

Creating the Future History



Education Transformation
in the
Nine Mile Falls School District

Introduction

The document that follows was written by individuals within the Nine Mile Falls School District in eastern Washington State, ca 1994. A copy was placed in each school office for people to read if they chose to. This document lays out how systems education was brought into the district, but carefully avoids the behind-the-scenes activities engaged in to ensure the outcome. Footnotes, links and highlighting are not part of the original document.

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Environmental Context

The Nine Mile Falls School District is located in Washington State. It lies in the northwest corner of Spokane County and spreads north-northeast for approximately two-thirds of the District land mass into Stevens County. Nine Mile Falls School District is spread along both sides of Long Lake from the Nine Mile Falls Dam to Tum Tum. This is a bedroom community to Spokane, and a large portion of the community daily commutes the nine miles to Spokane for employment.

Prior to 1990, the eighth grade students from Nine Mile Falls would have the option to request one of the four high schools in the surrounding District: Reardan, Spokane, Deer Park or Mead. After seven bond issues to construct a Nine Mile Falls High School, a building bond passed, and the school construction projected was financed, but the curriculum and personnel for a full high school program would need to be developed to meet the expectations of the community. Meanwhile the first graduating class would be scheduled for 1993. Further, even though the construction process was eventually successful, it has been a divisive issue in the community.

In the Spring of 1992, the District was perceived by the community as stable. At this time, the long-time Superintendent retired and the Nine Mile School District made a search for a new leaders. As the result of a District-wide survey process, the Board of Directors, with the community and staff, sought an instructional leader.

Dr Shirley Holloway was hired as the Superintendent of the Nine Mile Falls School District in early June, 1992. Her vision was to create the optimum educational environment for children where diversity was celebrated, and partnerships were created with the larger community to best support the needs of students. She scheduled the initial steps of site-based decision-making in tandem with the eventual development of site-based councils for the onset of the 1993-94 school year.¹

Immediately upon her arrival in the District, she began to develop a consistent communication process with the community. Her initial step was a needs assessment process which included individual interviews with patrons and staff and a survey. These information gathering processes were to focus on future directions for the District. Three major value orientations were identified from her constituency through the needs assessment processes.

One set of values voiced were those advocating for the neighborhood school concept, the desire for the school to be financially stable and also responsive to traditional family values. Second, those transplanted citizens from other states sought and voiced their desire for an educational and testing process that would be competitive on a national scale. This value was consistent with the other groups and when voiced provided cohesiveness with the other two groups. The third valued and individualized learning program with integrated opportunities for holistic expression in the arts and humanities. **All stakeholders of the community**

¹ Research did not turn up any indication that the school board voted and approved the implementation of systemic change.

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wanted greater involvement and input into the educational process of their children²; thus, a goal for a community-school partnership was established.

The District was informed in late June, 1992 that there was a deficit of approximately \$500,000 carried over from the previous school year. The community was in crisis, the seeds of mistrust were deeply embedded.³

In order to create a foundation on which to build a school-wide improvement process, Dr Holloway requested the Board to authorize a Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) Audit. This would provide evaluation of the system through a rational comprehensive planning process (Banfield, 1959). This approach would follow the systems approach, give authority to be able to gather information from parties who might not provide it otherwise, and allow issues of "public good" to be addressed (Benveniste, 1989). The audit was completed for the Nine Mile Falls School District throughout the Summer and Fall, 1992 and provided not only for rational planning, but an internal environmental assessment (Anthony, 1995) to judge the relative effectiveness of resource allocations, organizational designs, and distributions of power present in the system. This information was necessary to prevent unnecessary organizational conflicts which can create partisan responses and resolutions that undermine the organization's mission. The WASA results served as an initial base for the Strategic Improvement Process. See Appendix A.

² This statement is blatantly false in that not **all** stakeholders were asked what they wanted; a few stakeholders were facilitated into accepting the predetermined outcomes. Their supposed answers (which really weren't theirs at all) were then applied to all stakeholders as though the few stakeholders represented all. One only represents another if elected by secret ballot to do so.

³ A school board member, on the board at that time, later stated the \$500,000 deficit didn't exist. This is a classic case of creating a crisis to effect the wanted solution ... in this case, the solution was education reform with Dr Shirley Holloway as the knight on a white horse arriving just in time to save the day.

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Component 1: Planning Model & Process

Strategic Planning (Bryson, 1988) was selected due to the organized format that produces fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, does, and why it does it. District-level Strategic Planning requires broad scale information gathering, and exploration of alternatives, and an emphasis on the future implications of present decisions. **This method would provide for facilitation of communication and participation**, accommodation of divergent interests and values, orderly decision making, and successful implementation in the Nine Mile Falls School District.

Therefore, the Strategic Improvement Project was viewed as appropriate to the identified needs of the Nine Mile Falls School District. The project was initiated and will be facilitated by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)⁴ from January, 1993 to January, 1995. This restructuring project is entitled *Creating the Future*⁵, and is a strategic planning process developed by the NWREL based on the specific needs⁶ of the Nine Mile Falls School District. A guiding definition of restructuring for this project is "altering significant elements of a system—rules, roles, relationships—to improve the results attained (outcomes)." H. Dickson Corbett, *Research for Better Schools*, (1990). The importance of **systemic change based on the development of rules, roles, relationships, and results** has been, and will continue to be, stressed throughout the project. The vision driving this organizational project has been collaboratively designed and developed and is based on maximizing the strengths of the Nine Mile Falls School District and Community.

Therefore, the Systemic Change process matches the strengths and needs identified by the WASA audit for the District and is based on the following principles:

1. Seeing interrelationships, patterns;
2. Focusing more on underlying trends and forces, less on day-to-day events;
3. Moving beyond blame, realizing that you and the cause of problems are all in the same system;
4. Focusing on areas of leverage; small, well-focused action that leads to significant results; and
5. Avoiding symptomatic solutions; solutions that focus on fixing symptoms rather than underlying causes.

The major foci for the change processes are the community and District-defined results (mission, value/beliefs, and **essential learnings**), which provide the basis for teaching and learning criteria and adjustment. Thus the **system has evolved, and will continuously evolve, to a new and more stable state**, and systemic change has occurred, and will occur, in

⁴ What is not stated here is that Dr Holloway had had extensive contact and connections with NWREL *prior* to her being hired by the Nine Mile Falls School District. NWREL coming on the scene was not a coincidence.

⁵ As is a document written by [Dr Shirley McCune](#).

⁶ As the *Creating the Future* strategic planning process was a *program* of NWREL, it could only be said to address the *specific needs* of the Nine Mile Falls School District in that those *needs* (ie, systemic change or total transformation) were the same for the Nine Mile Falls School District as for every other school district in the nation that utilized the same NWREL program. As such, to say the process was geared specifically to the district's needs is to misrepresent the truth.

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partnership with all stakeholders⁷. The key will be to monitor this continuous change process.

⁷ Parents would readily learn they were considered a "stakeholder" if they didn't ... ask too many hard questions; question basic assumptions; object too much; bring up the Constitution; do too much digging into the process; share what they learned about the process with others.

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Process

In the Fall of 1992, Dr Holloway began teaching a Restructuring Class for the community and staff. Many of those who would become the Creating the Future Leadership and the Board of Directors enrolled in this class and became inspired. In this course the community and staff explored new rules, roles, and relationships which could and would create improved student results. The commitment to learning and then designing by the community, staff and Dr Holloway set the tone for change in the Nine Mile Falls School District. As an outcome of this commitment, the Board of Directors asked the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to make a presentation to the Board. After this presentation and discussion of the match between the Strategic Planning process and the Nine Mile Falls School District's strengths and needs, the Board approved the two year contract with NWREL to begin in January, 1993.

To lead this long-term planning process the Board appointed a Creating the Future Leadership Team. The Leadership Team began learning all they could about the systemic change process and Strategic Planning process, and then the vertical slice of the community and staff was selected to embark on the initial phases of learning and designing the restructuring process.

The key assumptions or Strategic Planning Premises (Anthony, 1985) which were identified, revised, and served as a guide to monitor development of the vision with the Creating the Future Team in Nine Mile Falls School District are as follows:

1. All students can and will learn;
2. Focus on student performance;
3. Accountable for outcomes, tighten emphasis on results;
4. Data based⁸;
5. More decentralized decision making;
6. Research based-vision driven;
7. Collaborative;
8. Strong commitment to continuous, cooperative learning; and
9. Become a learning organization.

The list of revised assumptions which are currently the guide for the curriculum, instruction, and assessment development are included in Appendix B⁹.

The creation of an open relationship and the definition of rules and roles for restructuring the

⁸ The gathering of personally identifiable information on every man, woman and child in the United States is imperative to systems education.

⁹ The very last page of Appendix B is a document stating that ...

When a Paradigm Shifts:

- a. The past no longer controls or predicts change.
- b. New paradigm rules violate the fundamental principles of the old.
- c. Resistance increases; investors in the old paradigm "circle the wagons."
- d. Sitting in circled wagons, most people do not see that a shift has occurred.
- e. Most children are held prisoner in the wagons, which are driven (and circled) by adults.

Of course, this statement assumes the efficacy and legitimacy of the world view undergirding the paradigm shift.

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Nine Mile Falls School District into a "learning organization"¹⁰ began with a vertical slice of 60 community members, staff, students, and administrators who represented various interests within the community and school. They were selected to represent all stakeholders of the community with a cross representation of race; religion; gender; position and age. The community and District personnel and students were represented, as well as local businesses.¹¹

The roles were based on how do parents, community members, and staff work together to attain greater results for students? The rules as to who had and has responsibility for learning, designing and implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes for students results are continuously being refined. As for the relationship between parents and staff, many attempts are being made to provide representation for all stakeholders in the community and the District. All stakeholders are encouraged to participate in the learn and design process by serving on one of the District committees¹². Those committees are as follows:

1. Curriculum Design Team;
2. Assessment Team;
3. Creating the Future Team;
4. Levy and Bond Committee;
5. Transportation Committee; and
6. Policy and Procedure Committee.

This process for strategic improvement planning is based on the premise of Learn and then Design, which is a rational comprehensive planning model. All decisions in these committees are based on the data and research which best match with the mission, values/beliefs, and essential learning goals agreed upon by the Creating the Future Team and adopted by the Board of Directors of the Nine Mile Falls School District.

The intent of the Strategic Improvement Process has been to promote a healthy system with a balance of accountability and autonomy. The goals of the three meetings with the team were creation of a mission statement, values/belief statement, and guidelines for the creation of essential student learning goals. These concepts were defined as follows:

1. Mission = States the basic purpose of the organization;
2. Values = States what we hold in our hearts and minds about

¹⁰ As in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*; Senge, Peter; 1994. Senge is referenced heavily throughout education reform material.

¹¹ Unfortunately, as these "Stakeholders" were *selected* not *elected*, they can be said to represent no one other than those doing the selecting. In addition, the community of sixty did not enter into the process on an informed basis of what the process was or what it intended to achieve. Many had no idea why they were there. One lady believed the meetings were set up as a way to "get to know her neighbors." As such, to claim the input of this group had meaning is to admit the process is seriously flawed and biased.

¹² The basic question of whether these teams or this process should exist under our form of government or in the school district has never been addressed. Parents, community members have only been allowed to participate under the rules set down by the process. Beyond that, parents had to be *chosen* to be on the teams. This was done to ensure that bias toward restructuring was maintained in the makeup of the teams.

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children and learning;

3. Essential Learning Goals = States what students should know and be able to do when they leave Nine Mile Falls School District.

From the three meetings the team developed four outcomes which illustrate the shared meaning, consensus process in vision and goal development, and trust in the continuing communication process¹³. They are contained in Appendix B as follows.

1. The District Mission Statement.
2. A set of comprehensive District Values/Beliefs statements.
3. Guidelines for the delineated student learning goals. The overall goals for students were to be the following:¹⁴
 - a. effective problems solvers/decision makers;
 - b. effective communicators;
 - c. caring and responsible citizens;
 - d. global and regional contributors;
 - e. self-confident individuals;
 - f. good workers;
 - g. lifelong learners. Later the essential learnings were incorporated with the four learning goals adopted by Washington State (HB 1209). See Matrix of [Essential Learnings](#), Appendix B.
4. The selection of a seven-member, [Creating the Future Leadership Team](#). They were appointed to further develop the strands and component skills of the essential learnings for a Nine Mile Falls Graduate and to continue communication with the community.¹⁵

The Creating the Future Leadership Team reviewed Lake Washington's [The Skills, Knowledge & Attitudes A Lake Washington Graduate Needs to Succeed](#); [Alaska's Youth: Ready to Work?](#); [ESHB 1209](#); Steven Carson, [Washington's Learning Goals](#); and the [SCANS Report for America 2000](#). **Appendix B.** Lake Washington's document was chosen as the model that most reflected the views and goals of the community of 60. **Adjustments were made to the Lake Washington document to more closely reflect the views of the Nine Mile Falls Community. Then the Washington State Basic Education Act (1993) was melded into the essential learnings. This is the document we are currently working from in designing the curriculum**

¹³ Later it would be claimed that the essential learnings were the result of the meetings of the [community of sixty](#). This is no where close to accurate. The purpose of the community of sixty was to accept authorship and ownership (ie, support) of outcomes that were predetermined. In the words of another, they were facilitated into believing the outcomes were their own.

¹⁴ Compare these with the goals of Dr William Spady, guru of outcome based education, published in 1991:

- a. Self Directed Learners;
- b. Quality Producers and Performers;
- c. Goal Setters and Pursuers;
- d. Collaborative Contributors;
- e. Creative, Complex, and Perceptive Thinkers;
- f. Innovative Problem Solvers; and
- g. Effective Communicators.

¹⁵ At this point, with the mounting opposition to what was going on, "community" was defined as those who agreed with the process or didn't actively oppose it (tacit approval).

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and assessment for Nine Mile Falls graduates. Appendix B.

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Component 2: Curriculum and Organizational Guidelines

This Creating the Future Leadership team was selected to complete a variety of organizational duties throughout the Strategic Improvement Process. Immediate responsibilities would include the following:

- a. To represent and provide information to the community in a consistent manner throughout the future of educational development in the Nine Mile Falls School District.
- b. To guide and assist in the continued development of the essential learning goals for a Nine Mile Falls graduate.

Long Term involvement for The Creating the Future Leadership Team would include the following responsibilities:

- a. To represent, communicate, and monitor for the community in the policy and procedure development for curriculum and assessment with the Curriculum Development Team.
- b. To represent and communicate in the collection of promising practices currently in use and to select, and develop curriculum, staff development processes, instructional processes, and assessment processes to match the established mission, beliefs, and essential learning goals.
- c. To represent and communicate to the community with the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instructional Development Teams throughout the Learn and Design process.

The Creating the Future Leadership Team developed the first draft of the Essential Learnings throughout March and April, 1993 and presented these to the Board on May 20, 1993. The Nine Mile Falls Board of Directors made suggestions for revision. The essential learnings were revised and communicated to the community and staff through committee and in-service meetings, and the local paper in August, September and October, 1993. Several revisions were made based on this input and the Essential Learnings Matrix was adopted by the Nine Mile Falls Board of Directors in October, 1993.

Copies of resource articles and a Bibliography used to develop the Mission Statement, Value/Beliefs, and Essential Learning Goals are contained in Resource Section of this document. Copies of the Mission, Values/Beliefs, and Essential Learning Goals documents are contained in **Appendix B**.

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Component 3: Assessment Accountability

A necessary component of the Strategic Improvement Process is to create a baseline Data Profile for the organization. This profile is based on the Rational Comprehensive model of planning and in this context is utilized to create a shared meaning and understanding of where the organization needs to initiate and align assessment and evaluation with future curriculum and instruction development. Therefore, it is Goal Based in its purpose (Clark, 1981). The goals of this profile are to set priorities for district activities, provide direction for future learn and design processes, align major strands of District work with the mission and student learning goals, and determine leverage points for improving student learning. The major strands of District work considered for alignment, goal prioritizing, and District/School responsibility are as follows:

- a. Core Technologies: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment;
- b. School Improvement;
- c. Community Relations;
- d. Budget;
- e. Facilities;
- f. Staff Development;
- g. Personnel;
- h. State or Federal Mandates;
- i. Special Programs;
- j. Extracurricular Activities; and
- k. Other_____.

The question to be clarified throughout the assessment and alignment processes is which of these have documented evidence as to the mission/learning goals being primary drivers of the activity and the results.

Dr Jaime Seaburg, the District Psychologist and Special Services Director, compiled the Data Profile documents and shared it as a "snapshot" of the District's data from the 1992-93 school year at the September, 1993 Creating the Future Leadership (CTF) and Curriculum Design Team (CDT) Meetings. See Appendix C.

According to these data, the District assessment and testing in the past ten years have not been consistent as to tests utilized, and there were no previous District goals, other than State Student Learning Objectives to correlate with the assessment and testing processes. The policies, personnel decisions, curriculum adoptions, instructional and student assessment, budget decisions, and community relations were not coordinated with an identified, agreed upon, and communicated set of standards or desired student results. The questions which emerged were:

- a. What testing and/or assessment tools match with the District Mission, Values/Beliefs, and Essential Learnings?
- b. What do we want to know about student learning by assessing and testing?
- c. What assessment tools will measure the results we have identified and seek to achieve?

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- d. What assessment tools will measure the District level results and also measure the necessary components desired by the State?
- e. What assessment procedures will guide our activities at District and School level to achieve our desired essential learnings and measure student learning?

As an outcome of this information, the Assessment Team has become an increasingly important component in the Strategic Planning Process. This team has utilized the Learn and Design process to create research binders for education of community members and staff as to the various assessment formats available. The areas in which specific formats are most useful for assessment of activities and measuring of student results will be identified by this team. See Appendix D.

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Component 4: Curriculum Prioritization & Alignment

In November, 1993 the Creating the Future Leadership Team met with the Curriculum Design and Assessment Teams to set one priority for initial curriculum development from the identified five strands on the essential learnings matrix. This process was then duplicated with the community at all four District buildings on January 11, 1994 and again on February 15, 1994. **These meetings were established to reach consensus of where to initiate the curriculum, instruction, and assessment alignment.** The community was asked to rate their concerns as to which of the five strands they felt needed to be addressed first. The five strands are as follows:

- a. Communication;
- b. Problem-solving and Decision-making;
- c. Concerned and Caring Citizens;
- d. Regional and Global Awareness; and
- e. Employability.

The majority of community and staff who attended agreed upon the Problem-solving and Decision-making strand as being the primary academic¹⁶ concern to begin alignment within the School District. As a community, with the school being a part of the community, the goal was felt to be creating concerned and caring citizens in contrast to creating problem-solvers and decision-makers.

In tandem with the community prioritizing process, the staff have been recording the instructional and curriculum practices which have been successful with students in the past. These have been defined as the collection of "promising practices". The "promising practices" have been aligned with the essential learning goals on matrices and are compiled in **Appendix E**.

The compiled "promising practices" will allow staff to analyze the data, celebrate the areas of strength, and guide the CTF, CDT, and Assessment teams in setting goals for future curriculum, staff, instructional strategy, and assessment development. The goals set in these areas will then drive the design and development of the following functions:

- a. Policy and procedure to be inclusive of the Strategic Planning Process;
- b. Alignment of curriculum, staff, instruction, and assessment development;
- c. Assist in monitoring and development of practices for hiring, supervision, and evaluation of personnel;
- d. Create guidelines for budget priorities, levy and bond decisions, and facilities; and
- e. Provide a guideline and coordination process for grant writing priorities.

Site-based teams will be able to utilize these goals to develop policy and procedures for guiding site-based decision-making. The goals and procedures will also provide a guideline for evaluating the site's effectiveness as it pertains to student learning results. The site-based decision will then be evaluated as to how well it supports student results. Over a two year

¹⁶ These strands can only be called academic if academic has been redefined to mean behavioral.

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period an Effective Schools Survey¹⁷ will be revised and facilitated with assistance from Gonzaga University. The survey will be administered and the results compiled and communicated in the spring of 1994 and again in the Spring of 1996. This survey has been chosen to provide baseline data to assess perceived systemic change towards improved student results. The systemic improvement process will have been implemented, monitored, and evaluated through this rational comprehensive and goal based assessment. Through this survey systemic success will be measured, and results will be provided which will serve as a guide for future decision making, goal setting, and use of resources to promote improved student results.

¹⁷ The Effective Schools Survey turned out to be a pre-printed form from National Computer Systems. What parents were shown as the survey and the actual survey did not match. What parents were shown was a typewritten copy of the questions, whereas the actual the form was computer generated and barcoded along one side and across the bottom. While School District officials claimed the responses to the survey were "confidential", they refused to disclose what was barcoded onto the forms. When members of the community objected, the district claimed the results of the surveys were never compiled. When asked to disclose where the surveys were, the district refused to disclose that information except to say that Gonzaga University had them.

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Component 5: Implications from Promising Practices

On March 9th and 10th, 1994 the Creating the Future Leadership Team (CTF), Curriculum Design Team (CDT), and Assessment Team (A-Team) met with facilitators Tom and Nancy Olsen, from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. At these meetings, the staff and community representatives worked with the community-prioritized B-strand, Decision-making and Problem-solving skills. The promising practices in this area were not detailed enough to expand upon. This group decided that the definition of decision-making and problem-solving was not well enough explained in this strand in order for these skills to be delineated throughout the subject areas and basic skills.

The CTF, CDT, and the A-Team discussed the future directions and goals for curriculum, assessment, and staff development pertaining to decision-making and problem-solving skill development. This group decided that a more specific definition addressing this strand would need to be developed. Accordingly, the Nine Mile Falls School District is looking at a transitional¹⁸ curriculum process. This was identified as infusing the five strand areas of the Essential Learning Matrix throughout the basic subject areas. The basic subject areas are defined as the following:

- a. Math;
- b. Science;
- c. Reading and Language Arts;
- d. Health and Physical Education;
- e. Social Studies, Arts, and Humanities;
- f. English; and
- g. Vocational/Technology Education.

The next steps for the group are first to research decision-making and problem-solving skills and create a more inclusive definition to preface this section in the District curriculum handbook. The second step will be to develop examples and intent statements for all of the essential learnings (48 total). Then third to take this section with the promising practices back to the staff to more fully define the promising practices and to address staff development needs based on this portion of the document. Lastly, to distribute the document to the committee and to come back together to discuss revisions of the document and future directions for curriculum, assessment, and staff development.

The District Mission directly speaks to the partnership with the community. With this in mind, the document will also be made available to the community and to all staff members for their input. The District includes parents and patrons who are invited to participate on all committees and give input for revision. An active Parent Coalition is developing in the Nine Mile Falls community. Concerns have been voiced and published in the local newspaper as to the inclusion of Outcomes Based Education processes. This group is concerned about the District consulting contract with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. All parental concerns will be taken into consideration as we move forward in the areas of curriculum,

¹⁸ There are three phases to systemic change (aka, systems education, aka OBE): traditional (objective), transitional (objective/subjective) and transformational (subjective).

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assessment, and staff development. It is a strong belief in our District and community that "parents are the child's first teachers, and they will be respected as advocates for their children."¹⁹

Our **contract with the NWREL for facilitation** is coming to an end. We are considering new directions for our District with the culmination of this research and development organization. These directions include the creation of new research and design priorities and duties of the newly formed site-based, learning improvement teams. These teams are currently developing grants to apply for the state-supported HB 1209 funding for staff development. Included within these building-based plans are the research and design of instructional processes developed around the B-strand of decision-making and problem-solving. Future considerations may be collaborative action research with the assistance of Gonzaga University, School of Education faculty²⁰. This process may begin with the Nine Mile Falls staff designing a research question based on measuring improved student learning results. Then the faculty, working in the capacity of "guides on the side," would assist in a sound measurement and data collection process. This collaborative process would lend direction to the next steps for curriculum, assessment, and staff development as they pertain to the remaining four strands of the Essential Learning Matrix, as well as the assessment of the learning improvement grant projects for the B-strand.

The Assessment Team has completed researching various methods of measuring learning. The results of the research were compiled to share with the community. The District has also received assistance from Gonzaga University to provide information to the community and staff in the area of assessment. Presentations have been made to the Restructuring Class and notebooks and videotapes are ready for the community and staff to review. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory has provided additional research in the areas of curriculum, assessment, and higher order thinking skills for the curriculum and assessment design for the B-strand; decision-making and problem-solving. The CTF, CDT, and A-Teams will meet when the B-strand, decision-making and problem-solving document is compiled and revised, and after the assessment research has been reviewed by the staff and community. This joint team meeting will be to focus on the design and adoption of a mutually agreed upon District and community pilot testing project for the B-strand. The test currently being reviewed is a Criterion-referenced Critical Thinking Test for basic application of critical thinking skills to commonly explored problems. This test is most appropriate for 2nd through 6th graders. The District assessment pilot may be at the elementary level, and success will be measured by improvement on designated critical thinking questions in the reading and math strands of the California Achievement Tests, as well as pre and post use of the Criterion-referenced Critical Thinking Test.

Various questions have been asked by the community, the CTF, the CDT, the A-Team, and the

¹⁹ That right was respected so long as the parent/s agreed to be the silent partner of the school. Those who refused to jump on the train and head off into oblivion, who asked the hard questions and demanded answers and accountability, did not see their rights respected.

²⁰ Gonzaga University entered into a [partnership](#) with the Nine Mile Falls School District. They would subsequently withdraw from that partnership. While their withdrawal was blamed on the Parents Coalition, the real reason they withdrew was because they received a less than favorable reception when they agreed to help the embattled superintendent sell education reform to parents who had been subjected to months of district officials not being truthful with them.

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staff. These questions are as follows:

- a. Should the District continue with the facilitation of the NWREL since they are related to the concern about Outcomes Based Education and government control? With the end of their contract with us is it a natural time to redirect and look at other options, or is better to maintain continuity? Or, is the current frustration with the process a message from the Creating the Future Team to make a change?
- b. An available option would be to request for Gonzaga University to serve as our partners in facilitation, research, and assessment design. Would this serve as a viable option to the community?
- c. What is the best communication process to include all levels of the organization and the community in our Creating the Future Process?
- d. Is the pace of our project too fast at the current time for staff and community? Should we slow down or just redirect our efforts with new facilitation and additional research?
- e. With the assistance and use of the modems donated by Gonzaga University would it serve our community and District to provide release time for the site-based decision-making teams or learning improvement teams to do our own research and development?
- f. Would our community and staff be more receptive to the local and site-based driven model at this time? If so, what will it look like?
- g. Can the District afford the necessary release time for this process? Will the learning improvement team grant plans assist in this process? If so, how?

The research on effective change in schools indicates that the more thoughtful the involvement and time spent in designing change, the more it will ultimately result in speedier implementation and ensure that our District really does have a shared vision in community and staff. With this in mind, we must remember that "evolution comes on little cat paws," and take the necessary time and thought to decide, in partnership with our community where the next steps will be for the Nine Mile Falls School District and the Creating the Future systemic change process. We must not lose sight of our partnership purpose—improved student results.

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Questions for the Planning Applicant

These questions are based on the "Cornerstones of Planned Change" (Hanson, 1991) and the "Seven Types of Plan Derailment" (Benveniste, 1989). This focus is based on the recent and sudden change of leadership in the Nine Mile Falls School District in the midst of a comprehensive Strategic Planning process.

- a. What assumptions do you believe form the foundation for the strategic planning model currently in place in the Nine Mile Falls School District?
- b. What are the major strengths of the Strategic Planning model that could assist our District at this time?
- c. Is this the right time to continue strategic planning in the Nine Mile Falls School District? What or why not?
- d. How does the current Strategic Planning model in the Nine Mile Falls School District compare with a comprehensive vision for an effective school district?
- e. What other models could be linked to this planning model that would share the common assumptions, mission, and values for the Nine Mile Falls School District?
- f. We have currently initiated a site-based decision-making model. How do will this merge with the Strategic Planning Model utilized by the Creating the Future Team?
- g. What role will the community and the partnership interests provide in the site-based decision-making model? How will these interests be represented in the Strategic Planning and site-based decision-making currently in place in the District?
- h. How will you provide for a communication system for the community and partnership interests with the Nine Mile Falls School District?
- i. How do you envision providing the community with on-going representation within the District systemic change process?
- j. Do you feel there are boundaries or limits to collaboration in the systemic change process? If so, what?
- k. Do various established groups within the Nine Mile Falls Community and School District have specific expertise that pertains to specific tasks within the Strategic Planning process? If so who and what?
- l. What role do you see the Nine Mile Falls School Board holding in the Strategic Planning Process and the site-based decision-making process?
- m. Does the Nine Mile Falls School District intend to coordinate the Strategic Planning process with the state regulated guidelines and /or mandates from the Student Learning Commission? If so, how?
- n. What are the driving beliefs about effective change in schools and what research or experience are these beliefs based on?

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