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TELLING THE STORIES OF EDUCATION

edutopia

SYSTEMWIDE CHANGE

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HANDS-ON LEARNING: A STUDENT DIRECTS HER CLASSMATE IN A MULTIMEDIA PROJECT ON CAREER PLANNING.

URBAN RENEWAL

The Union City Turnaround

by Diane Curtis

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In 1989, leaders of Union City Public Schools in New Jersey had a choice. They could continue the same unsuccessful programs that had led to the threat of a state takeover for failing 44 of 52 indicators of educational competence. Or, they could retain local control by demonstrating academic progress.

"Our backs were up against the wall. Either we did something different — in my opinion, radically different — or we were going to fail and the state would come in and take over the school district."

—Fred Carrigg, Executive Director for Academic Programs, Union City Public Schools
www.union-city.k12.nj.us

Unlike school districts in nearby Paterson, Jersey City, and Newark, which were taken over by the state and have yet to return to local control, Union City improved and in fact flourished. Fourteen years after that very real takeover threat, schools in Union City are models for reform, and visitors from Chicago to Argentina are replicating its practices.

Measures of Success

Test scores have shot up to the point where they're the highest among New Jersey cities. Eighty percent of the district's students currently meet state standards, up from 30 percent. Attendance at the 11-school, 11,600-student district increased, dropout and absence rates decreased, and students have been clamoring to transfer into Union City schools.

In one seven-year period, passing eighth-grade test scores jumped from 33 to 83 percent in reading, from 42 to 65 percent in writing, and from 50 to 84 percent in mathematics. College-going rates have increased, and the number of Union City graduates accepted at top institutions such as Yale and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology jumped from eight in 1997 to 73 in 2001.

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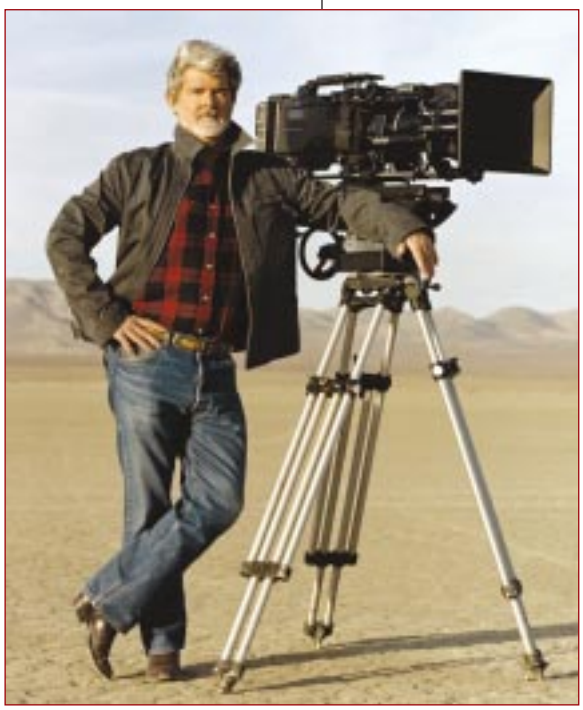
TECHNOLOGY AS A FORCE FOR CHANGE

by George Lucas

Systems are difficult to change, whether they are in health care, education, or my own field of entertainment. Often, history, politics, and bureaucracy create vested interests in keeping things the way they've been. Technology, however, often demonstrates a better, faster way of doing things and, eventually, can lead to transforming systems. It has made obvious improvements in health care and manufacturing. It's also allowed me a freedom and malleability in filmmaking that didn't exist before. Film is a very technical medium, but all arts are technical. Theater, painting, and sculpting are all technical fields, and their technologies — their tools — drive their art forms.

Changing systems can take decades. It also takes leadership from those responsible for systems. I'm pleased that this issue of *Edutopia* celebrates governors, superintendents, school boards, and others who've taken risks and "bucked the system" to set forward-looking policies for our school systems. ■

George Lucas, chairman of the GLEF board of directors, is writing and directing *Episode III* of the *Star Wars* saga, due out in 2005.



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Director George Lucas and the Sony 24p digital camera he used to shoot *Star Wars: Episode II Attack of the Clones.*

SYSTEMS CAN CHANGE

by Milton Chen

Recently, I was part of a discussion where education and foundation leaders expressed their disappointment at the pace and scale of school change. While we could all point to individual classrooms and schools, led by visionary teachers and principals, that are providing a Digital Age education for their students, it was more difficult to identify districts and states creating systemwide change. And, often, these groundbreaking examples were not well known.

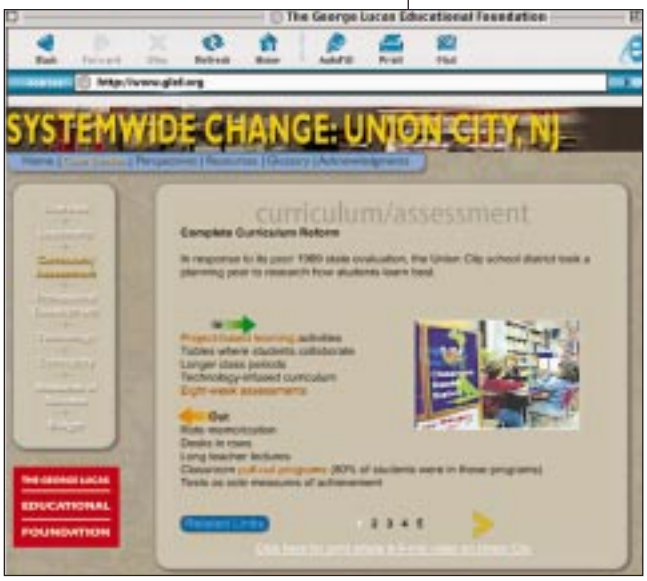
In this issue, we highlight a variety of district and state policies breaking the mold of the traditional classroom. From the inspiring turnaround story in the Union City, New Jersey, schools, where textbook funds were used for technology, to former Governor Angus King's political courage to place laptop computers in the hands of Maine middle school students, state and district leadership is being met with grassroots support from parents and communities.

The common denominator of each of these stories is a clear-eyed vision among educators and policymakers anticipating where schools need to move to prepare today's students for the future. Angus King is fond of quoting hockey star Wayne Gretzky's own reason for his phenomenal success: "Most players skate to where the puck is. I skate to where the puck is going to be."

We'd like to hear from our readers. Please give us your feedback on this issue and share your stories of systemwide change. Send an e-mail to feedback@glef.org ■

Milton Chen, Ph.D., is GLEF's executive director and will be a Visiting Technology Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education this fall.

NEW FEATURES AT www.glef.org



INTERACTIVE FEATURE: SYSTEMWIDE CHANGE

What does it take to transform an under-performing urban school district? This new multimedia case study on the Union City, NJ, Public Schools explores this question in detail. Visit www.glef.org/systemreform/home.html for the full story and for systemwide change resources.

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by Diane Curtis
GLEF Staff Writer

a COMPUTER for every lap

PORTLAND PRESS HERALD

"Why shouldn't Maine be first?"

So asked then-Governor Angus King in 2000 as he proposed that all seventh graders in the state be given laptop computers.

"For more than 100 years," King said, "Maine has always been in the bottom third of states — in prosperity, income, education, and opportunity for our kids. In my 30 years of working on Maine economic issues, no idea has had as much potential for leapfrogging the other states and putting Maine in a position of national leadership than this one — giving our students portable, Internet-ready computers as a basic tool for learning."

Three years later and thousands of miles away from daily politics (King left office in January after serving the maximum two terms), he is even more enthusiastic about the high-tech initiative that took effect last fall and that he predicted would "put Maine on the technological map," produce "the country's most digitally literate teachers and students," and "be the most significant project in the history of the state."

"The results are unbelievable," he said in a phone interview from St. Augustine, Florida, where he was on the first leg of a 5-1/2-month motor home tour around the country. [He and his wife, Mary, are "road schooling" their two children, Ben, 12, and Molly, 9. As well as being an "unwinder" after political life, King says, he and Mary felt the trip was "a great chance to do something important with the kids."]

Reports from nine pilot schools that got the laptops in the spring of 2002, and the rest of the state's seventh graders that got them in fall 2002, indicate positive results. Attendance is up and discipline problems are down at many schools. For example, at Pembroke Elementary School, detentions slid from 28 to three among students who had laptops, suspensions dropped from five to zero, and 91 percent of the students with laptops improved their grades in at least one academic area.

"I have never handed all of my homework in because I always lose stuff," wrote one student in a laptop survey. "Now I hand everything in because it is right there on my laptop." "I spent a lot more time working on my assignments because it was a lot more interesting," wrote another student. "I made honor roll for the first time!"

"The key word is engagement," King says. Engagement plus teacher know-how. The state made professional development for teachers an integral part of the program because, says King, "if you just drop the computers on the kids' desks, it won't work. ... It's a fundamentally different way of teaching. It's not standing up in front of the classroom and lecturing."

The laptop idea took root in the mid-1990s when King invited Seymour Papert, who had been described to King as "this really cool genius," to visit him in Augusta. Papert, who lives in Maine, is an artificial intelligence pioneer who was co-founder of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab and inventor of the LOGO computer language. Papert describes the computer as "the intellectual tool of our time."

After lunch in the governor's mansion, the two sat down for a chat. King observed that the student-to-computer ratio in Maine was 5:1. "What if we could get a bunch of money and make it 2:1? Wouldn't that be cool?" he said to Papert. To the governor's surprise, the MIT scientist said no. "It only turns magic when it's 1:1," replied Papert, a leading expert on how children think and learn.

About three years later, at a National Governors Association conference in Washington, King had a related, "very stark, somewhat scary insight" — that all the governors were working toward the same goals of opportunity and prosperity for their constituents in the same way.

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(Left) Governor Angus King sees his laptop dream become a reality. (Above) All Maine seventh graders received laptop computers in the fall of 2002.

"I suddenly realized if Maine was doing what everyone else was doing, we could never get ahead."

Not long afterward, state auditors reported a surprise $70 million budget surplus, and King was reminded of his conversation and his epiphany. "I said to people in my office and in the Department of Education, 'Look, I'm tired of doing things that are simply incremental. We get a few more dollars, we put a little more into education, we build a few more roads, but nothing changes. What can we do to really make a fundamental change and do something different from what everybody else is doing?'"

With input from Department of Education Commissioner Duke Albanese and others, they decided that Papert had the right idea. Give every kid a computer. Laptops, which didn't take up much room and had the benefit of being portable, seemed the best idea, especially since 40-50 percent of Maine students did not have computers or Internet connections at home.

"I announced it in the winter of 2000 and all hell broke loose," King recalls. The initial proposal was to create a $50 million endowment for the laptops, the interest of which would eventually pay for laptops for Maine students. "Experienced legislators told me it was the most controversial legislation they had ever seen."

The state appropriations committee voted 10-to-1 against King's proposal. E-mail also ran 10-to-1 against.

King made speeches. Apple Computer brought 17 laptops to the Capitol and set up a sample classroom. Kim Quinn, technology coordinator for the Maine Department of Education, created a Battle of Gettysburg Web site with everything from a 360-degree panoramic image of the battlefield to such songs as "Yankee Doodle," "Dixie," and "John Brown's Body." King hit the road, visiting middle schools around the state and going into classrooms to teach about Gettysburg using the Web site and the laptops donated by Apple. "It was a traveling road show," King recalls, and it got plenty of television, radio, and newspaper coverage. Over time, he met with every one of Maine's 186 legislators in groups of five or 10 and made the Gettysburg presentation to them. Papert, other prominent scientists and engineers, and author Stephen King made pitches to lawmakers or appearances at schools. Slowly, an advocacy group of teachers, parents, principals, and community members was growing.

The next boost for the project came when a small rural school district in Guilford decided, with the help of a $100,000 grant from Guilford of Maine, a local textile company, to buy its own laptops. More than half went to eighth graders, and the rest were shared among fifth, sixth, and seventh graders. Students at Guilford took virtual tours of the Louvre, NASA, and Columbus' three ships. They tracked local weather patterns. Their research and data collection were more complete and varied than it had been before. They built portfolios and worked more at their own pace in their own style of learning. And they were more eager to write.

Guilford "was critical because it gave us a test site that we could point to," says King. The proposal was also getting national and international attention, a situation King still can't qualify as a help or a hindrance in winning state support. President Clinton spoke of Maine during a speech on the Digital Divide, calling the laptop proposal "a remarkably good thing."

The governor, an Independent, also used the political strength of his office. The Legislature "had to pass the budget, and the budget required my signature, and this was my price." Lawmakers weren't willing to hand over $50 million, but in April 2000, they did agree to create a Maine Learning Technology Endowment financed with $30 million in surplus funds. By January, the commission had recommended that all seventh and eighth graders receive laptop computers starting in fall 2002. And in August 2002, under a $37.2 million contract with Apple — $25 million from the Legislature, the rest from private donations — 18,000 shiny iBooks with black carrying cases were delivered to schools for 15,000 students and 3,000 teachers.

King estimates that it will cost between $15 and $20 million a year — about 1 percent of the education budget — to put computers in all the middle and high school grades. "When you think of all the money spent in schools and try to determine impact per dollar, this is off the charts," he says. ■

For more information on Maine's laptop program, as well as examples of student work, visit the Maine Learning Technology Initiative site at www.state.me.us/mlte/. Governor King and his family also have a Web site tracking their cross-country trip at www.wheresmolly.com.

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What It Took

A combination of focused leadership, a comprehensive, research-based overhaul of the system, technology, teacher and community input, site-based decision-making, and more (and carefully targeted) money explain the turnaround.

"We really began with trying to determine a philosophy of education for the school system," says Fred Carrigg, executive director for academic programs for the district, and, along with Superintendent Tom Highton, the force

for pushing for profound, teacher-sanctioned changes. "When we looked at what existed, it essentially was four or five sentences that were nothing more than platitudes ... but it had no meat or direction to it."

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Students at an editing station match music to images in a tribute to the firemen of 9/11.

The district gave Carrigg and a group of teachers and administrators a summer to do research — "to find out what the trends were in American education, what people were saying, and to establish a philosophy of education."

To support the vision that emerged — one that put literacy first and embraced rigorous interdisciplinary projects, individual instruction plans, and parental involvement — the district switched to

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No Miracles Here!

by Fred Carrigg and Margaret Honey

Again and again, we have been told that Union City's transformation from failing school district to successful one is nothing short of a "small miracle." Despite how flattering it sounds, we disagree, however. There was no miracle here.

Miracles, like lightning, rarely strike twice. Behind every assertion that Union City's success is a miracle is the notion that the change strategies we practiced are not exportable, replicable, or scalable outside of Union City. Different reasons are cited for this dismissal: the size of the district (12,000), the homogeneity of the population (mostly Latino, though from diverse Latino communities), the implementation of advanced technology by Bell Atlantic (now Verizon), the stable and increased funding from the state. Certainly these factors played a favorable role in the transformation. However, many fundamental changes were institutionalized based on well-known and field-documented educational principles, which can be replicated in other districts.

Three core principles guided us:

1. **All children can learn.** The vast majority of Union City staff believes this, genuinely likes their students, and has respect for Latino culture, the community, and the Spanish language. Since staff believed that the children were not the problem and that they could succeed, this allowed for the fundamental assumptions that we could change and do better to take root. The question became what to do and how.

2. **Substantial reform cannot be imposed from the top down.** The central administration operated with a great respect and appreciation for the teaching faculty and staff, and included them in every aspect of the change process.

3. **Reform models must "fit" the local community.** As we conducted our research on education models in 1989, we realized that no external replacement model, no matter how successful somewhere else, could be superimposed on Union City. It would fail. These models would need to be adapted to our particular population and organizational structures at the district, school, and classroom level.

With these global assumptions in place, changes were made in a series of five-year plans that were annually reviewed, amended, and modified.

The district focused on creating a curriculum — with literacy front and center in our reform efforts — that would support students in moving away from rote learning and toward the development of thinking, reasoning, and collaboration skills. We chose to implement the reforms gradually, beginning in elementary classrooms, and then adding classes each year until reform reached every grade level. This decision meant

(Above) Fred Carrigg looks on, smiling, as students demonstrate their Web sites. (Right) A book report becomes a shared experience in this Union City classroom.

block scheduling, cooperative learning, and eight-week assessments to keep regular track of student progress and to note areas of weaknesses and strengths. Algebra was introduced in eighth grade. Every course had an interdisciplinary theme, which all students worked on, although they might work at different levels. District-paid professional development hinged on substantive instruction, and Union City now boasts one of the largest teacher populations with ESL (English as a Second Language) credentials and Master of Arts degrees. Many teachers were initially reluctant to adopt the changes, but Carrigg says most came around. "When the scores began to go up and things began to change, they came on board."

High Expectations

Another essential ingredient — possibly the most important, according to Carrigg — was higher expectations for a population of mostly poor students from Latino immigrant families, 75 percent of whom did not speak English at home. "Probably the biggest weakness of urban schools is the belief that these kids can't make it and can't succeed," says Carrigg.

"Most of America views certain school districts with little faith and little acknowledgement," agrees Union City graduate Oscar Negroni, who went on to New York University. "But I think that stems from the faculty and administration who have little faith in their students. In Union City, there's a lot of faith. They push us."

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that no student schooled in a reformed learning environment entered a new grade only to face the former method of instruction. It also meant that we were able to take the lessons learned from each successive implementation and apply them toward easing the transition in subsequent years.

In addition to curriculum reforms and incremental scaling, substantial increases in the district's operating budget played a critical role in Union City's efforts. The budget for the Union City School District increased from $37.8 million in 1989 to $128 million in 2001 as a direct result of equitable school funding legislation.

Beginning in 1993, Union City also made a deliberate decision to invest substantially in technology resources. We did this largely out of equity considerations, believing that urban students would once again risk falling drastically behind suburban students if they did not have access to state-of-the-art technological resources. The district built fiber-optic backbones in each of its 11 schools. With a ratio of less than three students per computer, Union City is now one of the most wired urban school districts in the United States, if not the most.

Research conducted by the Education Development Center (EDC) Center for Children and Technology suggests that deep and sustained access to technology has the potential to have a positive impact on both students' learning and on the school community's views of their students' capabilities. But the research also suggests that technology in and of itself, in the absence of other components of school reform, would not produce these kinds of changes. We identified eight key reform strategies integral to the district's success:

- Instructional leadership at the building level.
- Effective school improvement teams.
- Extensive professional development in whole-language teaching approaches and cooperative learning.
- A strong emphasis on student creativity and the expression of ideas in multiple formats.
- An emphasis on providing different points of entry into a task for children working at different ability levels.
- A de-emphasis on remediation and an emphasis on learning for all.
- Establishment of classroom libraries and media-rich classroom environments.
- Multitext approach to learning that includes the integration of technology into instruction.

These strategies are replicable. When anchored in the core principles outlined here, these steps can take hold and be sustained long enough to work. The real miracle of Union City is an administration that believed in the potential of educators and the capabilities of students. We backed up these beliefs by making investments where we believed they would count the most. ■

Fred Carrigg, executive director for academic programs for Union City Public Schools, is currently on loan as special assistant to the commissioner for urban literacy of the New Jersey Department of Education.

Margaret Honey is vice president and director of the EDC (Education Development Center) Center for Children and Technology.

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Students as Workers

Throughout the classrooms in Union City's 11 schools, the trend is to eliminate rows of desks facing a blackboard and passive students listening (or not) to 40-minute lectures. Students more likely will be working individually or in groups — often at computers — while the teacher circumnavigates the room, stopping to advise or confer when needed.

COURTESY OF GARY FERRANTE

A groundbreaking for Union City's newest middle school draws school officials and community members alike.

Kindergartners through third graders may be at varying stages of Wiggle Works®, a software reading program that allows children to read (or have read to them) interesting literature. They can stop the presentation and have words or phrases repeated as many times as needed. They can record and play back their own voices, and they can write and illustrate their own versions of the book and have that book read back to them by the computer. Middle schoolers may be demonstrating their flash and animation projects on the Civil War, incorporating history, literature, and art from the period. High school students may be creating a news show video about the Great Depression or explaining why Willy Loman is a tragic hero while making a PowerPoint® presentation.

While a solid, research-based curriculum put Union City on the road to achievement, technology is what pushed it to great heights, Carrigg and other teachers believe.

The Power of Technology

"The Internet just broke down the walls of my classroom," says 27-year teaching veteran Marjorie Zaccagna, who was born and raised in Union City. "We could look up anything. There was no longer, 'That's a good question. I'll come back with the answer tomorrow.' Well, why tomorrow? We'll get the answer right now." With technology, which Zaccagna describes as "a shot in the arm" to her teaching career, she has "so many different ways now of getting [students to learn] without having to stand up there and lecture at them."

Senior Andrea Tapia says she has benefited immensely from technology. "At other school districts, they're blind to technology — just basic environments where you go into the classroom, you learn off the blackboard, you go home, you do your homework in your textbook, and you come back to class and you present it, which is boring. And that's why students lose interest in wanting to learn."

The district made the decision in 1992 to put a couple of computers in every classroom at about the same time that Bell Atlantic decided, in a program called Project Explore, to wire and donate computers to all the teachers and students at Union City's Christopher Columbus Middle School. The results were so positive that district officials decided to use much of the new money coming to the district (the result of a school equal-financing court ruling) on computers, connections, and software. Union City now has one computer for every three students and all of its classrooms wired for the Internet.

Money and Teachers

"None of this happens without money, but a lot of that can be and should be a restructuring of how money is expended," says Carrigg. He notes that while a number of New Jersey school districts in poor communities saw their funding increase more than threefold over 12 years, only Union City used the money in such a way as to produce an impressive turnaround in student performance — with technology the drawing card for students.

But Carrigg gives the majority of credit for the transformation of Union City to the teachers who finally got a say in how to educate children. Too often, he says, teachers are "handcuffed and not given the opportunity to be the professionals they are. ... This is what these good teachers knew needed to be done." ■

www.union-city.k12.nj.us

a passion for projects

ART BY MAX SEABAUGH

It was the early 1990s, and a Washington state education reform committee was investigating what learning looks like when students are allowed to choose the subjects of long-term, cross-disciplinary projects.

Traveling to a few high schools that had adopted "project-based" and "performance-based" learning, committee member Bobbie May remembers her pleasure at seeing how enthusiastic the students were as they presented their projects to peers, teachers, and visitors.

"When students talk about their own work, they get so excited," says May, who is currently president of the Washington State Board of Education. She was struck, too, by the amount of effort the young people — even those with a tendency to slack off — put into their projects because they were able to choose a subject about which they were passionate, were allowed to take learning wherever they pleased, and knew they were going to present their work publicly to local experts and community members.

Impressed by what they saw, the committee recommended that the state require students to complete a culminating project that demonstrates growth in key academic areas as a graduation requirement. "We specifically stayed away from a senior project and called it a culminating project because we're hopeful it will show progress over time," says May.

In 2001, the state Board of Education accepted the committee's recommendation and voted to put the requirement into effect in 2004 with the incoming freshman class that graduates in 2008. The board also totally revamped teacher certification programs so that teachers would be prepared for a performance-based system. May credits the Legislature's patience ("They didn't expect miracles in two or three years!") with allowing for an orderly process and providing sufficient time to win support and build a strong foundation of teacher knowledge.

The culminating project proposal fit nicely with four educational goals outlined by the Washington Legislature in the 1990s: mastery of reading, writing, and communication; knowing and applying the core concepts of math, the social, physical, and life sciences, civics and history, geography, the arts, and health and fitness; thinking analytically and creatively and integrating experience and knowledge to form reasoned judgments and to solve problems; and understanding the importance of work.

The "how" of implementing culminating project requirements is left up to local districts. Lake Washington is among a handful of school districts that already have a culminating graduation requirement in place. Technology is an integral element of every project.

"Technology should be a natural component of everything [students] do," says Heather Sinclair, district director of secondary curriculum and staff development for Lake Washington. "It should be a natural tool they use on a day-to-day basis. It shouldn't be something that is scary or contrived. It should be authentic and realistic." PowerPoint® is becoming routine. Students also make videos using digital cameras and movie editing software. They burn their own CDs. They use the Internet to converse with their mentors and conduct research. One student created a steam engine out of Plexiglas; another used computer-aided design (CAD) software to design a sailboat. Because students choose their own projects, the nature of their study is as varied as the teenagers themselves. Projects can range from working with real scientists on the Human Genome Project and sharing their experience through video or written reports to writing and producing a play or building a "battlebot" robot and explaining how it was built and how it works. One Lake Washington student who suffers from dyslexia conducted research on the disease and then used this information to work with younger boys with dyslexia.

Assessment That Matters

But endorsing projects alone is not enough, some educators warn. Despite her belief that "the most powerful way to learn something is to use it," educational consultant and former Washington high school teacher Eeva Reeder says she would "have a hard time arguing in favor of [a project graduation requirement] unless it's done right." Reeder, who has created project assessment rubrics for several districts, knows firsthand the difficulty of creating projects and assessments of those projects that challenge students and measure important skills. She had her geometry students design a Year 2050 school that was judged by local architects. (The project can be viewed on the GLEF Web site at **www.glef.org/reeder/open.html**.)

There's a big difference, Reeder says, between rebuilding a car for the first time and rebuilding it for the tenth. She says teachers and students need to be clear on a long list of assessment criteria — from extending the student's knowledge to demonstrating analytical, logical, and creative thinking to effective background research and evidence of initiative. It also means starting substantive project-based learning in the early grades.

But done right, Reeder says, the culminating project "has the potential to be the single most powerful change agent in the school." ■

www.k12.wa.us/curriculuminstruct/pz/projects.asp

HIGHER higher pay, STANDARDS:

Connecticut Balances the Equation

Lindsey Mann is a Muggle, but she knows the secrets of Azkaban.

by Ashley Ball
GLEF Staff Writer

Mann, 30, is becoming certified as a Connecticut public school teacher at Southern Connecticut State University. Recently her class visited the Edgewood Elementary School in New Haven to study interdisciplinary themes in teaching. For the sixth-grade students at the K-8 arts school, the class theme was *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. All assignments were based on the book, from art projects (draw a "Wanted" poster of the character Sirius Black, advertising his crimes and where he might be found), to writing compositions (write a birthday letter to Harry at his cousin's house, asking him questions about his life as a wizard). Students learned the skills they needed while exploring subjects they enjoyed.

The Connecticut certification process encourages such innovation, thanks to a statewide focus on teacher quality that has lasted more than a decade. In the early 1980s, spurred by disappointing national test results and reports such as "A Nation At Risk" — the seminal document published in 1983 that decried the mediocre state of public education in America and recommended sweeping change to fix the problem — other states mounted reforms using administrative reorganization or new curriculum as levers for change. Connecticut chose to start with teachers. The commissioner of education at the time (now executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals), Gerry Tirozzi, insisted that "the teacher is the center of educational reform."

Connecticut focused its school reform on teacher quality.

The changes wrought by that reform account for the rigor of teacher education and professional development today. Mann's units, and those of her classmates, must incorporate relevant Web-based and project-based components and accommodate all learning styles. (An example of a successful unit is one that she created for the fifth grade around the book *Fever 1793,* about a yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia. Students in small groups used the Internet to research life in 1793, then exchanged e-mail with pen pals as though they themselves were characters in the book.) The units will be included in her portfolio for assessment. When she becomes a teacher, she will still be responsible for turning in a portfolio and a videotape of herself teaching for review.

"They put those kids through hell," one veteran teacher says of the certification process.

"The money helps," says first-year teacher Reilly Love.

These two statements represent the two sides of Connecticut's reform. In the early 1980s, Connecticut was far from a desirable place for teachers to work. Starting teachers made from $11,000 to $18,000 per year. Even in wealthy areas, teaching was not an attractive option. In impoverished urban areas — Connecticut's cities are, in stark contrast to its suburbs, overwhelmingly poor — finding and retaining quality teachers was next to impossible.

When Tirozzi formed a commission of business, education, and government leaders to improve teacher quality, he knew money would play a part. He just didn't know how much — or by what formula — salaries would be increased. Arthur Wise, the current president of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, recalls evaluating two of the commission's proposals.

The first idea, merit pay, entailed rating teacher effectiveness annually and awarding a bonus accordingly. The

second involved career ladders. Teachers would be "ranked" in the manner of college professors: associate teacher, full teacher, and so on. Neither was proven and, according to Wise, neither plan allowed for a budget downturn.

PHOTOS BY MIKE LYDICK, COURTESY OF CEA

Arts instruction is an essential element of turning out "fully educated" students.

The commission's final plan, the Education Enhancement Act of 1986, addressed money and standards at the same time. Tirozzi calls it "a balanced equation." Under the act, teachers' starting pay was raised to a minimum of $20,000, almost doubling some salaries. Districts altered their salary structure across the board so that all teachers, not just new ones, benefited. Qualified teachers poured across the Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York borders looking for jobs.

Procedures for teacher learning were improved at the same time. Connecticut initiated a portfolio assessment for new teacher training and aligned assessments for students with standards for teachers. It developed a support system for beginning teachers, known as BEST (Beginning Educators Support and Training), providing them with mentors for their first years of teaching.

Later refinements to the Education Enhancement Act included the implementation of arts-themed Higher Order Thinking Schools (Edgewood Elementary is one), and the creation of a Common Core of Learning (CCL), which outlined statewide expectations for what constituted a "fully educated" student. This document was intended not as a set of standards or mandates but as a catalyst for curricular improvement. In addition to foundation skills like reading, writing, and problem solving, the CCL emphasized social and emotional development: "intellectual curiosity, respect, citizenship, and a sense of community."

By 1998, Connecticut's fourth graders were ranked first in the nation in both reading and mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The proportion of eighth graders scoring at or above proficiency levels in reading was the highest in the country. Connecticut also ranked first in writing. In a 2001 report prepared for the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, authors Suzanne M. Wilson, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Barnet Berry credit the Education Enhancement Act for Connecticut's "large, steady gains in student achievement and plentiful supply of well-qualified teachers."

Now the challenge is to keep the reform going. This is a crucial time for Connecticut's educational system, though all looks smooth on the surface. As of 2001, the state still had the highest average teacher salary in the nation (at $53,507), according to the American Federation of Teachers. Students still outperform national NAEP scores in mathematics, reading, writing, and science. Connecticut has incorporated technology into its standards for students, and it has made technology training a requirement of the teacher recertification process.

But in spite of these improvements, Connecticut struggles with internal equity issues. Teachers in the wealthier districts get better technology training, better professional development, and higher pay. There is also an achievement gap between wealthier districts and their high-poverty, high-minority urban counterparts. In *Education Week*'s "Quality Counts 2003" report, the state received an A- for adequacy of resources. For equity of resources, it got a D.

Another challenge is the increased importance of testing under federal law. The Connecticut Mastery Test is given in the first, fourth, and sixth grades. In 2004 it will be given every year. Veteran Deep River teacher Wendy Oberg approves of the test as a measure of higher order thinking, but would rather not depend on it as an absolute measure of teaching success. Connecticut Education Association President Rosemary Coyle, adds, "One test score determines the fate of an entire school. If you don't get that number, you are penalized."

Urban schools, which rely on state and federal aid, are most vulnerable to the penalties. Some urban teachers end up using their extensive certification training to teach canned remedial programs, which, as one young teacher says, "can really wear you down."

With the 1986 Education Enhancement Act, Connecticut developed high standards and a sophisticated support system for its teachers, and it reaped high achievement gains for its students. The imperative today is to keep the original equation balanced; as Connecticut collaborator Wise says, to "stay with the innovation. We have made some great strides, but we need to make more." ■

big plans for SMALL SCHOOLS

by Roberta Furger
GLEF Staff Writer

For years, Emma Paulino hoped and prayed for a miracle at her children's East Oakland schools. Aging facilities were bursting at the seams. To relieve the overcrowding, many students were on a year-round, multitrack system. They attended school for 28 days and then were off for 28 more. Coherent instruction was next to impossible as students and teachers moved from one available classroom to the next. Teachers were frustrated, parents were angry, and too many students — including Paulino's son, MacEdward, were falling through the cracks.

Throughout first, second, and third grade, MacEdward Paulino floundered in a chaotic and dysfunctional school system. As a third grader, he had difficulty reading and writing his name. Repeated meetings with teachers yielded nothing but platitudes, or worse, indifference. When one of her son's teachers suggested Paulino was "expecting too much," the Mexico native knew it was time to stop waiting for a miracle and start creating one of her own.

A New Vision

Paulino wasn't alone in her quest to create something better for her children. Through the Oakland Community Organizations (OCO), a faith-based organizing group representing 40,000 Oakland families, she connected with parents, teachers, and students who were equally determined to find a better way. They read Deborah Meier's *The Power of Their Ideas*, about an innovative small school in East Harlem. They visited successful small schools in Chicago and New York City. They solicited the assistance of educators at the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable School (BayCES), and they lobbied hard with the Oakland Unified School District to support their vision for reform: small, autonomous schools that would relieve overcrowding and reinvigorate public education in the city's flatlands.

It took more than four years, but the community's persistence paid off. Today Oakland is in the midst of one of the most significant small-school reform efforts in the country. Guided by a unique partnership between OCO, the Oakland Unified School District, and BayCES (which is administering a $15.7 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), this large urban district is undergoing what BayCES Executive Director Steve Jubb describes as "inside-out reform."

In September 2001, 190 children (including Paulino's two youngest) began their school year at ASCEND (A School Cultivating Excellence, Nurturing Diversity), a K-8 autonomous school developed by a team of parents and educators. For the students who moved to ASCEND from their former overcrowded, underserved schools, the changes couldn't have been more dramatic: Class size averages 22 students (even in the upper grades). Thanks to deep partnerships with local organizations, music and art are integral to the academic program. Teachers receive ongoing assistance from academic coaches on everything from working with parents to implementing an expeditionary learning model of teaching (where in-depth projects based on student inquiry are key). Parents, for their part, are partners in the visioning, planning, and day-to-day running of the school.

Although each of Oakland's small schools is grounded in common themes of rigorous academics, equity for all students, and local decision-making, the academic programs vary considerably. ASCEND and Life Academy of Health and Bioscience, a small autonomous high school, are based on the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound reform model. Curriculum at both schools is organized and presented as learning expeditions, where students learn by exploring, creating, questioning, and reflecting. Urban Promise Academy, one of three new small middle schools, is a Tribes Learning Community. This whole-school reform model focuses on the integration of students' emotional, physical, and intellectual growth. MET West, a new small high school, is modeled after the Metropolitan Career and Technical Center in Providence, Rhode Island, and employs a hands-on, experience-based model of teaching and learning, where teams of students, parents, teachers, and mentors join to create a personalized curriculum for each student.

Parents and students, teachers and administrators all have a role to play in designing Oakland's new small schools.

PHOTOS BY MICHELLE LONGOSZ/OAKLAND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

A Matter of Choice

If you ask Oakland Superintendent Dennis Chaconas where the city's various small schools initiatives will lead, he'll answer you in one word: choice.

Fundamental to Oakland's reform effort is the notion, says Chaconas, that Oakland families deserve educational options. It's a fundamental shift for the district, adds Jubb, which for years worked on the premise that educators, rather than families, knew what was best for students.

Although only a fraction of Oakland students are currently attending the new small schools, the impact of these early efforts is being felt throughout the district. After hearing about the small school initiatives under way elsewhere in the district, for example, several teachers at the 750-student Edna Brewer Middle School began exploring ways to better connect with students. "We felt like kids were slipping, slipping, slipping," says Alanya Snyder, who along with four colleagues opened a School Within a School (SWS) in September 2002 with 64 sixth graders and 64 eighth graders.

Rony Prieto is one of the School Within a School's success stories. The nearly six-foot 15-year-old has a full mustache and looks like he belongs on a high school campus, rather than in a school with prepubescent 11-year-olds. But successive years of failing grades led to

Rony being held back a year. And now, as part of the first group of eighth graders in SWS, the Latino youth is experiencing for the first time what it's like to be academically successful. "This is the first time I haven't had any D's or F's on my report card," says Rony, who attributes his much-improved grades to the attention and assistance he gets from SWS teachers. "In the big school, teachers couldn't devote a lot of time to one student, so it was hard for people who needed extra help to get it," he explains. "Now, teachers don't let you leave for the day until they know you understand the material."

Daily homework assistance (available after school and "recommended" for students who aren't getting at least a C in all of their classes), regular conversations between teachers and parents (the student handbook includes an e-mail address as well as home and cell phone numbers for every teacher), a reinvigorated curriculum, and ongoing community-building activities help ensure that all students get the assistance and support they need not just to "get through" middle school but to flourish.

Early Successes, Ongoing Challenges

Three years into its small schools initiative, Oakland has seen some remarkable gains. Test scores have improved throughout the district, with students at small schools showing even greater improvement than the district average. Attendance at the new small schools is higher than at their counterparts throughout the district. The difference at the high school level is the most notable: Attendance at Life Academy averages 92 percent, compared to the districtwide high school average of just 81 percent. Suspensions and expulsions are fewer at the new small schools, as are incidents of violence.

Perhaps most impressive of all is the number of students who are staying in the system, due in large part to the more personalized instruction they are receiving. In September 2002, one year after two of Oakland's largest high schools adopted small learning communities for all freshmen, nearly 1,400 fewer students left the school system than in the previous year.

But despite these early successes, Oakland is not without its challenges. Space — or the lack of it — is one of the primary impediments to rolling out new small schools. Already there are several new schools approved and just waiting for a suitable site to be identified.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of all is Oakland's current fiscal crisis: The district has a deficit of roughly $80 million and will need bailout funds from the state to turn things around. Along with the much-needed funds may come a state administrator likely to be more interested in balancing the budget than in preserving small school reform.

Oakland reformers are fighting hard to maintain and grow their hard-won victories. They're lobbying with state officials, moving forward with plans for new small schools, and even investigating a plan that would redesign the district on a smaller, "more human" scale.

"Every part of the system needs to change," Steve Jubb adds. "We've all been part of the problem. We all need to be part of the solution." ■

by Diane Curtis, GLEF Staff Writer

A+ FOR empathy

The children in Amy Hamilton's fourth-grade class know exactly how their day at Mulready Elementary School in Hudson, Massachusetts, will begin. After they hang up their coats and backpacks, they know to put their homework on their desks. Then they read Mrs. Hamilton's message on the chalkboard, which can be anything from a comment about the weather to a question to ponder.

COURTESY OF AMY HAMILTON

After that, they head for the red rug and Morning Meeting, which includes a greeting ("Say hello to the other students as a character in a book" may be the opener), sharing, activity, and news and announcements.

"Let's start a pass-along story," says Hamilton. "Once upon a time . . ." And so the story goes around the class, becoming a tale of a Valentine bear who has to go to the pharmacy to take care of cuts and bruises from a lightning bolt.

They also talk about what they plan to do during the upcoming vacation week. "Sleep in!" says one student. "How late do you sleep in?" asks another, showing an example of "active listening."

The Importance of Structure

"It puts a really specific structure to the classroom," says Hamilton, referring to both Morning Meeting and the end-of-the-day, reflective Closing Circle. "That's important because kids need to know what to expect. It makes them feel secure."

Morning Meeting is part of a program called Responsive Classroom that addresses young people's social and emotional needs as well as their academic needs. And the social and emotional aspect of education, says Hudson Public Schools Superintendent Sheldon Berman, "is an essential and central element" of districtwide reform.

"A school system has to create an environment where learning is a positive experience and the climate in the school is such that it supports children taking risks, feeling safe, feeling accepted," Berman says. He adds that the instructional program and social and emotional initiatives are "mutually beneficial and necessary."

A 1998 survey of Hudson parents confirms the importance of programs that address students' social and emotional needs, both for behavioral and academic results. The survey found that parents believe that safety and a caring environment, fair treatment, and responsiveness of the faculty to parents' concerns are the top indicators of the success of a school system. Challenging academics came in fourth.

Empathy, Ethics, and Service

When Berman, who has a background in conflict resolution as a founder of Educators for Social Responsibility, came to Hudson 11 years ago, a group of teachers unhappy with destructive student behavior asked him to tighten the discipline code. He felt that harsher punishments weren't the answer. He formed a committee to consider the request and the consensus was that a discipline code alone would not create an atmosphere of respect and responsibility. What would, though, members decided, was a comprehensive program of social-emotional learning, service

learning, and character education: "Empathy, ethics, and service" is a favorite district refrain.

The district has a variety of programs designed to build respect and a caring community: Responsive Classroom, Second Step (an empathy development and conflict resolution program), and a program of service learning from prekindergarten through grade 12 that has received wide recognition. Responding to research showing the academic and social benefits of small schools, Berman is creating high school student "clusters" who stay together for three years with one teacher. Berman has even appointed one of the nation's few districtwide directors of community service learning and character education, Mary McCarthy.

COURTESY OF CHARACTER EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

(Left) Teacher Amy Hamilton shares an encouraging morning message with some of her fourth graders. (Above) Mary McCarthy, director of Community Service Learning and Character Education, and Hudson Schools Superintendent Sheldon Berman display the banner the district received from the Character Education Partnership.

National School of Character

Hudson Public Schools was the only district in the country to receive the 2001-2002 National Schools of Character Award from the Character Education Partnership. Berman cannot break down how much specific reforms — curricular and social-emotional — contributed to positive changes in the district, but says improvement won't come without both. He notes that since he took over as superintendent, test scores are up, absences down, and more students are seeking to come into the district than leave it, a reversal of the situation when he started.

Karen Rundlett, a teaching assistant, says that during her recess duty she sees evidence of the success of Second Step lessons she teaches a half hour a week to different classes at Mulready. "I hear students say, 'We'll use I-messages.' Rather than 'You were mean,' they say, 'I feel bad when you call me a name.' That's exciting. I think they get it, and they really enjoy it."

A Second Step lesson on empathy, for example, recently involved looking at a laminated card with a picture of two young girls who had broken a neighbor's window with a baseball. Part of the discussion included the fact that nobody had seen them throw the ball. What to do? Do you tell the neighbor you broke the window and offer to make reparations? Do you run and not say anything? Students answer in a variety of ways, Rundlett says. But they always have to ask themselves four questions: Is it safe? Is it fair? Will it work? and How will people feel? Once the students answer the questions for themselves, they do role-playing on the question.

Sue O'Keefe, a psychologist at Farley Elementary School, also trains teachers in Second Step. "The empathy portion is the foundation of the program. That's why I like it so much," O'Keefe says. She says the program has definitely changed the climate of the school from one in which students acted out, called each other names, and got physical when there was a dispute to one in which they try to understand the other person's point of view and come to a verbal resolution of a dispute.

The First Six Weeks

In the Responsive Classroom program, the first six weeks are considered crucial for creating a feeling of safety and belonging, setting reasonable limits and boundaries for behavior, introducing the schedule, routines, physical environment, and materials of the classroom, and establishing expectations about the curriculum and how the children will be taught. Guided discovery, in which children have practice sessions of important behavior, such as eating in the cafeteria, sitting down in the school bus, or using materials properly, is also an important element of Responsive Classroom. Other features of the program include rules and logical consequences, academic choice in which children get to choose a project, family communication, and strategies for arranging materials, furniture, and displays to encourage independence, promote caring, and maximize learning.

And the effort to create a caring community with involved students who feel they belong never stops. In the works now are plans for a cluster model of high school organization, in which students are grouped into units of 100 to 150. The clusters would be based on broad areas of student interest such as communications, media, and the arts; science, health, and the environment; technology, business, and engineering; or social service, education, and social policy. Students would stay in the same cluster for three years and work together on service projects, presentations, and cluster discussions, as well as take some courses together. Student government representatives would be chosen from clusters, thus giving more students an opportunity to lead.

Berman is also instituting the practice of providing clusters with an hour a week of school time to, among other things, discuss and solve issues of importance to the school as a whole. Students, Berman says, will even have a say in hiring.

One of the reasons Berman's character and service approach to learning has caught on is that he lets the results speak for themselves. He never mandated that Responsive Classroom be used. Instead, he offered training in it to a few teachers. Their colleagues then saw the changes in classroom atmosphere and student learning and voluntarily joined the program. Today, 90 percent of the elementary and middle school teachers in the Hudson Public School District practice Responsive Classroom. ■

www.hudson.k12.ma.us

SUPERINTENDENTS

Systemwide reform can be daunting. But reforms can start with small steps. We've asked six reform-minded superintendents to share "one small, but meaningful step" they have taken to bring change to their districts. Their answers offer practical advice, from homespun to high-tech, for embarking on the road to reform.

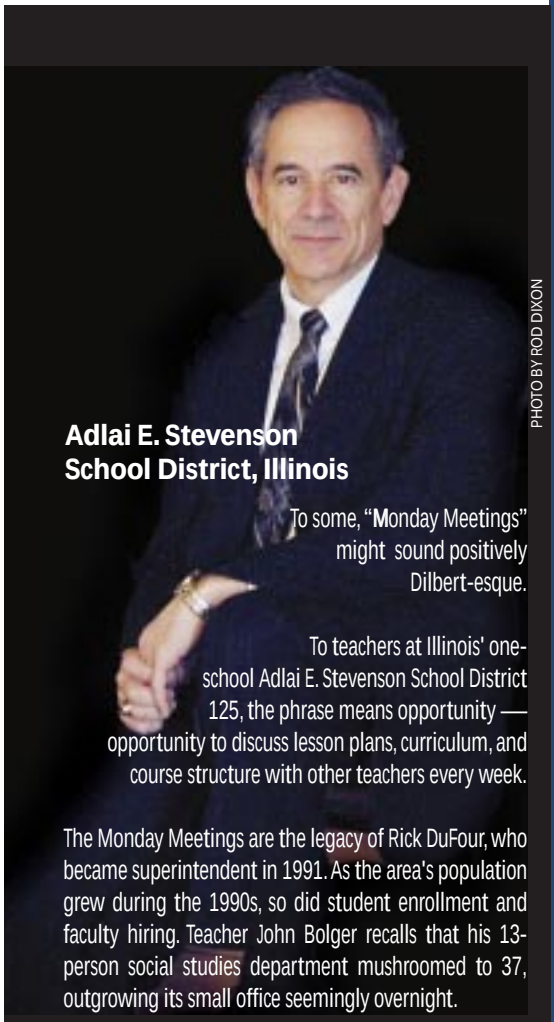


PHOTO BY ROD DIXON

Adlai E. Stevenson School District, Illinois

To some, "Monday Meetings" might sound positively Dilbert-esque.

To teachers at Illinois' one-school Adlai E. Stevenson School District 125, the phrase means opportunity — opportunity to discuss lesson plans, curriculum, and course structure with other teachers every week.

The Monday Meetings are the legacy of Rick DuFour, who became superintendent in 1991. As the area's population grew during the 1990s, so did student enrollment and faculty hiring. Teacher John Bolger recalls that his 13-person social studies department mushroomed to 37, outgrowing its small office seemingly overnight.

To regain a collaborative atmosphere, DuFour built time into Monday's schedule for teams of teachers to evaluate instruction and achievement. Bolger says the meetings allow veteran teachers to mentor newcomers. Fellow teacher Christin Rudolph says they help her plan lessons such as the math lab her team created, which teaches exponents using Skittles® candies.

Stevenson holds four Blue Ribbon awards for excellence from the U.S. Department of Education. DuFour, who left in 2002 to pursue his career as an author and speaker on school reform, attributes the district's achievements to teacher collaboration, not to his strategic improvement plans. The teachers give him more credit. Unlike those of some other administrators, says Bolger, "his theories actually work in practice."

Boston Public Schools, Massachusetts

COURTESY OF THOMAS PAYZANT

Boston Public Schools Superintendent Tom Payzant is part visionary, part tinkerer. Both qualities have aided him in his quest to reform the district into "130 schools of excellence," using student data to refine curriculum and classroom practice.

Boston's data-driven accountability system started five years ago, when Payzant asked schools to examine their yearly Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System results and answer three questions:

1. What curricular steps will we take to address the problems we see?
2. What professional development will we provide to our teachers to enable them to execute these steps?
3. How will we measure whether what we've done has made any difference?

In 1999, the year Payzant was named Massachusetts Superintendent of the Year, Boston Public Schools began administering diagnostic tests three times a year, responding to their results immediately. By 2001, test scores had gone up across all grades and subject areas. A districtwide intranet makes this information accessible. Principals track student performance on each test question. One click reveals the specific standard that each question addresses, diagnosing not just "trouble reading," but "trouble decoding words in expository text." Professional development is concentrated on the most problematic standards.

"Before this, just managing the data was daunting," says Boston School Development Director Rachel Curtis. "Now that the process is easier, staff can focus on understanding the information and making the improvements."

Chula Vista Elementary School District, California

COURTESY OF LIBIA GIL

"It's lonely at the top." That's what principals in the Chula Vista Elementary School District on the California-Mexico border shared with newly arrived Superintendent Libia Gil in 1993.

The issue of isolation came up during conversations about what principals at the 25,000-student school district — the largest K-6 district in California — saw as an ineffective performance evaluation system. Gil addressed principals' concerns by adding "peer group" evaluations to those conducted by assistant superintendents. The peer groups do more than facilitate evaluation, says Gil, who left the district last year to become chief academic officer for the nonprofit organization New American Schools. (The organization aims to increase student achievement through comprehensive school improvement strategies.) Peer groups allow principals, who often have no opportunity to talk with one another, to share ideas about everything from curriculum to boosting teacher morale.

Gil, last year's winner of the $25,000 Harold W. McGraw Education Prize, says the process has become "a very systematic way of helping review teaching and learning practices." For example, a peer cluster team may notice a writing focus in the second grades but not in the third. Principals can then brainstorm ideas for improving the third-grade program and for creating the best writing programs in their own schools. The peer program also requires no additional money.

"This is how we disseminate good things that are happening," Gil says. "Sometimes people are doing great things for children but nobody knows about them."

IN ACTION

Mercer County Public Schools, West Virginia

In Mercer County, West Virginia, where Deborah S. Akers has been superintendent since 1993, the poverty rate is high — more than 60 percent of students receive free and reduced-price lunches. Expectations are high, too.

Akers, the 2003 winner of the American Association of School Administrators' State Superintendent of the Year award, has implemented a districtwide senior project. Working alone or in small teams, every student chooses a topic and completes a research project. At year's end, students assemble a panel of teachers and community members to whom they present their work.

Students conduct Internet research on the school's computers and use PowerPoint® for presentations. Two students interested in engineering created a model of West Virginia's New River Gorge Bridge, the longest-span single-arch bridge in the United States. As they started to research right after 9/11, their inquiry into the engineering details of such a large public structure was met with suspicion, but

PHOTO BY BO BOWMAN

the students surmounted the difficulties and obtained plans for the bridge.

That kind of real-world experience makes the project challenging and, Akers believes, rewarding. She says that though the project may be intimidating for students, it actually eases them into obtaining valuable skills.

"Being able to speak about a subject in front of a group of people is a skill [students] need in life," Akers observes "In college, this kind of project isn't unusual. This is an easier, more friendly start that is still demanding."

COURTESY OF KATHRYN LEEDOM

Willmar Public Schools, Minnesota

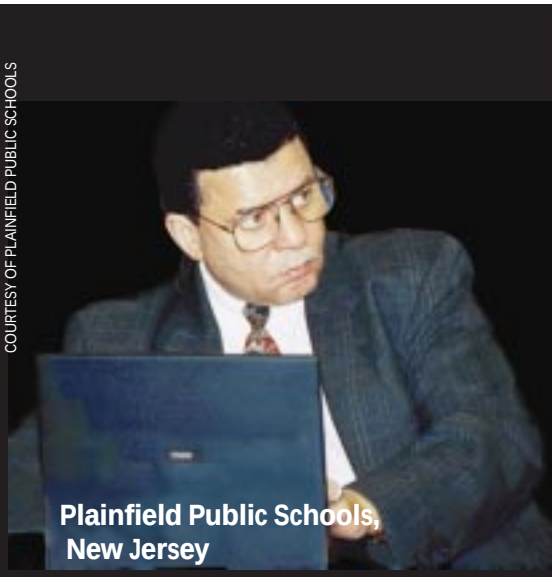
Starting a new school may not be everyone's idea of a small step toward change, but for Kathryn Leedom, superintendent of Willmar Public Schools in Minnesota, it makes perfect sense.

Leedom opened the Lincoln Learning Center, a K-4 school, in 2000 — the same year she became superintendent of the 4,400-student district.

Character education drives the Learning Center's curriculum. Each month a trait (such as honesty or respect) is integrated into classroom lessons. In literature, students discuss the traits each character exhibits. In science and math, students work in groups, then discuss how they interacted: Were you respectful? At monthly assemblies, each class demonstrates a word using songs and skits. A recent song extolled cooperation to the tune of "The Lion Sleeps Tonight."

Leedom sees strong ties developing. Teachers send home postcards emblazoned with the words such as "perseverance" to recognize students' efforts. Students slip anonymous notes into a hot pink box to laud classmates for their positive qualities. Studies of social-emotional learning show that this atmosphere enhances students' sense of personal responsibility and self-esteem, paving the way for academic achievement.

Character education is now being introduced in the district's other schools. One Lincoln teacher says, "Now that [other] teachers see this can be integrated, that it's not something 'extra,' it's really started catching on."



COURTESY OF PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Plainfield Public Schools, New Jersey

"Community engagement," says Superintendent Larry Leverett, is a "low-investment strategy that gets big returns in a variety of ways."

Leverett made community involvement a top priority during his eight years at Plainfield Public Schools, a 7,500-student urban district in New Jersey. His success in consensus building, among other skills, prompted Greenwich Public Schools in suburban Connecticut to hire him away this year.

When business leaders, parents, and civic leaders get involved, Leverett says, it pays off in volunteerism such as reading to students, partnerships that help pay for student activities, and support for school ventures. Community members helped write and win approval of Plainfield's strategic plans for literacy, staff development, and technology. Leverett also credits passage of a multimillion-dollar referendum for new construction, renovation, and state-of-the-art media centers in large part to his efforts at engaging the community.

Leverett meets with people whenever he can to build trust and increase communication. The forum can be one-on-one conversations with community leaders, including "people who are disenfranchised with the leadership, who may not typically be heard or that a superintendent may not even want to hear," he says. "Don't wait for them to come to you . . . . Don't be deterred because of the past history of relationships."

RESOURCES

A Sampling of Resources on Systemwide Change

ARTICLES & REPORTS

A Case of Successful Teaching Policy: Connecticut's Long-Term Efforts to Improve Teaching and Learning was written by Suzanne M. Wilson, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Barnett Berry for the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy. The 2001 report uses graphs, charts, and case studies to illustrate Connecticut's ongoing reform effort, in which teacher pay and certification standards were raised in order to improve student learning. Web: www.depts.washington.edu/ctpmail/PDFs/Connecticut-WDHB-02-2001.pdf

EdWeek Quality Counts 2003 is the seventh annual report on state efforts in education from *Education Week*. This report looks at the condition of teacher quality and supply in each state, providing state data, report cards and profiles. Web: www.edweek.org/sreports/QC03/

Connecticut's Common Core of Learning was created by the state's Department of Education in 1998. This document outlines the integrated skills, understandings, and character aspects that Connecticut expects each student to develop. It is "not meant to define a minimum set of competencies; rather, it is designed to set and define the high standards required for students to become fully educated citizens." Web: www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/cccl.pdf

Laptop Lessons: Exploring the Promise of One-to-One Computing highlights issues to consider when implementing a laptop program in a K-12 school. The article by Kim Carter is from the May 2001 issue of *Technoloy & Learning*. Web: www techlearning.com/db_area/archives/TL/200105/laptops.html

Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is conducting two studies on systemwide education reform. In "Closing Achievement Gaps," the nonprofit, Manhattan-based research organization examines the policies and practices of four urban districts that have raised academic performance overall and reduced racial differences in achievement. A study of the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) examines the effect of inquiry-based reform on student achievement. Web: www.mdrc.org/subarea_index_3.html

Small Schools, Great Strides is a report published by Bank Street College based on a two-year study of Chicago's small schools strategy. Available online at www.bankstreet.edu/gems/publications/smallschool.pdf

Toward Success at Scale is an article on expanding reform beyond one school site to an entire district. It appeared in the December 2002 *Phi Delta Kappan* and was written by Tom Vander Ark, executive director of education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Web: www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0212va1.htm

The Union City Story: Education Reform and Technology was written in 1998 by the Center for Children and Technology. It investigates the impact of reform and state-of-the-art networking technologies on students, teachers, and parents and analyzes improved performance on standardized tests. Web: www2.edc.org/cct/publications_report_summary.asp?numPubid=85

BOOKS

Children's Social Consciousness and the Development of Social Responsibility by Hudson Schools Superintendent Sheldon Berman provides insight and research on methods to produce active, caring, responsible students. (1997) Publisher: State University of New York Press. Phone: 518.472.5000; Fax: 518.472.5038; E-mail: info@sunypress.edu; Web: www.sunypress.edu

How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School by the National Research Council includes research and examples of brain-based research on learning that points to the advantages of projects and building on prior knowledge. (1999) Publisher: National Academy of Sciences. Phone: 202.334.2000; Web: www.nationalacademies.org

The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem by Deborah Meier uses journal entries and essays to tell the story of one of New York City's most famous public schools, Central Park Elementary School. (1995) Publisher: Beacon Press. Phone: 617.742.2110; Fax: 617.723.3097; Web: www.beacon.org

ORGANIZATIONS

Catalyst chronicles the "voices of school reform" in Chicago, including the initiative for small schools. Web: www.catalyst-chicago.org

Character Education Partnership (CEP) is a nonpartisan coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to developing moral character and civic virtue in American youth as one means of creating a more compassionate and responsible society. Phone: 800.988.8081; Web: www.character.org

Coalition of Essential Schools is a national network that aims to promote small classrooms and schools that feature personalized instruction, multiple forms of assessment, democratic and equitable school policies and practice, and close partnerships with the school's community. Phone: 510.433.1451; Fax: 510.433.1455; Web: www.essentialschools.org

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) brings together educators, scientists, human service providers, policymakers, and concerned citizens to promote social and emotional learning as an integral part of education in schools throughout the world. Web: www.casel.org

The Connecticut Commission on the Arts is a state agency funded by the Connecticut Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Commission supports arts programs in schools and communities across the state. Phone: 860.566.4770; Fax: 860.566.6462; E-mail: artsinfo@ctarts.org; Web: www.ctarts.org/

Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) is a national nonprofit organization that promotes social responsibility as a core responsibility of schools. ESR programs include social and emotional learning, character education, conflict resolution, diversity education, civic engagement, prevention programming, youth development, civic engagement, and secondary school improvement. Phone: 617.492.1764; Fax: 617.864.5164; E-mail: educators@esrnational.org; Web: www.esrnational.org

Responsive Classroom is a program of the Northeast Foundation for Children that focuses on schools as respectful learning communities where educators honor the social context of learning and use knowledge of students' development to inform all decisions. Phone: 800.360.6332; Fax: 413.772.2097; E-mail: info@responsiveclassroom.org; Web: www.responsiveclassroom.org

School Redesign Network at Stanford University offers information for K-12 educators, including courses, redesign resources, and access to research on the benefits of small schools. Phone: 650.724.2932; Email: julieh@stanford.edu; Web: www.stanford.edu/dept/SUSE/csrn

WEB SITES

Connecticut State Department of Education's Division of Evaluation and Research serves as an online guide for teachers and administrators within the state. The site includes information on Connecticut's professional development and mentoring programs, teacher evaluations, administrator tests, and school leadership. Web: www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/t-a/

Laptop Learning Challenge, developed by Toshiba and the National Science Teachers Association, features lessons and resources in support of laptop learning. Web: www.nsta.org/programs/laptop/index.htm

Maine Learning Technology Initiative provides the tools and training necessary for success in Maine's program providing middle school students with laptop computers. Web: www.state.me.us/mlte/

Mainelearns.org includes success stories from teachers and parents of Maine's laptop computer program for seventh and eighth graders. Web: www.mainelearns.org

Piscataquis Community Middle School in Maine has a Web site detailing its laptop computer program, one of the first and most comprehensive in the state. Web: www.sad4.com/PCMS/laptop.html

Student Guide to Culminating Project is the Lake Washington High School guide for projects that are due before each student graduates. Web: www.lkwash.wednet.edu/lwsd/pdf/StudentGuideCulminatingProject.pdf

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