



LSDS NOTES

Partners Necessary — Role Needs Clarifying

In creating the League, it was determined that each school should work with a partner — a higher education institution or other agency that could help them with their ongoing school renewal work.

During the first few months of the League, schools and partners have been unclear about the role of the partner.

Initial visits with schools have identified some positive partnership work. At the University Lab School in Laramie, K-9 students frequently interact with students from the College of Education. As many as 500 college students are involved with the Lab School annually. Most Lab School teachers have student teachers. Lab School students tell us that the college students add variety to learning experiences and have many creative ideas.

While not all schools have such ready access to college students, others report involvement with teacher candidates.

At Whatcom Day School, for instance, the principal reports that “we have had practicum students here from Western’s teacher ed program:

a cluster of four or five, one whole day a week for a term. We also sometimes have classes come to do a specific project. We also have a work-study student here from Whatcom community College. She wants to go into their Early Childhood Program and is getting some experience. We are reimbursed for 75% of her wages. She helps out in the preschool classes and is available to fill in if someone is sick.”

In addition, the principal says they have many other volunteers and student helpers.

The presence of prospective teachers and volunteers is one way in which schools benefit from partnering with a university. However, there are other possibilities.

University faculty, grounded in the latest in educational research:

- help school renewal by asking hard questions of school staff
- help school staff evaluate programs and learning materials
- Work with school and

university educators to define new curricula

- work with school faculty to determine whether challenged practices should be continued

While there are many ways in which the “partner” can help the school, the relationship must be mutually beneficial if it is to be a true partnership.

Besides placement opportunities for college students, partners benefit when they:

- conduct research in the school
- learn instructional practices from effective school-based teachers
- gain opportunities to serve the broader community of which they are a part

To obtain these mutual benefits, the school and partner institution must engage in frequent and thoughtful conversation. We look forward to learning more about how LSDS schools are working with their partners. ◇

League of Small Democratic Schools Notes

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If you have items to submit for future newsletters—please email them to Dick Clark at rwcuw@msn.com

Young & Old at Wakefield Learn About Their Government

Bush wins again

At Wakefield Elementary, Mrs. Muller's kindergarten class held their own presidential election on election day, November 2. These young students have been learning about citizenship and discovering that they are citizens of many places, such as their country, state, and town.



The kids' election included a clerk, who made sure that voters were registered as part of the class and watched them sign their names correctly on a piece of paper. They then took their ballots to a secret place and voted for either John Kerry or George Bush. A judge sat at the ballot box to ensure that all the ballots were legal.

The kids said it was fun to watch the other students tally the results. The students took their responsibility for the citizenship activity so seriously that they marked each ballot as they tallied so they did not count the ballots twice. Their election results were Bush with 11 votes and Kerry with 4 votes. ◇

Government Day

On October 28, Wakefield High School's Junior class took a field trip to the Dixon County Court House for Government Day.

There they added to their knowledge about the way each office in the county runs.



Students selected a group they wanted to be in. The groups included County Assessor, County Treasurer, Clerk of District Court, County Sheriff, County Attorney, County AG Agent, County Clerk, Weed Control, County Judge, County Vet Officer, County Supervisor, and Director of FSA.

The Junior classes from Wakefield were joined by students from nearby Ponca, Allen, Emerson-Hubbard, and Newcastle for this educational and fun event. Each group rotated and learned what each office in the county does. The Junior class reports that they gained a lot of knowledge and had a lot of fun. ◇

By
Karissa Meyer
November 15, 2004

REFLECTION FOR LSDS:

In October and November Wakefield students, like those in many other schools in the nation, cast straw ballots for their choice among the Presidential candidates. When advised on the school's web site of the outcome of the high school balloting, which strongly favored President Bush, one student responded, "Well, this is no surprise to me. The majority of the population out here is Republican/ Conservative as opposed to Democrat/Liberal."

A question for all to consider is

whether mock elections encourage students to think about our government or, as the Wakefield student's comment suggests, merely reflect the bias of the community in which they reside.

Another question is whether activities such as mock elections and government days such as the one described elsewhere on this page lead to better understanding of our democratic system or are seen by students simply as a welcome break in the routine of normal classroom activity.

Write to rwcuw@msn.com and let us know what your answers are to these questions.

TWO APPROACHES TO SECONDARY SCHOOLING—

Neither emphasizes preparation for participation in a democratic society

We are used to seeing photos of Prime Minister Tony Blair and President George W. Bush as they work together on critical world issues such as the conflict in Iraq. As we look forward to the next four years of the Bush administration, it is interesting to note the differences in how the two governments approach the common problem of strengthening education for secondary students.

Secondary Education Changes Proposed by Tony Blair's Government in Great Britain

The recently issued "Tomlinson Report" proposes a radical restructuring of education of secondary students in Great Britain. Among the key features of the proposed ten-year reform effort are the following.

All students ages 14 to 19 would work for a diploma established at four levels: entry, foundation, intermediate, and advanced. The diploma would not be based on coursework, but on a single extended project. There would be some hands-on courses in areas such as art and design that would feature project-based work.

Schooling for 14- to 19-year olds would provide for the students to progress at their own rate in mixed-age classes. Advanced level students would be encouraged to take exams with extra-hard questions, but the total number of exams required of pupils would be slashed.

The "core," which all pupils would have to complete to pass the diploma, would be made up of "functional" mathematics, information technology and communication skills, and would include a focus on an

extended essay, and "wider activities" such as work experience, paid jobs, voluntary work and family responsibilities.

Under the proposed reforms, students could pick their own combination of areas to study (open diploma) or opt for one of the 20 pre-designed combinations (specialized diploma) that would give stronger and more respected vocational qualifications.

"Graduates" earning the diploma would be given a transcript of their achievements, including a breakdown of individual module marks, which would be available to employers and universities online.

(EducationGuardian.co.uk © Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004, October 18, 2004 online at <http://education.guardian.co.uk/1419education/story/0,15147,1330075,00.html>)

Instead of slashing exams as is proposed in Great Britain, President Bush is expected to emphasize more testing during his second term as he places a greater emphasis on reforming high schools.

President Bush's Plans for Secondary Education During His Second Term

Instead of slashing exams, as is proposed in Great Britain, President Bush is expected to emphasize more testing during his second term as he places a greater emphasis on reforming high schools. One source offers the following summary of the new plans:

"Would expand assessment of high school students with tests required each year in grades 9 to 11. He would require states to take part in the 12th grade National Assessment of

Educational Progress. He calls for expanding the Striving Readers initiative, which he proposed earlier this year [2004] to help struggling middle and high school readers. He wants to provide \$200 million to encourage schools to use 8th grade test data to develop performance plans for entering high schoolers. Mr. Bush seeks to expand aid to make Advanced Placement courses more widely available to low-income students."

In addition, his plans include a "proposed \$120 million increase in fiscal 2006, to \$260 million, for the Mathematics and Science Partnership program. This extra aid would be targeted at increasing high school and math achievement by providing teachers with professional development."

Other plans that would directly impact high schools include making more loans available through an "Enhanced Pell Grant Program" for low-income students who take a rigorous high school curriculum. Also, he wants to create a "\$40 million Adjunct Teacher Corps" to encourage professionals outside of education to teach middle and high school part time. (*Education Week*, November 10, 2004, p. 27)

Governors and state superintendents are announcing similar plans. ♦

What changes would either the Bush or Tomlinson plan require you to make in your school?

Editor: Richard W. Clark
Institute for Educational Inquiry
Phone: 206 325 3010
Fax: 206 325 3012

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.

Is your school responding to the Tsunami disaster? If so, let us know how.

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 pm on the 17th and end by around 10:00 am on the 20th.

Several schools are bringing a second person to that meeting at their expense. Reading selections for the meeting will be in the mail by mid-January.

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



will begin at noon on the 15th and end at noon on the 17th. (Note: to accomplish the work that we hope can be accomplished during the regional meeting, it may be necessary to stretch into the evening on both the 15th and 16th.)

The **Northwest** regional meeting will be in Seattle on May 12-15, 2005.

The **Rocky Mountain/Plains** regional meeting will be June 15-17, 2005 at Eagle Rock. That meeting
