



LSDS NOTES

Small is Beautiful

Dick Clark

A small school, John Goodlad has suggested, is one in which the faculty can gather around a single table.

Ted Sizer offers the following, “nonnegotiable design principles.” “[T]he school is small enough so that all the teachers know each other, that most teachers know most of the students and their families, and that the regimen is flexible enough to accommodate the ever-shifting needs of particular students. (*The Red Pencil*, p. 50)

When the teachers and other staff at the Westside Village school gather around a table for a Monday afternoon study session, they take advantage of their deep knowledge of each student to build strong programs.



Bend, Oregon's Westside Village Magnet School teachers and associates gather for one of their Monday study sessions.

Eagle Rock Emphasizes Student Voice

Lois Easton

As one of the members of the League, Eagle Rock demonstrates its commitment to the Agenda for Education in a Democracy in a variety of ways, with particular emphasis on the development of voice in

writing and speaking. Voice is essential to a democracy. At Eagle Rock, voice represents much more than an antidote to anonymity. It represents power to students who have felt powerless in other educational settings. It

represents responsibility to students who have not felt responsible for their own education (and the education of others). It represents authority for what has felt out of students' control: their own education.

League of Small
Democratic Schools Notes

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Agenda for Education in a Democracy

Mission:

- **Preparing the Young for Democracy**
- **Providing Access to Knowledge**
- **Practicing Nurturing Pedagogy**
- **Exercising Moral Stewardship**

Strategy:

- **Simultaneous Renewal**
- **Dialogue, Decision, Action, Evaluation**

Conditions:

- **Leadership**
- **Resources**
- **Connection with Ecology of Schooling**

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Eagle Rock *continued from page 1*

By design, Eagle Rock provides several ways that students and staff members can have voice.

Through choice-making. As is the case with many of the schools in the new League, students choose to come to Eagle Rock and choose to

and run a Peace Mediation process. Similar processes can be found in both elementary and secondary schools elsewhere in the League. Eagle Rock students also attend staff meetings where they have a voice in how the school is run. They run most

upon their own learning styles. They document their learning through creative, individually designed exhibitions and demonstrations; three times a year, and when they graduate, they create public presentations of learning that attest to their academic and per-



stay. They choose when to graduate (Eagle Rock's is not a time-based system). They choose courses that help them graduate (much as they would if in college). They choose how to learn and how to document their learning in these classes.

Through mechanisms that create a democratic culture. Again, as is the case with other schools in the League, Eagle Rock operates on a proposal system. Anyone may write and present a proposal. The whole community (students and staff) debate and work on making proposals acceptable to all. Regular all-community meetings (morning Gatherings, for example) bring everyone together daily. Staff create agendas for staff meetings. There are no grades—such as sophomore or senior—that create a hierarchy among students.

Through leadership expectations. Students meet in Peer Council to determine consequences of many minor infractions, have a say in consequences related to major infractions,

of the activities on campus by serving as House (Dormitory) Leaders or KP Leaders or by participating in an Intramural or Morning Exercise Committee, for example. They participate in the hiring process for staff members. They engage with prospective students as mentors and make recommendations about prospective individuals' readiness to come to Eagle Rock. They also help with decisions related to Second Chance, whereby a student who has left Eagle Rock petitions to return.

Through program (curriculum, instruction, and assessment). Everyone at Eagle Rock is a learner (which is why Eagle Rock is both a school and a professional development center for adults). Everyone is also a teacher (which is why students suggest classes and co-teach with instructors). Eagle Rock is a purposefully diverse community, enriched by the wide variety of experiences, skills, and intellect that student and staff bring to the mountains of Colorado. Students are encouraged to discover and build-

sonal growth.

Students know how to graduate from Eagle Rock. They know the curriculum requirements (standards or competencies) and how to demonstrate them through engaging classes that are, in fact, just vehicles for learning, not Eagle Rock's unit of credit. They know what "mastery" looks like (through rubrics) and have some say in creating rubrics. They know that they are expected to find their own meaning in curriculum. They also know that there's no failure (they simply are not ready—yet—to demonstrate mastery), no "markers" such as GPA or class rank that stay with them forever because there are no grades.



Charter Members of LSDS

Fourteen schools have been named as charter members of the League of Small Democratic Schools. The group includes schools in rural, urban, and small cities. Some of the schools are private, one is a charter school, most are public schools of choice, a couple are regular neighborhood schools. Six schools include high school students, and three others include middle school age youngsters. Five serve only elementary age children. Five states are represented in the two regions.

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

Linford Elementary
Laramie, Wyoming

Meeteetse School, (K-12)
Meeteetse, Wyoming

New Vista High School
Boulder, Colorado

The Odyssey School (K-8)
Denver, Colorado

University of Wyoming Lab School (K-9)
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 Options (Elementary)
Olympia, Washington

Westside Village Magnet School
Bend, Oregon

Whatcom Day Academy
Bellingham, Washington

Meeteetse School Remembers 9/11

Meeteetse is a small community of 351 but many graduates are serving in military units as the nation continues the war on terrorism. On September 10, 2004 local heroes and those serving abroad were on everyone's mind as kindergarten through high school



Primary students sing their country's praises.

students participated in a special assembly.

Advanced classes reported on statistics of the continuing fight, young children led singing, and the events of 9/11 were described in detail.



Local heroes were honored at the Assembly.

League of Small Democratic Schools Notes

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Agenda for Education in a Social and Political Democracy



Common Characteristics of LSDS Schools

- **Democratic purpose:** LSDS schools believe the primary purpose of schooling is to develop in young people the knowledge, skills, and dispositions students require for successful participation in our nation's social and political democracy.
- **Student achievement:** Students in such schools are successful academically and socially.
- **Ongoing professional development:** All members of the school community engage in continuous learning.
- **Approaches to learning:** These are schools that use a wide variety of approaches to learning including engaging students with parents and other adults within the community.
- **Small size:** They are small schools—small enough so that faculty members can gather as a group for dialogue.
- **Governance:** These schools operate relatively autonomously within the larger systems of which they are a part. Whether public or private, charter or neighborhood school, all serve a broad spectrum of students.

Dates Set for 2005 Meetings

Representatives of all LSDS schools will meet in Seattle at the Institute for Educational Inquiry on March 17-20, 2005.

That meeting will begin around 3:00 p.m. on March 17 and will end by around 10:00 a.m. on March 20.

Several schools have expressed an interest in bringing a second person to that meeting at their expense.

Those wishing to do so must notify the Institute by no later than November 1, 2004.



Meanwhile dates have been set for teams from participating schools to attend one of two regional meetings:

The **Northwest** regional meeting will be May 12-15, 2005. *The place for that meeting still has not been decided.*

The **Rocky Mountain/Plains** regional meeting will be June 15-17, 2005 at Eagle Rock. That meeting will begin at noon on June 15 and will end at noon on June 17. (*Note: to accomplish the work which we hope can be accomplished during the regional meeting, it may be necessary to stretch into the evening on both the 15th and 16th.*)
