

**PORTRAITS OF SECONDARY PARTNER SCHOOLS
IN THE
NATIONAL NETWORK FOR EDUCATIONAL RENEWAL
1996-1999**

**Reflections on Practice Series no. 3
Center for Educational Renewal
University of Washington**

*Expanded and Updated
June 1999*

Contact Information:

CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL RENEWAL
College of Education
Box 353600
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-3600
(206) 543-6230

WASATCH HIGH SCHOOL
64 East 600 South
Heber City, UT 84032
(435) 654-0640

WASATCH PORTRAIT:

Transforming a School District into a *Community of Learners*

Steve Leatham, Wasatch School District

*If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall
say unto this mountain, be thou removed,
and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be
done; and nothing shall be impossible unto
you.*

The New Testament

*It is like a grain of mustard seed, which
indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it
is grown it is the greatest among herbs,
and becometh a tree, so that the birds of
the air come and lodge in the branches
thereof.*

The New Testament

A Lesson in Geography

It is important to begin this discussion of Wasatch School District's participation in the Brigham Young University-Public School Partnership with a lesson in geography. Two geographic factors conspire to make Wasatch a very unique member of the partnership: location and size. The district is somewhat isolated from the university, and it has by far the smallest student population of the five participating districts.

When Katherine Lee Bates wrote *America the Beautiful*, she must have had Mount Timpanogos in mind. At 11,750 feet, Timpanogos is the second highest peak in Utah's Wasatch Mountain Range. For 50 million years, the mountain has stood forebodingly between the Utah and Heber Valleys. Brigham Young University is located south of Timpanogos in the Utah Valley.

Wasatch County School District is located in the Heber Valley, 30 miles north and east of Brigham Young University on the north side of the mountain.

The Utah and Heber valleys are joined by U.S. Highway 189, a narrow, winding road marked by sharp curves and falling rocks. This small, two-lane highway follows the course of the Provo River as it cuts its way through Provo Canyon from Heber Valley to Utah Lake. The road seems to be under constant construction as it is widened from two lanes to four. For many years, some at BYU thought that U.S. 189 ran in only one direction, from north to south.

Symbolically speaking, Mt. Timpanogos stood for years as a nearly impenetrable barrier between the district and the university, between the public schools and the school of education, between the schoolroom and the college classroom, between theory and practice. Then, in 1984, under the guidance of John I. Goodlad, the Wasatch County School District's Board of Education and superintendent joined with the superintendents and boards of Nebo, Jordan, Provo, and Alpine school districts and the Brigham Young University School of Education to create the BYU-Public School Partnership. The BYU-Public School Partnership was the second of many with which Goodlad was to become involved.

Immediately, Wasatch stood out as the smallest district in the partnership. Jordan, Utah's largest school district, has a student population twenty times greater than that of Wasatch School District. Alpine is twelve times larger, Nebo six, and Provo almost four times larger than Wasatch. One third of all

the elementary and secondary students in Utah are enrolled in the five partner districts.

Though seated at the table as an equal partner from the beginning, size has been a limiting factor in Wasatch District's ability to fully participate in school-university partnership activities. Except for a couple of minor ventures in gifted and talented programs and the preparation of school principals, the district lacked either the personnel or the resources to participate in all partnership programs. Compounding the problem is Wasatch's distance from BYU. Provo, Nebo, and Alpine Districts are all within a ten-mile radius of the campus. Jordan District is about the same distance from BYU as Wasatch but is connected to the university by Interstate 15.

Diverse, seemingly unrelated elements sometimes unite to promote and stimulate greater partnership growth and development. In the fall of 1996, a number of factors combined to change the manner in which Wasatch County School District connected with its public school and university partners. A new superintendent was hired by the Board of Education. A District Director of Programs position was created. Construction on Interstate 15 made travel from BYU to Jordan District hazardous and a road widening project on a 2 ½-mile stretch of U.S. 189 enhanced travel through Provo Canyon. With travel to the schools in Jordan District now more difficult than to those in Wasatch, the university began to look less apprehensively at the district's distance from campus. Taken separately, these events have little meaning; linked together at an auspicious time, they formed an explosive catalyst projecting Wasatch more deeply into partnership business.

A New Beginning

Superintendent Danny Talbot came to Wasatch School District in the summer of 1996 with a broad knowledge of reforms calling for improvements in teaching and teacher education. Previous experience with

the Holmes Group as a principal and district administrator underlined the importance the superintendent placed on collaboration between school and university partners. One of his first acts was the appointment of a director of programs who was given the charge of re-examining Wasatch School District's role in the BYU - Public School Partnership.

The programs director was named to the university's Leadership Associates' Program in August 1996. Based on the Institute for Educational Inquiry's intensive leadership development program, the BYU Leadership Associates included classroom teachers, professors from the arts and sciences, principals, professors of education, district administrators and educators from the Utah State Office of Education. The agenda of the Associates' Program was and remains the simultaneous renewal of schooling and the education of educators.

The 1996-97 BYU Associates cohort was directed by Kathleen Hughes, executive director of the Center for Improvement of Teacher Education and Schooling (CITES). The group of twenty-one educators engaged in seminars, conversations, and workshops for five two-day and four one-day sessions over the course of the school year. Themes of the sessions focused on the four topics central to the purpose of teaching young people their moral and intellectual responsibilities for living and working in a democracy:

- Encultuating the Young in a Democracy
- Access to Knowledge
- Pedagogical Nurturing
- Stewardship of Schools in Educative Communities

An expectation of graduates of the Associates' Program is that they will serve as leaders of the work in their own settings. Dr. Martin Kokol, professor of education in the McKay School of Education, and Steve Leatham, the Wasatch School District's director of programs, worked together as associates in the BYU program. Dr. Kokol and Mr. Leatham discussed the feasibility of

replicating the Associates' Program in Wasatch School District during the 1997-98 school year. Both agreed that the time was right to create a Wasatch Associates' Program.

Divine Inspiration or Serendipitous Discovery

Goodlad aptly describes the collaboration of school and university educators as, "*a murky journey through unmapped territory to be undertaken by travelers not accustomed to talking let alone working together.*"

Lesson 6 of Kenneth Sirotnik's guidelines governing school-university partnerships asserts:

Lesson 6: Living with Goal-Free Planning, Action, and Evaluation . . .

*."The world of human activity in and between educational organizations does not lend itself well to concrete, sequential models of planning and evaluation. Often, in fact, it is precisely as a result of activity that we become clearer about what we are doing and why we are doing it."*¹

More fitting descriptions could not be found of the Wasatch Associates proposal presented to Dean Robert Patterson of the McKay School of Education; Winn Egan, chair of the Teacher Education Department; associate deans from the arts and sciences; the executive director of CITES; and administrators from the five partner districts at a meeting in June 1997. Wasatch School District proposed selecting a cohort group of twenty-four people to participate in a year-long professional development program. The Wasatch Associates would be made up of eighteen secondary teachers, four university professors from BYU, one representative from the State Office of Education, and a district facilitator.

The eighteen secondary teachers would come from Wasatch Middle School and Wasatch High School. Nine teachers would be chosen from each school. A cohort group

of eighteen student teachers from BYU would join the program in January and remain in the district until the end of the school year. The BYU student teachers' supervisor, Martin Kokol, would act as co-facilitator of the Wasatch Associates' Program.

The Wasatch District teachers would be assigned as cooperating teachers for the BYU student teacher cohort. Half of the student teachers would be assigned to Wasatch Middle School and half to Wasatch High School. The two student teacher groups were to switch schools after one quarter of instruction. Those assigned to the high school for third quarter would be assigned to the middle school for fourth quarter, and those at the middle school would move to the high school to finish the school year. Each of the eighteen mentor teachers would supervise two student teachers, and the eighteen student teachers would have a middle school and high school experience.

The purpose of the Wasatch Associates' Program was to meet the BYU-Public School Partnership's goal of simultaneous school renewal and improvement of teacher education. The Wasatch Associates would spend the first part of the school year working directly with the BYU School of Education in setting up a program that would provide the BYU student teachers with a meaningful and professional student teaching experience. The BYU student teachers would provide the Wasatch District teachers time for a professional renewal opportunity during the second semester.

The cohort group of student teachers would lend consistency of instruction to the program as they carried on the daily lesson plans of the cooperating teachers while they were away at Associates activities. The students of the district would benefit from this arrangement because they would not suffer the interruption to their learning that they would if substitute teachers came into their classrooms. The cooperative instruction made possible by the use of student teachers would provide the mentor teachers an opportunity to plan and discuss better methods of preparing the preservice teachers.

Wasatch School District would give each of the student teachers a \$425 tuition credit and a \$125 mileage stipend upon successful completion of the student teaching experience. This money would normally have gone to district substitute teachers who would replace the Associates during in-service endeavors. Student teachers completing this program would receive consideration for jobs opening within the district.

Mentor and student teachers would be drawn from a wide variety of subject areas, including social studies, English, math, business, foreign language, science, and physical education. The district pledged to select its finest mentor teachers in these areas. The student teacher and mentor teacher would spend a considerable amount of time team teaching and preparing the public school students for a smooth transition from mentor teacher to student teacher.

All those present at the June 1997 meeting were clearly supportive of the Wasatch proposal and unanimously approved the concept of the plan. No one spoke negatively of the ideas proposed or questioned whether the scheme would work. To the contrary, there was great enthusiasm for Wasatch's renewed involvement in the partnership. Consent to move ahead with the proposition was implied as no misgivings were expressed by any members of the gathering.

Kenneth Sirotnik cautions that the creation and refinement of partner schools is *"mostly a two-steps-forward/one-step-backward kind of activity."*² Michael Fullan describes the complex changes that must take place in more chaotic terms:

Productive educational change roams somewhere between over-control and chaos. . . . the change process is uncontrollably complex, and in many circumstances 'unknowable.'

Take any educational policy or problem and start listing all the forces that could figure in the solution and that would need to be influenced to

make for productive change. Then, take the idea that unplanned factors are inevitable. Finally, realize that every new variable that enters the equation — those unpredictable but inevitable noise factors — produce ten other ramifications, which in turn produces tens of other reactions and on and on.

No one could possibly come to figure out all these interactions.³

The Wasatch Associates

Superintendent Talbot and the Wasatch County School District Board of Education entered into the Associates project under two conditions. First, the program was to interrupt student learning as little as possible. Second, in order to ensure the success of the program, only the best mentor teachers would be selected to participate.

The selection of teachers for the Wasatch Associates' cohort began in early August 1997. The principals at the high school and the middle school were asked to submit the names of nominees to the superintendent and director of programs. Based on the criteria listed in the plan and with the admonitions of the Board of Education in mind, eighteen teachers were chosen to participate in the effort before school started on August 25.

This was a unique departure from the way cooperating teachers are normally chosen. In most cases, the university notifies the district of the student teachers it needs to place. Mentor teachers in the corresponding subject matter areas are then selected by the public schools. In this instance, the reverse was true — the school district selected its best cooperating teachers and then asked the university to provide it with student teachers prepared in the appropriate disciplines.

Superintendent Talbot officially notified the teachers of their selection as an Associate by letter and asked them to attend an orientation meeting on August 22. Seventeen of the teachers contacted responded to the

superintendent's invitation. The eighteenth choose not to take part in the program and was later replaced. No pressure was applied to mandate teacher participation. Teachers were asked to join voluntarily.

Superintendent Talbot and the facilitators of the program, Martin Kokol and Steve Leatham, conducted the introductory meeting. The expectations and benefits of participating in the program were clearly outlined. Those teachers chosen to participate in the Wasatch Associates' Program were expected to:

- Attend 4 one-day and 5 two-day off campus program sessions.
- Complete the required readings and assignments.
- Supervise two student teachers during the second semester.
- Complete a teacher training and evaluation inquiry project.
- Attend second semester cooperative teacher meetings.
- Prepare and present a one-hour lesson to the student teacher cohort.

Participation in the Wasatch Associates' Program provided teachers with the opportunity to:

- Network with BYU-Public School Partnership educators.
- Reflect on the nature of teaching and learning.
- Share in discussion, study, and activities with professional colleagues.
- Help student teachers acquire appropriate skills, knowledge, and concepts.
- Participate in the redesign of the secondary teacher education program.
- Enjoy social and professional development activities.
- Work with a third- and fourth-quarter student teacher.
- Develop a districtwide teacher renewal center.
- Visit programs of educators with a similar commitment to education.

- Get involved in updating district teacher evaluation plans.
- Prepare for leadership in Associates' Programs.
- Receive university and district in-service and lane change credit.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the teachers discussed their concerns. Their biggest fear was being away from their classrooms for fourteen days. For several good reasons, all thought student learning would suffer greatly if they were gone that much. Secondary teachers especially worried about having enough time to cover all of their subject matter material during the year. More importantly, these teachers were selected because they were conscientious classroom teachers not known for missing much school. All agreed to enter the program with the assurance that they would be working directly with student teachers who would cover their classes while they were away at Associates' proceedings.

The district was less apprehensive about the fourteen days the teachers would be away from class. Administrators agreed that although it would be disruptive, the potential benefits inherent in the Associates renewal efforts outweighed the teacher's time out of class. Granted, students may not learn as much on the days their teachers are not in school, but the Associates' Program agenda makes them better teachers on the days that they are there, affording a positive net gain in student learning. Research has shown that the most important factor in increasing student achievement is increasing professional development. Professional development is more important to increasing student achievement than either lowering the pupil/teacher ratio or increasing teacher salaries.⁴

The teachers selected to the Wasatch Associates' Program came from Wasatch High School and Wasatch Middle School. Nine teachers were chosen from each building and taught courses in these subject areas:

Wasatch High School Wasatch Middle School

AP English	Eighth Grade English
11th Grade English	7th Grade English
Biological Science	Integrated Science
U.S. History	U.S. History
Economics	Health
Physical Education	Physical Education
Mathematics	Mathematics
Spanish	Spanish
Business	Computer Literacy

A coordinated effort was made during the teacher selection process to pair a high school subject area with one in the middle school, hence facilitating the opportunity for a student teacher to have both a high school and a middle school experience.

Four university professors were invited to join the Wasatch Associates; two from the David O. McKay School of Education and two from the arts and sciences. Only one, Martin Kokol, committed to the program. No one from the Utah State Office of Education accepted the offer to become involved. The Associates numbered twenty, eighteen Wasatch District teachers, the director of programs, and Dr. Kokol.

The Work Begins

With the mentor teachers now in place, the university assured the district that it would coordinate the recruitment of a cohort group of student teachers who were willing to drive to Heber City from January through May. Plans moved ahead for the first Wasatch Associates' activity on September 16, 1997. An outdoor trust building and bonding experience in the Uinta Mountains of northeastern Utah was scheduled. The September meeting was the first of four one-day meetings scheduled for the Associates. The others would take place in October, November, and December. The mentor teachers did not feel comfortable about being

away from their classes two days in a row until the student teachers arrived in January.

Because the BYU student teachers would not be in the district until the beginning of the second semester, substitute teachers had to be located for the first four Associates' meetings. Finding substitutes for 10 percent of the teachers in the school district is just about impossible. The district is lucky to come up with half that many on a good day. A combination of district substitute teachers and students from Dr. Kokol's teaching methods courses covered the mentor teachers' classes for the first four Associates sessions.

Individuals who participate in the Leadership Associates' Program read and discuss ideas related to John Goodlad's four moral dimensions of teaching:

Enculturating the young in the principles of a social and political democracy: The education of the young in what it means to live and work in a democratic society; building a sense of community; the critical need for an educated citizenry.

Access to knowledge for all children: The assurance that all children, regardless of their gender, ability, race, socioeconomic status, or culture have access to educational opportunities.

Nurturing Pedagogy: The art and science of teaching that provides nourishment, support, and encouragement for all children to promote their learning at various stages of development.

Stewardship of schools in an educative community: The need for schools to be places of renewal where all who have interest take part in building the community; the need to create systemic change within the school and university environments.

The Leadership Associates' Program is an integral part of the BYU-Public School Partnership and is used to further the National Network for Educational Renewal's agenda of simultaneously renewing schools and improving teacher education by developing leadership at all levels of education. Participants share in discussion, study and other activities intended to examine and understand the conditions that influence teaching and schooling. Members of the cohort collaborate on ways of achieving school reforms designed to increase student achievement.

Associates complete an extensive reading program, including these books:

- *There Are No Children Here*, Alex Kotlowitz
- *Access to Knowledge*, John I. Goodlad and Pamela Keating, Eds.
- *Making Democracy Work in Modern Italy*, Robert Putman
- *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Ken Sirotnik, Eds.
- *The Right to Learn*, Linda Darling-Hammond
- *Change Forces*, Michael Fullan
- *Reviving Ophelia*, Mary Pipher
- *The Unschooled Mind*, Howard Gardner
- *The Public Purpose of Education and Schooling*, John I. Goodlad and Timothy J. McMannon, Eds.

In addition to the assigned books, several readings from journals and professional magazines are also required. The Leadership Associates' Program provides educators the time needed to have extended conversations about the public purpose of education and the moral responsibilities educators have toward children in our schools.⁵

The Norwegian School of Nature Life conducted the group's first meeting. The Associates participated in outdoor problem solving exercises designed to build trust and confidence among members. Group communication, commitment, and cooperation was emphasized. Subsequent

one-day meetings in October and November involved a trip to Brigham Young University to meet with School of Education dean Robert Patterson and visits to partner schools in Alpine and Provo School Districts. The Associates traveled by school bus and enjoyed lunch together as part of each excursion.

The December Associates' meeting was especially memorable. It was held locally and involved a visit to the Wasatch County Jail. Women from the Utah State Prison are incarcerated there. Teachers held moving conversations with the inmates about school and the role it played in landing them in prison. Inmates fondly recalled teachers who cared about them personally and criticized the system for not dealing more strictly with their delinquent behavior. The jail visit was made more poignant by the month's reading assignment in Mary Pipher's book, *Reviving Ophelia*, and Alex Kotlowitz's *There Are No Children Here*.

A Test of Faith

The first crucial test of faith in the partnership's ability to move the mountain standing between the School of Education and the school district came in January. The university announced that it could not supply student teachers for all of the mentor teachers in the program. Lack of support from the arts and sciences, an integral member of the three-way partnership, had seriously frustrated and handicapped progress of the program. Student teachers could not be found for the physical education, mathematics, Spanish, or business teachers.

What was acceded to by the university in June could not be delivered in January. The district's promise made in August went unfulfilled in January. Credibility with mentor teachers was stretched to the breaking point. Teachers had agreed to enter the program on condition that they would have a student teacher in January. Continuation of the program was earnestly debated in the district.

Sirotnik prophetically warns of these potential partner school-university problems in his planning lessons:

Lesson 1: Dealing with Cultural Clash. School systems and universities are not cut from the same cultural cloth. The norms, roles, and expectations of educators in each of these educational realms could not be more different—e.g., the ethic of inquiry in the university vs. an ethic of action and meeting immediate needs in the schools. . .

These two cultures are quite different, and it is hard to fit them together in productive, long-term, useful ways . . .

Lesson 2: Dealing with Schools of Education. [Of the two sides of the partnership fence], the university side, usually the school (college or department) of education, is the more intractable . . .⁶

After much consternation, thirteen mentor teachers chose to remain Associates. Three of the teachers thought the Associates' Program was important enough that they would continue even though they would not have student teachers. Six high school and seven middle school teachers stayed in the program. Student teachers in English, science, economics, and U.S. History were eventually secured.

The two-day Wasatch Associates' meetings began in late January, but not without further problem. The university's calendar did not match the school district's. Second semester for the university ends in mid-April; the school calendar goes until the end of May. A portion of the student teachers would be in the schools from the first of January through the end of February and another group from the end of February until the middle of April. A compromise was worked out with the student teachers. In order for them to receive the full \$425 tuition stipend, each committed to cover their

mentor teacher's classes for all 5 two-day meetings.

Time to Associate

The two-day meetings were held at the Provo Marriott Hotel. Everyone involved agreed that it was a treat to meet away from the district in such comfortable surroundings. The teachers were very impressed that the district cared enough about them to provide such a wonderful reward for their diligent work. As a special touch, overnight accommodations were made for the educators and their partners at the hotel. Social activities and dinner at some of the area's finer restaurants were also arranged. The group spent one enjoyable evening at a theater production of *Forever Plaid* and ventured 1,500 feet underground on a silver mine adventure on another occasion.

Each of the two-day meetings centered on one of the moral dimensions of teaching. Activities included discussions, simulations, workshops, role plays, problem solving, and reflection on assigned readings. The Associates wrestled with the moral dilemmas posed by many issues over the course of five months. Among them were democracy, multiple intelligences, brain dominance, equality, access to knowledge, nurturing, personality, educational change, curriculum integration, class size, moral intelligence, and board certification, to name a few.

Some of the thoughts expressed by the Associates on the two-day meetings included the following written comments:

"All teachers need some time to associate with their peers in a setting different from the normal day-to-day school activities. It was very beneficial for me to re-evaluate my own reason for teaching and whether it was in the best interest of students."

"I have been given a completely new concept of democracy which I believe will govern the things I do in my classroom and my activities in the 'school community'."

“The information we discussed and the moral issue we role-played gave me insight into some new ideas for my classroom. I especially enjoyed the Jonathan Kozol tape and thought he had some outstanding insights into what education should really be all about.”

“I have pondered my own philosophies the last few days. I am committed to character education as an important part of teaching, but I can also now see a broader importance to it.”

“Grouping plays a vital role in the acquisition of knowledge in my classroom. The model in the article re-emphasized essential elements which have been neglected in classroom conversations. Of great interest to me is the practical application of brain research in class instruction. The more students understand the process of learning, the more effective and lasting will be the learning. The sessions have been inspiring.”

“I really appreciate having the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with other teachers. At school, we are all too busy with our own agendas to really talk together. This is wonderful. The hotel is very nice.”

“As I read some of the selections and listened today, I realized that I have changed over the years from a complete ‘sage on the stage’ to more of a ‘guide on the side.’ However, I need to do more of that. I need to recognize more of the diverse learning styles and involve the students more.”

“I feel these two days were insightful and worth it!”

“What is interesting is that the more I attend these seminars - the more I see what needs to be changed. I appreciate the break and the refueling that the program affords us.”

“This program has been one of the most invigorating experiences I have enjoyed

during my 21-year teaching career. The *Access to Knowledge* and *Change Forces* sessions have been very enlightening to me. I thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to associate with other educators with differing viewpoints and experiences.”

The second semester did not pass entirely problem free. The English student teachers were required by their department to attend classes at the university on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This was a very awkward situation for both the mentor and student teachers. Consistency of instruction is very hard to maintain on an every-other-day basis. Fortunately, this schedule did not last for the entire student teaching period.

Special Projects

In April, one of the most significant happenings of the whole Associates’ venture took place. Over a two-day period, the mentor teachers took turns making one-hour presentations to the entire group of student teachers. The question each addressed was: *Based on your knowledge and experience, what advice would you have for a beginning teacher?* Every presentation was unique. All were stirring, inspiring, emotional, heartfelt, and to the point. Topics covered ranged from classroom discipline to nurturing pedagogy; from getting along with administrators to including all students in each lesson; from burnout to retirement; from extracurricular assignments to moral responsibilities.

Without exception, every student teacher called the two-day seminar the most moving and inspirational experience of their entire teacher preparation program. So moved by the mentor presentations was the district that plans for all of the teachers in the district to hear their message were immediately made.

In her book, *The Right to Learn*, Linda Darling-Hammond talks of what one high school teacher who had spent twenty-five years in the classroom told her: “I have taught 20,000 classes; I have been ‘evaluated’ thirty

times; but I have never seen another teacher teach.”

Fullan also speaks of the isolation in which teachers find themselves:

Teaching has long been called ‘a lonely profession’. The professional isolation of teachers limits access to new ideas and better solutions, drives stress inward to fester and accumulate, fails to recognize and praise success, and permits incompetence to exist and persist to the detriment of students, colleagues, and the teachers themselves.⁷

Many of the teachers in the Associates’ Program echoed these same sentiments. As part of an inquiry project to further investigate the phenomenon, each of the Wasatch Associates shadowed a student through a school day. Every Associate was able to watch six other teachers teach during this study. When it was over, teachers said things such as:

“At the conclusion of the experience, I wondered whether this was a typical day for all students. It is difficult to determine the climate of a typical day by only sampling once. Although the courses were challenging, the environment seemed to engender respect and to motivate students to excel.”

“The student only received personal contact with a teacher twice during the periods that I observed. Both of those contacts were negative, disciplinary actions. Not once was he complimented for anything he did or didn’t do!!!”

“A worthwhile assignment to see student/teacher relationships.”

“I enjoyed this assignment; it was very interesting to see what goes on in other classes. It makes you wonder what is going on in your own classroom. The teachers knew I was there, but some of them didn’t

care, even if they were doing a terrible job.”

“In summary, I was able to see some very good teachers doing their work. We are not doing what is necessary to meet the needs of the student I chose to follow.”

“In conclusion, I felt that the teachers all did a good job, but all could have done more to reach this child. She is one of those students who should pursue higher education but without an advocate she may not do so. She is one of those children who can slip through the cracks. We notice those who obviously need help, but sometimes overlook the good student whose self-motivation may need a boost.”

“Shadowing a student was a very enjoyable and enlightening experience to me. I was really impressed at the level and amount of teaching that is going on in the building. I observed several types of teaching strategies and several types of teaching personalities.”

The largest and most widely ranging project undertaken by the Wasatch Associates involved providing in-service training for all of the district’s teachers at this year’s Opening Day Institute. This idea rose from the one-hour presentations the mentor teachers made to the student teachers and from a passage in one of the readings.

In *The Right to Learn*, Linda Darling-Hammond pretty well described Wasatch School District’s Opening Day Institute when she wrote: *Until recently, many teacher education and ongoing professional development programs separated theory and application almost completely. In-service training programs consisted of large groups of teachers amassed in auditoriums after school for brief encounters with packaged prescriptions offered by outside consultants. Divorced from daily concerns and practice, these hit-and-run events were generally forgotten when the next day’s press of events set in.*

The Associates divided into four groups

based on the curricular themes of the "Moral Dimensions of Teaching." The day was divided into two 90-minute sessions. The first lasted from 9:15 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. and the second from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The district's 190 certificated employees were assigned to attend presentations in two of the four major theme areas. Each of the thirteen Wasatch Associates was responsible for 15 teachers per 90-minute session. The groups of 15 included teachers from five different schools and from grades K-12. In this way, every teacher in the district had an in-depth introduction to at least two of the moral dimensions. Among the teachers assembled were two former student teachers newly hired by the district to teach science and English. Ten of the district's substitute teachers were also included in the seminar.

Though hesitant at first to address their colleagues, the Associates presented what was called by most in attendance the best Opening Day Institute they had ever attended. The session was very positive and set the tone for a great school year. All of the teachers were very appreciative of the opportunity to meet and get to know other teachers in the district with whom they had never had a chance to work. The conversations that took place in each area were very inspiring. Teachers talked to each other, rather than being told by an outside expert how to teach.

The classified employees in the district met together in the afternoon and were introduced to the moral dimensions. Stewardship of Schools in an Educative Community was the theme of this meeting. The need for schools to be places of renewal where all who have interest take part in building the school community was emphasized. Everyone left the gathering with a renewed spirit of cooperation.

In Wasatch School District, teachers are the focus of the district's plan to reform its schools. They are familiar with the challenges and the obstacles of the day-to-day operation of their schools. The district will continue with the school renewal plan it started last year with the Wasatch Associates.

Two follow-up meetings planned with the first group of Associates will address ways to implement the recommendations made in *Breaking Ranks*, the advisory report published by the Carnegie Foundation and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The first meeting has already been held. The teachers have prioritized the *Breaking Ranks* recommendations and are now engaged in action research projects in their classrooms which will lead to school renewal.

The Work Continues

A second group of eighteen Wasatch Associates has been selected; four of them are from Wasatch High School and three from the middle school. These new Associates, combined with the original cohort group of mentor teachers, will help create the critical mass of support needed for the simultaneous renewal of teacher education and schooling. Eleven Associates from the three elementary schools in the district are part of the new cohort. Student teachers will no longer be placed individually with cooperating teachers. They will be nurtured by a cohort group of expert district practitioners. To this end, the district has appointed one of the original Associates as a part-time student teacher facilitator.

Wasatch School District's goal is not to create unrelated partner schools within the district but to become a "*Professional Development District*." In doing so, the district is committed to transforming itself into a "community of learners."

Although school districts have changed some in the last one hundred years, most are still organized like factories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with an assembly line view of the educational process. The structure of today's school system is deeply rooted in this tradition.

Like the early manufacturing industries, school districts developed as specialized organizations run by carefully prescribed procedures. Policies were made at the top of the system and handed down to

administrators who translated them into rules and procedures. The imposition of hierarchical, centralized decision making over matters great and small meant excluding members of the community from decision making. The highly structured, educational bureaucracy created at the turn of the twentieth century stifled creativity and independent judgment.

Wasatch School District is subtly undergoing a revolutionary transformation. The school district is tearing down the outmoded, factory-model, bureaucratic, educational organization and rebuilding a thriving "community of learners."

The school district is becoming a place of renewal where all who have interest take part in building the learning community. There is a new climate of support, combined with a commitment to learning together. The district is dedicated to the collective solving of problems, the sharing of ideas, and working with others. A "community of learners" needs people who can communicate, think, and continue to learn throughout their lives; people who can demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviors, responsibility and adaptability; and people who live in the world of ideas and possibilities.

Wasatch School District's "community of learners" is engaged in discussion, decision, action, and evaluation. It is made up of parents, educators, students, patrons, and citizens with a desire to continue to learn about self, others, and the world. It involves those who see life as an endless quest for knowledge and meaning. The district's ties to the partnership have never been stronger. The size of the district is now viewed as a valuable asset. The mountain is beginning to move; the mustard seed is starting to sprout.

Funding for these programs comes from grants awarded by the Utah State Office of Education, the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations via the Institute for Educational Inquiry, and the BYU-Public School Partnership. Special thanks is given here to Dean Robert Patterson, David O. McKay School of Education, Brigham Young University; James Bergera, executive director,

BYU-Public School Partnership; and Kathy Hughes, executive director, CITES. Without their dedication, the Partnership would diminish in stature. Recognition should also be given to the Wasatch County School District Board of Education and Superintendent Danny Talbot for their continued support of the Partnership and the Wasatch Associates.

Notes

¹John I. Goodlad, *Educational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994) pp. 109, 116.

²*Ibid.*, p. 110.

³Michael Fullan, *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform*, (Philadelphia: The Falmer Press, 1993) p. 19.

⁴Rob Greenwald, Larry V. Hedges, and Richard D. Laine, "The Effect of School Resources on Student Achievement," *Review of Educational Research* 66 (3), pp. 361-396.

⁵A proposal from the Brigham Young University-Public School Partnership to conduct Leadership Associates Programs in each of the five partner school districts to Scott Bean, Superintendent of Public Instruction, May 8, 1997, pps. 1-5.

⁶Goodlad, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-110

⁷Fullan, *op. cit.*, p.30.