

LEAGUE OF SMALL DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

A program of the
Institute for Educational Inquiry
John I. Goodlad, President
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Announcement of League Formation and Initial Meeting

Fourteen Schools Selected

A news release is being sent to local and national media indicating selection of 14 schools as charter members of the League. A draft of the national version of the release is included with this message.

First Meeting

The first meeting of representatives from each of the schools in the League will be held in Seattle at the IEI on September 23-26. The session will begin at 3:30 pm on the 23rd and conclude around 11 am on the 26th.

Each school is to send one representative to this first meeting which will include (1) sharing of information among the schools, (2) backgrounding on the Agenda for Education in a Democracy and on this League, (3) planning of school visits by IEI staff and consultants, and (4) planning for other activities during the year including cross-site visits and regional cluster meetings.

Ideally the person attending the meeting will be the same one who attends the second meeting on a date in the spring that will be set during this September meeting.

The Institute will reimburse participants in the September meeting for approved expenses. As soon as a school has selected its representative, the school should notify Dick Clark at rwcuw@msn.com. This notification should include title, email and snail mail addresses, and a phone number that can be used to contact the person. We will then provide information to the representative regarding lodging and travel arrangements.

Meanwhile for those coming by air, there are some excellent fares out there right now and you are encouraged to make reservations for the representatives as soon as possible. We expect that all of you flying in will be able to arrange for tickets under \$500. If that is a problem please notify us immediately so we can work with you to get the best possible rates.

Reminder

We have requested each school selected to provide us with additional information including names of local media contacts, school board chairpersons, and superintendents. Because we need that information to make sure the selected schools get attention, we need you to forward that information if you have not already done so. If the original request letter got misplaced during the summer, please let us know and we will send you a new copy.

Fourteen Schools Selected as Charter Member of League of Small Democratic Schools

John I. Goodlad and his Seattle-based Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI) announce the selection of fourteen schools as charter members of the League of Small Democratic Schools. Schools were selected to participate in the League because of their commitment to preparing students to be productive members of our democratic society and because they possess the following characteristics:

- **Democratic purpose:** Members of the school community believe the primary purpose of schooling is to develop in young people the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they require for successful participation in our nation's social and political democracy. These are "schools that dare to make a better society," and they have a definite view of what that society should be. They share a commitment to the mission of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy.
- **Student achievement:** Students in such schools are successful academically and socially. Multiple measures of such success are used with portfolios, exhibitions, demonstrations, and other comprehensive assessments joining teacher-administered and externally-prepared tests as ways of assessing achievement. Frequently, follow-up studies reveal continuing success by those who have completed their study at the school. Mastery of learning, not sorting or ranking of students, dominates assessment practices.
- **Ongoing professional development:** All members of the school community engage in continuous learning. The school community has both a capacity and a commitment to improvement—one in which the members have the ability to engage in civil discourse, to take risks, to critically examine different points of view. Outside partnerships (with universities, businesses, and other agencies) strengthen the work of the school community.
- **Approaches to learning:** There are many opportunities for students to interact with each other and with adults in different roles. Students experience continuity and diversity in relationships with adults. The grade/age

configuration of the school is not important, but it operates in a way that is appropriate for students of different developmental stages. Strategies that leave a student with the same core teacher are all right if the structure also ensures students are engaged with other teachers. Team teaching, including approaches that involve preservice teachers and/or parents are among strategies favored. These schools commonly use multi-age groupings of students. They encourage learning that takes place outside the boundaries of the school campus. These schools engage students with parents and other adults within the community.

- **Small size:** The school is small—small enough that faculty members can gather as a group for dialogue. There are a small number of student contacts for each teacher and small advising groups to ensure that each student is well known by an adult. In general, the basic instructional unit is no more than 300 to 350 students. (There may be several such units on a single campus.)
- **Governance:** These schools operate relatively autonomously within the larger systems of which they are a part. Such schools are often schools of choice—schools chosen by parents and/or students and schools in which faculty exercise considerable discretion regarding instructional practices and curriculum. The schools may be neighborhood public schools, magnet schools, charter schools, or private schools, but all take seriously their commitment to the public purposes of schooling. They are inclusive (not selective) and aggressively strive for a diverse student population.

The initial fourteen schools are located in two geographic clusters: Northwest and Rocky Mountain/Plains. Charter members of the League are listed below. Eventually, the League hopes to add Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Pacific Rim clusters. The geographic clustering of the schools will enable regional as well as national activities for the League.

The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations have provided a modest grant to the Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI) to support the creation of the League.

The activities for the League begin in the fall of 2004 with a leadership seminar September 23-26 at the Institute for Educational Inquiry. During the year IEI staff will visit schools to provide support to the faculty and administration. In the spring there will be an additional seminar in Seattle, and a regional meeting for teams from the selected schools. Each of the schools will also be provided with books and other reading materials to help educators in the school gain in their understanding of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. A summary of the Agenda is attached.

Charter Members of the League of Small Democratic Schools

Rocky Mountain/Plains States Region

Eagle Rock High School and Professional Development Center
Estes Park, Colorado

Lab School for Creative Learning (K-6)
Fort Collins, Colorado

Meeteetse School, (K-12)
Meeteetse Wyoming

New Vista High School
Boulder Colorado

Odyssey School (K-8)
Denver, Colorado

University of Wyoming Lab School (Middle School)
Laramie, Wyoming

Velma Linford Elementary (K-6)
Laramie, Wyoming

Wakefield Community School (K-6)
Wakefield, Nebraska

Wakefield Community School (7-12)
Wakefield, Nebraska

Northwest Region

Friday Harbor High School
Friday Harbor, Washington

Lewis and Clark High School
Vancouver, Washington

Lincoln Elementary
Olympia, Washington

Westside Village Magnet School
Bend, Oregon

Whatcom Day Academy
Bellingham, Washington

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AGENDA FOR EDUCATION IN A DEMOCRACY

The Agenda consists of a four-part mission, a set of strategies, and conditions that are necessary to carry out the strategies.

The agenda is mission-driven, research-based, and seeks to

1. Foster in the nation's young the skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary for effective participation in a social and political democracy.
2. Ensure that all youth have access to those understandings and skills required for satisfying and responsible lives regardless of race, religion, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or birth-language.
3. Develop and provide continuing support to educators who nurture the learning and well-being of every student.
4. Ensure educator's competence and commitment to serving as stewards of their schools.

To carry out this mission, we seek simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators. We work to develop a broad base of well educated leaders. We emphasize reflective practice and inquiry, stressing the value of educators learning from each other and from those who share their commitment to the education of the nation's young. These strategies are carried out with recognition of conditions needed for continuing renewal of education.

John I. Goodlad's Institute for Educational Inquiry (a Seattle-based non-profit), the Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington, and the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) are the primary agencies that implement the Agenda. The NNER currently involves school-university partnerships in 40 sites, located in 23 member settings, in 20 states.

For more information about the Agenda consult <http://depts.washington.edu/cedren>