires a radical shift in perspective away from logical and empirical evidence — answers found "out there" — and toward subjective, intuitive, personal, and symbolic interpretations — answers found "within." This central question of leadership provides the foundation for a continuing internal and external dialogue that takes place throughout the entire Leadership Formation Program.

A shift away from the traditional approach of examining logical and empirical ways of understanding leadership is necessary for two fundamental reasons. First, collecting and studying lists of traits of persons who have been successful educational leaders or studying the
lives of great educational leaders is a time-honored method employed in most programs. However, this strategy is built on the unquestioned assumption that a set of educational leader traits already exists and that these traits can be known by some rational thinking researcher. It begs the question that if a set of traits does not pre-exist, how does the researcher know what to look for? Our approach of setting aside these trait theories about who does and who does not possess leadership allows a "space" for our candidates to develop their own answers as to what being an educational leader means to those desiring to provide it as well as for those experiencing it.

The second reason to avoid the accepted approach to administrative training relates to the traditional practice of studying theories explaining the actions and/or behavior patterns associated with successful leaders. These behavioral and empirical theories of educational leadership focus on the methods of getting the followers to behave according to the wishes of the leader. In this context, "good" educational leaders become those who are able to get others to do what the leaders want them to do. Yet, this approach suffers from the same infirmities as the first. Empirical or behavioral theories assume that certain behaviors in an individual can be identified as "leadership behaviors." These observable behaviors which result in successful educational leadership presuppose a definition of successful educational leadership. That definition implies that on the basis of some predetermined goals or expected results, certain educational leadership behaviors are judged to be appropriate or inappropriate.

For our administrative candidates, the question is not so much what are the traits and behaviors of successful leaders in education, but what is the nature and meaning of being an educational leader. Reflecting upon and continually answering this question becomes a reality in self-growth, in teaching and learning, in schooling, in relating, and in the whole educational process. The inner life of an educational leader — what one aspires to and wants to create — is central to what educational leadership is and means (Fritz, 1989). How one feels, thinks, believes, likes, dislikes, seeks, understands, values, loves, fears, hates, and hopes becomes part and parcel of leadership (Mitchell, 1990).

What the Leadership Formation Program begins with is not what a leader ought to be or ought to do; neither does it begin with the traditional competencies or skills of a leader. The program begins with the belief that an educational leader is a person whom an educational constituency desires to follow because the leader believes in something and has the ability to achieve results in the service of those beliefs. With such a belief, the issue then becomes how is one formed to lead?

**How Future Leaders Are Formed**

The Leadership Formation Program is structured to challenge those professional educators who seek a graduate degree and administrative certification or those professional educators who already have advanced degrees and desire state certification. The Master of Arts in Educational Administration leading to Washington State Initial Level Principal or the Principal Certification Track (post master's level), Program Administrator Certification, and the Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership Studies leading to Washington State Superintendent Certification are structured as an on-campus cohort learning experience consisting of four phases. Phase One is the Integrative Core Course experience designed to investigate the candidate's readiness and commitment for the educational leadership role of either principal, program administrator, or superintendent. Phase Two consists of a supervised internship experience that provides realistic and extended leadership activities and reflective conferences. Phase Three concentrates on the degree course of study designed to develop professional competence and reflective scholarship required of leaders. Phase Four involves the completion of a research component and oral examination appropriate for the degree.

At the same time, the program accommodates those with advanced degrees seeking either principal, program administrator, or superintendent certification. This post-master's, cohort learning experience is the same as the first two phases of the degree programs described above. Candidates for certification are required to satisfactorily complete the Integrative Core and subsequent internship.

The Integrative Core Course Series is an interdisciplinary team-taught series of first-year courses required of all students pursuing the principal, program administrator, or superintendent administrative credential tracks. The structure of these core courses requires that entering candidates are assigned to "administrative
teams" of eight candidates each. The teams are made up of candidates working toward elementary, middle school, or high school principal certification, and program administrator or superintendent certification. These teams concentrate on a carefully written case study intended to focus on various dimensions of the program. The instructional team is responsible for the courses and is made up of a university faculty member along with two clinical adjunct professors of practice chosen from the principal and superintendent ranks. The instructional team determines the selection and ordering of topics, readings, and materials for each linked course in the block as well as the development of the problem-based case study and authentic assessment methods.

The heart of Leadership Formation Program incorporates, as its conceptual foundation, three core elements: a problem-based approach to leadership; the five disciplines of a learning organization; and an intense seminar approach.

Problem-Based Learning

The first element is a problem-based approach to administration. Learning based on problems represents an alternative to studying blocks of classified knowledge in a strictly organized sequence — a cornerstone of most administrative graduate education. In problem-based learning, the student-administrator focuses on a continually evolving case study. The learner brings his or her previous information and expertise as well as the ability to think rationally about it. As candidates begin to ask questions, certain issues become defined which will require a search for more information. After assembling the appropriate information, the student-administrator learns to recognize that few problems in educational administration are totally "solved" and that wrestling with any one problem opens up many other questions which can be pursued either at that time or at some future date.

Bridges and Hallinger's (1999) research into problem-based learning has provided the objectives for this section of the Integrative Core Courses. They are:

1. Acquiring new knowledge and learning to apply it.
2. Developing life-long learning skills.
3. Acquiring insight into the emotional aspects of leadership.

Acquiring new knowledge and learning to apply it. The case study offers opportunities to acquire five types of knowledge: (1) domain-specific knowledge (e.g., facts, theories, principles); (2) procedural knowledge (e.g., how to run meetings, group decision tools); (3) strategic knowledge (e.g., problem framing, problem solving); (4) life-long learning; and (5) practical wisdom, through insights one gains from practitioners. All five types of knowledge are emphasized at various times during the first year of the Integrated Core.

Developing life-long learning skills. This over-used phrase has lost much of its meaning; however, the faculty believe that practicing professionals need to keep abreast of changing conditions and the ever-expanding knowledge base. The variety of problems confronted in the case provides a platform for acquiring these essential skills. Candidates are expected to locate human resources and reading materials relevant to the problems in the case and assume responsibility for evaluating problem-relevant learning resources just as they would in the "real world." In addition, the program emphasizes implementation and analytical skills which normally culminate in an actual implementation of a solution to the problem in a realistic setting. The administrative simulations in which candidates participate serves this purpose.

Acquiring insight into the emotional aspects of leadership. Leadership involves more than cognitive activities; it can, at times, become an emotional ordeal. Simply reading about the affective components of administration is insufficient. Again, the simulation provides the opportunity to enact the leadership role, and to gauge how one would react when experiencing the weight of responsibility or the disappointment of thoughtfully conceived plans gone awry.

Occupying these leadership roles, candidates begin to feel what it means to be a leader as opposed to a subordinate.

Because problems encountered in education are those of individuals within complex organizations, most problem situations presented to the candidates take the form of a complex case study. In this way the learning is highly relevant and similar to the method by which many administrators learn in real life. The advantages to this form of learning are that it contributes to the candidate's motivation; it encourages active intellectual processes at the higher cognitive levels; it enhances the retention and transfer of information; it can be modified to meet the needs of individuals and/or small groups; and, it encourages curiosity and systems thinking.
The Five Disciplines

The second element is the "leadership disciplines" found in the work of Peter M. Senge (1990). A fundamental assumption of the program is that people follow people who believe in something and have the ability to achieve results in the service of those beliefs. The true leaders in schools are those who continue to learn. The five leadership disciplines make up the five major strands which run through each of the content areas. These disciplines are:

- **Personal Mastery**: learning to expand administrators' personal capacities to create the results desired and to create an organizational environment which encourages all of its members to develop themselves toward the goals and purposes they choose.

- **Mental Models**: reflecting upon, continually clarifying, and improving administrators' internal pictures of the world, and seeing how those images shape actions and decisions.

- **Shared Vision**: building sense of commitment in a group, by developing shared images of the future, and the principles and guiding practices by which the group chooses to operate.

- **Team Learning**: transforming conversational and collective thinking skills, so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual members' talents.

- **Systems Thinking**: a way of thinking about, and a language for describing and understanding, the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems.

In an effort to help candidates manage the dynamic complexity found in school organizations today, members of the cohort develop skill in systems thinking. They analyze the case study by adopting a systems perspective, which necessitates the practice of causal-loop diagramming. By the completion of the first year, candidates are creating computer models of issues/problems so that they move from perceiving events as they occur in isolation to uncovering the underlying structures or relationships that influence the system as a whole.

Within every organization, success is dependent upon peoples' ability to create and make real goals, hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Skill in personal mastery involves individuals' ability to become clear about what they care most about and want to create in their lives. Skills in shared vision involve the ability to help groups or teams come together in a committed way around a common goal or vision. Throughout the course of the first year, members are given the opportunity to practice and grow their own personal aspirations. Similarly, they develop techniques and a deeper understanding for helping groups and teams of people create shared visions.

The health and growth of schools as organizations is also dependent on being able to get at the truth. If an organization cannot look honestly at current conditions, it is impossible to fashion appropriate strategies for growth. Mental models is the set of assumptions or mental maps that people use to interpret their world. Cohort members learn to open up their thinking and to surface the set of assumptions being used by themselves and others in the group. Simulations and group activities provide the opportunity for them to understand how members can learn together as a team.

**Formation Seminars**

The last curricular element is the Formation Seminar that stresses the understanding of ideas and issues, never information or even knowledge about a body of subject matter. The rudimentary seminar involves mainly questions and answers about what has been read or experienced. In more complex seminars, the faculty member and candidate co-leaders may have to provide background information during the course of the discussion. The materials chosen for seminar discussions are always sufficiently over the heads of the candidates so that they have to reach up to understand what they have read. If what is assigned is completely intelligible to them at a glance, it is not material suitable for seminar discussion, because a seminar should always result in the participants' understanding more after they have discussed what they read than before the discussion started. John Dewey's Democracy and Education, Jean Jacques Rousseau's Emile, Raymond Callahan's Education and the Cult of Efficiency, Philip Jackson's Life in the Classroom, and Goodlad's In Praise of Education are examples of some of the works considered in the seminars. These classics are assigned because they pose the "larger questions" about education. This is done so that candidates' minds are engaged in a way that involves them in asking questions about deeper meaning as they make an effort to understand the work. It is believed that "making meaning" is a critical aspect of leadership.

**Program Delivery**

**Candidate Admissions**

The overall goal of the admission process is to identify and select candidates who are most likely to fulfill all of the goals of the program and who will thrive in a realistic administrative team setting.
where the learning environment is relatively unstructured. Two general policies apply to the admission process. The first is the principle of heterogeneity: given that the applicants have the basic Gonzaga University Graduate School academic qualifications, candidates are selected from a wide variety of educational settings. The objective is to create a balance between public and private school practitioners, among urban, suburban, and rural geographic areas, and between those pursuing a degree with certification and those pursuing administrative certification only.

The second policy involves the selection of candidates not only on the basis of academic credentials, but also on the basis of personal characteristics and abilities. Included are demonstrated abilities for independent learning, for imaginative problem solving, and for productive contributions to various small groups. In addition, those making decisions on admissions look for emotional stability, responsibility, motivation for an administrative career, and the capacity for self-appraisal. These academic and personal characteristics are then weighed in a series of decision-making steps leading to an offer of a place in the program.

The selection process uses two methods: one is an academic assessment of grade-point average plus standardized scores which results in a rank-ordered list and an assessment of the nominee; the second consists of references and autobiographical letters. Each file is reviewed by the three-member admissions team, and the applicant's ratings of those personal characteristics addressed in reference and autobiographical letters are rank ordered. A short-list of applicants is then invited for a set of two activities. The first is a 30-minute interview conducted by the admissions team. The second is a simulated administrative team meeting centered on an educational problem. Applicants are assessed primarily for group skills and contributions to group problem solving.

Program Design
Administrative candidates progress through the program as a cohort group. Formal course work begins on the Gonzaga University campus with two weeks of intensive, academy-like study in July. In the fall and winter semesters, principal candidates enroll in two linked courses as do those on the program administrator and superintendent tracks. These linked core courses are skill and content oriented infusing the case study with common themes, issues, and problems. The core is taught in an intensive, block mode by the instructional team during weekend times and dates flexibly scheduled to address the demands of the curriculum and instructional delivery. Teaching is accomplished in a variety of formats such as lectures, labs, workshops, simulations, and seminars. The final component of the first year is the Role Seminar Retreat — a two-day, off-campus experience with candidates immersed in individual and collaborative study and reflection. An internship experience of two semesters is completed the following year in the case of certification candidates or in the third year for degree candidates.

Number of Students Involved
The program is designed to accommodate a 24-student cohort each year. Each cohort consists of three Ph.D./Superintendent track candidates, three program administrator candidates, and 18 principal candidates divided equally between post-masters and masters.

Faculty Roles
The faculty team, with the assistance of the planning team made up of practicing administrators from the field, plan and participate in the Summer, Fall, and Spring semester offerings of the Integrative Core. Although some parts of the core are run for the entire cohort, others such as administrative team seminars and workshops are subdivided based on the teams. There are internal options for individuals and/or teams to choose from specific skill or content workshops with designated faculty or administrative consultants.

Faculty Co-planning
Readings, lectures, seminars, simulations, workshops, and other activities are all planned to explore program themes. Faculty coordinate the building of themes, cases, connections, questions, and the ways those connections will be developed through the course of the program. The majority of planning occurs during the summer prior to the beginning of the program.

Community-building Mechanisms
One of the principles upon which this program is built is the fostering of community and collaboration. The structure of the program offers a similar shared experience and multiple feedback loops. Seminars involving administrative teams offer not only intellectual and social space, but also generate a sense of purpose by being reality based. In addition, community is built socially and spatially through activities such as providing Friday evening and Saturday morning meals for the entire cohort during the Fall and Spring semesters and the Role Seminar Retreat during the second summer session.

Candidate Assessment
Candidates engage in multiple forms of assessment, both formative and summative. Each candidate maintains a portfolio documenting professional competence for each element of the program. Collaborative peer assessment and faculty assessment data are also provided each semester. Whenever feasible, assessment activities are authentic in nature, established from problems of practice, and implemented in real-world situations.
Early Indications
The admonition to “know thyself” is a critical aspect of the Leadership Formation Program. Knowing who one is as a person is indispensable for an effective and authentic leader. If this is true, then the following written comments from two years’ worth of candidates’ randomly selected program evaluations might suggest that this unique learning experience is accomplishing its mission:

What was the most useful or meaningful thing you learned during your Integrative Core Course Experience?
Learning to slow down and think before acting.
Challenging myself and my thinking. Learning of the five disciplines, as well as the piece on dialogue, was the most meaningful to me.
Examining my own thinking processes and becoming aware of some of my deeply rooted mental models.
Mental models; suspending assumptions. Creative tension is good.
The differences between dialogue and discussion. The concept of the five disciplines.
The notion of personal mastery and how to develop that discipline has resonated with me.
Exploring the inner-sell, my beliefs, and suspending those beliefs. Slowing my thinking down. Looking at the structure of a situation. Having dialogue in my life.
This program caused faculty and candidates to fully practice the elements of good teaching, knowing, and learning. Faculty’s passion and commitment to the education of human beings to becoming administrators (servants) of teaching and learning is consistently apparent to me as a student.

Conclusion
Leadership is internal. It begins from the inside and works itself outward. Authentic leaders do not change other people, nor do they cause others to follow them. Authentic leaders change their own attitudes, values, perceptions, and actions; as a result, others desire and choose voluntarily to follow in pursuit of a goal larger than themselves. The Leadership Formation Program understands that who one is and what one is seeking in life is essential to becoming an educational leader.

References
Dr. Rebecca Wolfe serves as a Facilitator for the “Success for All” reading program in the Mount Vernon School District. With a BA and an MAT in English and Education, Rebecca is a teacher of English, French, ESL and Methods in Second-Language Learning. For fun, Rebecca likes to walk and run with her Akita dog, Kuma, on Shaw Island where they spend their free time.

“Service Learning”

Service Learning is an approach to providing opportunities for young people to apply their academic learning to community needs or to incorporate community service into their academic learning: it’s a reflexive reality. It helps build good community relations, connects with many different areas of the curriculum, promotes civic responsibility, and, most importantly, it plays a vital role in the development of well-rounded, responsible citizens. “Every child a citizen” is the goal of Service Learning (Compact for Learning and Citizenship of the Educational Commission of the States, March 15, 1999).

In some school districts, community service and “school-to-work” programs exist, but the missing link is the curricular component which makes it truly “Service Learning.” Service Learning has much in common with both, yet some differences exist.

As elements of school reform efforts, Service Learning and School-to-Work Programs share the conviction that applied learning — experiential learning — is most effective in producing permanent, meaningful learning. They share a paradigm that views students as active learners, providers of resources, producers of knowledge, providers of help, and participants in meaningful events and change. They both use teaching and learning strategies such as contextual learning, application of knowledge to actual situations, teaching that goes beyond the classroom, multidisciplinary instruction, and collaborative learning. Both Service Learning and School-to-Work programs require educators to re-examine their practices.

Service learning is applied learning which embodies all of the elements of constructivist learning: “a learner and life-centered curriculum; enriched environments; interactive settings; differentiated instruction; inquiry, experimentation, and investigation; mediation and
facilitation; and metacognitive reflection" (Fogarty, 1999, p. 78).
Visionary educational leaders (Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Feuerstein, Gardner, Diamond, and others) have encouraged learning which derives from research and experience in psychology and neurobiology, as well as other biological and social sciences (Fogarty, 1999, pp. 76-78).

Orcas Island

Orcas Island High School projects are coordinated by Kay Grossman, who advises the Community Resource Training Program as well as the Orcas Key Club (a service organization for high school students). The CRT Program is similar to a School-to-Work program, but it is directed toward smaller communities that lack adequate opportunities for work experiences. Unlike participants in School-to-Work programs, CRT students are not paid for their services. Student volunteers for the Orcas Fire Department are acquiring skills with lifesaving equipment as part of the Rescue Technicians' training. Lloyd Brown, a senior, does a variety of odd jobs at the Orcas airport. Lloyd recently received an "Air Hawks" scholarship; he plans to become a pilot. Toby Shanker and the other Orcas students provide child-care for the Orcas Family Resource Center. Jacqueline Taylor works at the non-profit "Second-Hand Rose" clothing shop to help fund "Children's House." Others serve as tutors for younger students who need help with schoolwork. Claire West has given three years to the Ecology Club, helping maintain the ecology garden and the weekly school recycling program. Several classmates assist with these chores.

Although these activities are not yet officially a part of the Orcas school curriculum, they are consistent with John Dewey's notion of an "experiential continuum" in which experiences are valued according to how worthwhile they are educationally. This is determined by how much growth (mental, physical, and/or emotional) takes place.

Moving from Community Service to Service Learning is a natural progression in the evolution of an integrated program. The Orcas Island School District and community have all of the ingredients for a highly successful Service Learning program.

Lopez Island

Lopez Island School District received a "Learn and Serve America" grant which was renewed for the 1999-2000 school year. Coordinator Paul Lewis assists participating teachers, helps parents get involved, and facilitates the community-based program. In an early developmental stage, the Lopez program already includes a number of significant projects. The principal efforts have been 1) the Hummel Lake Watershed Project, 2) the migrant farm workers project, 3) a family resource center and peer mentoring project, 4) a community garden project for Lopez Village, and 5) a service club of students from the Alternative Resource Class.

The Hummel Lake watershed monitoring project includes the cooperative participation of the school district, the San Juan County Health Department, the San Juan County Conservation District, and a community group known as "Friends of Hummel Lake." In this project, Jill Rain's senior high students in Environmental Science collect data to monitor water quality, while the Alternative Resource Class (grades 1-5 with teacher, Greg Ewart) map plants and animals of the watershed from Hummel Lake down to Swift's Bay. Alex Nelle's fifth graders were also involved. Their work will contribute to a pamphlet for the public, to be distributed by the San Juan County Land Bank.

In the Hispanic migrant population project, students were connected to two organizations, Tierra Nueva and Tierra Nueva Norte, and worked on a clothing drive to benefit Hispanic migrant communities. An opportunity to deepen their appreciation for the Hispanic culture and to improve their command of the Spanish language was an important part of the experience for Lopez students.

Like the other "Learn to Serve" programs, the Lopez Island program exists to help K-12 students learn, to discover career options, to develop leadership traits, to become reflective about their lives on a personal and civic level, and to provide valuable service to their community. Lewis and the teachers are aligning activities and evaluating progress according to the Washington Essential Learning Requirements (EALRs). Students reflect on their experiences through journal writing, presenting talks, creating art, and group discussions.

Bellingham

In Bellingham, at Fairhaven Middle School, Calle Underhill has been coordinating a service learning program for nearly three years. Last year 150 students were providing service at sites throughout their community. Underhill directs a learning unit that spans 12 weeks. During the first six weeks, while the adult leaders are making arrangements with the sites, the students are preparing for their service by conducting research into their areas of interest.

Five categories of service present opportunities: 1) animal care, 2) social service, 3) the environment, 4) the young, and 5) the elderly.

Some of the Fairhaven students' projects have included working at an AIDS hospice center, organizing food gifts for the homeless at the Lighthouse Mission, and many other humanitarian services. Assisting the students with transportation, on-site needs, and other aspects of the program are pre-service teachers enrolled in the College of Education at Western Washington University. Dr. Angela Harwood, professor of education at WWU, has been collaborating with Underhill on an "Issue Brief" concerning the effects of service learning on the development of civic responsibility. For their brief, they have done pre- and post-assessments of attitudes and behaviors, and surveys of sites and supervisors. They have given presentations about their work at a recent National Middle School Confer-
ence and at local school board meetings. Western Washington University has an Office of Service Learning that provides resources and support for schools, teachers, and organizations interested in establishing and implementing curriculum-integrated service learning programs.

**Nooksack High School**

At Nooksack High School, Sue Ann Heutink has served as coordinator for Community and Work-Based Learning programs for over ten years, succeeding Kate MacPherson who established the program. Service Learning and School-to-Work programs are a good fit at Nooksack. The communities of Sumas, Nooksack, and Everson include about 500 students. Nooksack Junior/Senior High School received a "Serve America" grant for three consecutive academic years — 1992 to 1995.

Since 1995, the programs have continued in two ways: either students enroll in Ms. Heutink's Service Learning class or they design an independent project under her supervision. A short list of the Nooksack projects includes a mix of individual and group service projects:

1. High school students tutor elementary school students.
2. Students help supervise children at a local daycare center.
3. Students volunteer at the community museum.
4. Students help at an adult care home for Alzheimer's patients.
5. Students prepare and serve meals for the local Lighthouse Mission.
6. A salmon habitat enhancement project on Kinney Creek.
7. Students hold events to raise awareness about drug/alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, and diversity issues.
8. Seventh-graders had a T-shirt and poster drive for Croatian orphans.
9. Industrial arts students built a customized wheelchair for a child with multiple sclerosis.

Many Nooksack faculty members are involved in the Service Learning program. Patti Wells, a first-grade Nooksack teacher, collaborated with Heutink on a manual, "Service Learning: A Guide to Program Planning and Implementation," as part of their Master's Degree program at Western Washington University. Several eighth-grade teachers guide an interdisciplinary "Breakout" class project to raise awareness of social issues and problems. Their eighth graders can earn 1/2 credit toward their graduation credits even before they enter high school. High school students earn 1/2 credit for 90 hours of well-documented, satisfactory service in their experiences.

Participants from many grade levels, along with community organizations, have contributed to the huge success of this effort. A video presents a more comprehensive look at the inspiring Nooksack Valley Service Learning Program. It is available for $10.00 from Nooksack Valley High School, P.O. Box 4307, Nooksack, WA 98276.

**Granite Falls High School**

Granite Falls High School was selected by the Corporation for National Service in 1999 as a National Leader School for Service-Learning — one of only 70 in the United States and the only one in Washington state. Students Rebecca Jensen, Vanessa Von Stubebe, and Jennifer Gibson, with Counselor, Lillian Troop, accepted the award and participated in a leadership conference in Washington, DC.

What has been the secret to their extraordinary achievements? Part of the answer seems to be the participatory management system adopted in the 1993-1994 school year by the high school administration, led by principal Peter Finch. A site-based council, the Learning Improvement Team (LIT), was formed. A needs assessment led to student learning goals developed by an inclusive team of students, staff, parents, community, and administrators. Students in the I.E.P. Program also serve on the LIT and serve in many other ways, such as acting as student mentors to younger children. Service Learning as a class requirement for all students became part of a phased-in plan achieved through a consensus model. As of 1994, students perform at least ten hours of community service per semester.

Throughout the evolution of the Learning Improvement Plan process at Granite Falls High School, students have been the movers and shakers. They feel supported by their principal, faculty, and community to develop and implement action plans. In 1995, the Associated Student Body initiated an annual retreat funded originally by a grant from the Snohomish Office of Children's Affairs, a grant written by the ASB President. Other grants have been initiated, written, and received by other students since that time. The ASB vice-president serves as a non-voting member of the school board. Some students have even written and received grants independently, without the principal's knowledge, prior to the announcement that funds were granted.

Because of the systemic integration of community service into the total life of the school, student leaders are empowered to assume leadership roles in numerous ways. One result is that school climate has improved significantly, as shown by surveys of teacher perceptions. From 1996 to 1998, teachers' perceptions of the level of respect shown to teachers improved from 41% to 70%. Attendance is excellent at 95%. It is not an exaggeration to say that Service Learning has helped to transform Granite Falls High School.

Students at Granite Falls are engaged in ways that must be seen and heard to be believed. On the day I visited Granite Falls, Mr.
Effective Service Learning accomplishes the following:
- Strengthens academic learning through practical experience and application of theoretical concepts
- Involves researching school and community problems
- Involves developing service activities and/or projects that address real problems in the school and community
- Involves youth in all aspects of the process
- Works to build problem-solving partnerships between school and community, as well as within the school and community
- Includes guided reflection time for students to think, talk, and write about what they did and saw.

Finch received a telephone call about a legislative hearing to be held on the following day. The hearing concerned a piece of legislation his students inspired and have continued to pursue for several years, SB 6008, to provide for a Youth Court process permitting teenagers to hear cases of their peers when minor infractions are committed. The Granite Falls Teen Court was the result of much hard work by many students from Granite Falls. The effort was supported by a grant from the Snohomish County Federated Health and Safety Network. Susan Goetsch has been instrumental in assisting the students, along with Pam Daniels, Snohomish County Clerk; Rick Bart, Snohomish County Sheriff; and Chuck Allen, Granite Falls Police Department Chief of Police. The Teen Court serves as a Community Accountability Board for youth who agree to diversion. The school also supports the Teen Court by allowing students to go before the court as an alternative to suspension.

 Granite Falls students have testified before the Washington State Legislature in previous years. Finch asked several of those involved with the Youth Court project if they wanted to drive down to Olympia to testify again this year. He knew how much they wanted to help get the law enacted so that teens in any community in Washington State can create their own Youth Court without having to repeat the complicated, time-consuming procedures that GFHS students went through to achieve their Teen Court, now accepted as legal by all agencies involved. Three students (Jennifer Gibson, grade 11; Caitland Sanders, grade 9; and Holly Hendrix, grade 8; with Susan Goetsch, Director of the Granite Falls Boys & Girls Club) did testify in Olympia in favor of the SB 6008 on February 18, 2000. Their testimonies can be heard on-line at www.tvw.org by following the links for “Archives” to “House Committees” to “Criminal Justice and Corrections” to “2/18/00.” Gibson’s testimony begins at the 41-minute mark. GFHS students’ testimonies from previous years can be heard on-line, as well. These students have experienced “applied learning” in citizenship in ways that most adults have never known.

Another example of Service Learning at Granite Falls is “Community Nights,” a program which, like the ASB retreats, helps to bring together community members to brainstorm ways to decrease youth violence and increase positive participation in the school and community by both youth and adults. Danielle Cooley was instrumental in establishing Community Nights which provides free pizza for all. The program is partially funded by yet another student-written grant from the Snohomish County Federated Health and Safety Network.

Many other projects, not funded by grants but carried out by students and other community members, have included coaching by high school students for the Junior Athletic Association and the Little League; volunteer work at the local Food Bank, and volunteering at the Puget Sound Blood Center. The Mentor Program involves many students every year, led by a student coordinator of community services. Is there anything these kids can’t do? Apparently not!

Experiences are more effective teachers than lectures.

A Reflexive Reality

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni writes that, in teaching moral values and building up moral commitments, “the most important social science observation here is that experiences are more effective teachers than lectures” (Etzioni, 1993, p. 103). A Communitarian, Etzioni insists that two requirements are essential for our young people: “to develop the basic personality traits that characterize effective individuals and to acquire core values” (Etzioni, p. 90).

The five school districts included in this article represent the eleven school districts and two ESAs currently engaged in Service Learning. From Orcas Island, in the formative stages of becoming a Service Learning district, to Lopez Island in the early developmental phase; to Fairhaven Middle School with a well-established program; to Nooksack School District’s exemplary program; to Granite Falls High School, a “National Leader School for Service Learning,” we can see the developmental progression of this growing practice.

Service Learning aims to “provide students with the opportunities to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well-being and to that of their families and communities, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives” (Finch, 2000).

Service Learning programs incorporate community service into their academic learning; it’s a reflexive reality. It helps build good community relations, connects with many different areas of the curriculum, promotes civic responsibility, and, most importantly, plays a vital role in the development of well-rounded, responsible citizens. Those involved in Service Learning understand what Dag Hammarskjöld meant when he said, “The door to happiness opens outward.”
Connecting Evaluation and Education Reform

Joann Mychals is the Assistant Executive Director of the Washington Association of School Administrators.

Dr. Jackie Hallett is a consultant and a retired administrator from the Ferndale School District.

Background

Most districts have been working for the last several years to train staff in the instructional strategies needed to help students master the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and be successful on the WASL. Teachers have had training in six trait writing, assessment strategies, problem solving, and higher level thinking skills. However, most districts are now realizing that little training has been provided to their administrative teams in new supervision and evaluation techniques for working with teachers. Principals need to be able to recognize the difference between a classroom which is teaching to the EALRs, and one which is not. They then need to have numerous strategies to help those teachers who are struggling to become more successful. In addition, the models of evaluation which those principals have to work with are woefully out of date.

The Process

To assist districts in their efforts to align evaluation with education reform, the Washington Association of School Administrators set out to design a "tool kit" as a resource guide with processes, strategies, and practical examples to assist districts in realigning their supervision and evaluation methods. With that focus, WASA sent a request to all 296 school districts in Washington, seeking samples of updated models and other supervision documents that could be considered for the "tool kit". WASA then established a committee of administrators with diverse job responsibilities to review these documents and ultimately to select a variety of differing materials and resources that would make up a resource guide.

As the committee worked, it became evident that creating an organizational structure was imperative. WASA had received about 1,000 pages of material, and the committee struggled with determining the criteria for inclusion. After much debate, the team decided to include a wide variety of examples without endorsing or promoting a given philosophy. In this way, districts could select sample documents and materials which best align with their philosophy as well as with their emphasis and progress in their education reform journey.

The Resource

The Toolkit is divided into six components, the first of which is the Introduction, ("What is the Toolkit About?") and sets forth the committee perspectives and selection of the contents. Our goal was to provide districts with a valuable resource guide that supports their work in redesigning their evaluation model. One of the challenges administrators have today is the difficulty in "knowing who has done what," and then to solicit the information. Having resources at our fingertips is a critical step in any process. The Toolkit, as a finished guide, contains over 250 pages of such documents, forms, and other resources, and is available in CD format or hardcopy.

The second component of the Toolkit, the Foundation, identifies the elements needed for redesigning the evaluation model. The question, "What must I know?" is the knowledge piece underlying effective evaluation and supervision. This component contains the RCWs and WAGs which govern evaluation of teachers, and provides the foundation by which school districts develop and adopt policies and
collective bargaining agreements to provide the frameworks by which local districts design and implement teacher evaluation. Sample evaluation policies and contract language are provided, including the Code of Conduct, which sets forth the policies and procedures for unprofessional conduct and outlines the responsibilities for supervisors who complete annual evaluations. This component gives access to essential knowledge necessary to support decision making in the evaluation process.

The third component of the Toolkit is the Frameworks, which provides a guide for the question, “What choices must we make?” Twelve “Decision-Making Considerations” are provided that give a powerful framework for a joint committee of district and association representatives to use in analyzing their philosophy and in redesigning their evaluation tool. The establishment of a philosophy will become the foundation for future decisions, and thus becomes a critical step in the process. Some questions are technical and can be answered rather quickly after looking at the various examples. However, other decisions are more sensitive and require that the committee has developed a sense of trust and honesty about the role of evaluation. The issues to be considered when redesigning your evaluation model include:

1. Do you believe in evaluating experienced teachers differently from inexperienced teachers?
2. Do you want to make an overall judgment on each criteria or to evaluate each performance indicator as well as each evaluative criteria?
3. Do you want to add evaluative criteria, such as “Teacher as Professional,” “Use of Technology,” or “Communication with Parents”?
4. Do you wish to distinguish between the different aspects of the instructional process such as planning, instruction, and assessment?
5. Do you wish to elongate the cycle so that teachers can be on the short form or professional growth option for more than two years (see RCW 28A.405.100.5)?
6. Do you want to design a developmental model?
7. Do you wish to include goal setting as part of the evaluation process?
8. Do you want to include the use of student achievement data as part of the evaluation process?
9. Have you studied and examined the pros and cons of the various models?
10. Do you want to use other data collection tools such as student and parent surveys?
11. Do you want to adopt the minimum observation requirements as outlined in the RCW or require that administrators do more?
12. How many evaluative judgments do you want principals to have?

Satisfactory, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory?
Exemplary, Satisfactory, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory?

This component also contains several samples of overall evaluation philosophies, professional growth philosophies, and an intervention assistance philosophy. Vancouver has done an extensive revision of their view of the relationship between evaluation, recruitment, professional development, and retention of staff (see Figure 1). Integral to this component are samples of three evaluation models with five different formats. These models provide a visual tool to examine “strengths and challenges” of each model and feature:

Open Ended Model
In this model, the performance indicators are described in detail but are not evaluated individually. The administrator is required to write one or more paragraphs that describe how the teacher addresses each evaluation criteria. Administrators need strong writing skills for this model to be effective. (The Nooksack Valley and Ferndale districts designed this type of model.)

Developmental Model
This model describes teacher behavior on a continuum from “no use” to “consistent use” or from “does not meet minimum standard” to “meets and/or exceeds standard”. The strength of this model depends on the administrator's ability to distinguish between teacher behaviors. For this model to be effective, there needs to be consistency among the administrators who evaluate staff. (Medical Lake and Enumclaw School Districts use a “developmental” model.)

Checklist/Rating Model
The third model is an example of a checklist/rating model. In this model, the administrator gives a Likert ranking to each performance indicator. The strength of this model is that it is very specific, but requires a written description to ensure that an employee is not confused about what and how to improve (Winlock Valley School District uses a Checklist/Rating Model).

This component also includes samples of Professional Growth models, samples of planning worksheets, and timelines.

The fourth component, the Proficiency Criteria Bank, addresses the question, “What is good performance and how do I recognize it?” The criteria referenced in law (legislated in the 1970s) is still the basis today for classroom teacher evaluation. However, some districts have rewritten their performance indicators to better reflect current classroom teaching and learning expectations. An extensive and varied collection of possible indicators is provided for each criteria. These lists allow you to quickly review the many options for specifying and describing the language for each evaluative criteria (so you need not reinvent the wheel!)
Examples of optional criteria and indicators (e.g., Communication with Parents, Technology) are included as well as criteria for evaluating general certificated support staff.

Many districts utilize other forms of data collection to assist them in the overall evaluation process. An especially useful “Classroom Observation Data Collection” tool, developed by Chris Beals of Enumclaw, is found in the Toolkit in its entirety. These data collection tools can be used collaboratively with teachers and principals in goal setting, developing action plans, observing and conferencing for continuous growth, and in preparing the final evaluation.

The fifth component, Managing the Process, provides suggestions and strategies from practicing administrators in the form of “Tips from the Field.” Carol Whitehead, now Superintendent in the Everett School District, offers wisdom and advice with “A Dozen Ways to Avoid Pitfalls in the Supervisory Process.” A collection of reflection and self-assessment tools, pre-conferencing techniques and models, and samples of pre-observation forms and worksheets from the Bethel, Ferndale, and Edmonds School Districts are shared. The Monroe and Issaquah districts have examined how the roles and responsibilities in evaluation have changed over the past years.

Surely no resource guide is complete without an Appendix — the final component of the Toolkit — and thus supports the question, “What help is available?” A wealth of research, articles, and other literature abound on the topic of supervision and evaluation in an era of education reform. The Toolkit supports committee and staff discussions with selected articles for reading and an extensive bibliography.

The appendix also includes other resources — people, organizations, web sites, consultants, trainers and legal expertise — for support to districts.

Conclusions/Observations

In the course of collecting and analyzing documents and materials shared by districts from around the state, our committee gained certain observations about aligning evaluation with education reform. It is apparent that many districts have been heavily influenced by Charlotte Danielson’s work, Enhancing Professional Practice, A Framework for Teaching. Districts are using Danielson’s developmental model to create tools and models which reflect the belief that all learning is developmental in nature. Districts also tend to design their evaluation model and format to closely align with what teachers are doing in their classrooms: seeking feedback; describing “good” versus “outstanding” performance in detail; and using “rubrics” to provide clearer detail about performance.

Education reform is asking teachers and administrators to change some of their practices. The pressure and demand for higher standards and achievement is being felt in every community and classroom. At this juncture (seven years and progressing), districts must examine their evaluation processes and tools to ensure that the goals and intent of Washington’s education reform is actualized in every classroom.

The evaluation process is a vital link in ensuring that teachers and administrators have the skills, tools, and support to do their job. The value of committing time, training, and resources to this process cannot be minimized. This investment will effectively influence and guide evaluation throughout your district at all levels. By sharing our collective knowledge, wisdom, and materials, we can do this work more effectively. The Toolkit hits the target and offers a valuable resource to assist districts on their journey to improving learning for all children.

(For more information about the Toolkit, please contact Joann Mychals at 1-800-859-9272.)