

The Learning Network

A Newsletter for Districts and High Schools Engaged in Redesign Work

May 2009 | Volume 7 Issue 4

Save the Date!

The summer Critical Friends Group training will be held August 17-20, 2009 at Highline High School.

This four-day workshop will prepare teachers, administrators, and other school staff to coach or participate effectively in a Critical Friends Group (CFG), a type of professional learning community with a focus on looking at student work, collaboration, reflection, and inquiry.

This workshop will present the research base and philosophical goals for CFGs, then move on to the practical ways to operate and structure CFGs in your school. You will leave with a toolbox brimming with protocols and activities and a plan for starting CFGs at your site.

For more information, check out <http://www.cesnorthwest.org>.

Scale Is the Transformative Goal

By Rick Lear, Director with Jude Garnier, Director of Adult Learning

Over the nine years of the Small Schools Project's (SSP) existence, we have worked with several hundred schools in more than fifty districts in Washington State.

We have worked with elementary, middle, and high schools, and with districts that received three- to five-year grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to redesign various aspects of their schools or districts, or both, to produce stronger and more equitable outcomes for students.

A small number of those schools or districts received a second round of grants from the same foundation, resulting in seven to nine years of sustained support in the form of discretionary money, ongoing professional development, and leadership coaching for building and district administrators and teacher leaders. SSP provided the bulk of the professional development and coaching support.

We have also worked closely with a set of high schools over the past three years to promote service learning as a central strategy for improving student performance, and we work closely with the Atlanta Public Schools in their high school redesign efforts.

While we have worked at each level of district systems, high schools have been the heart of our work. Helping high schools become places where each student is known, respected, challenged, and served well has been our lifeblood. Because district leadership is so fundamental to creating and supporting such schools, much of our recent work has been working with district leaders to help align their systems.

We don't yet know what high schools will look like in the 21st century, but the national conversation about high schools is different than at the start of this decade.

It is only within the past three years that the goal of graduating *each student* ready for college, career, and citizenship has been taken seriously

at a national level. Access to a quality high school education is increasingly seen as a civil rights issue.

The expectation that high schools will sort students—that is, make *a priori* decisions about who is worthy of further education and who is not—is under assault as never before. “Each student” and “college-ready” is a powerful coupling. (Elsewhere in this issue, two superintendents and a teacher share their perspective on this pairing.)

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But the most powerful lesson for us over these years has been the complexity of change in the face of an array of forces working to maintain the status quo, even if unintentionally so. A short list includes:

- schools designed to *sort students into predetermined slots* for an economy that disappeared decades ago;
- an *inflexible hierarchy* and set of job descriptions that often serve to silence expertise;
- *outmoded approaches to teaching*, buttressed by long-standing cultural norms about schools and schooling;
- *union contracts that constrain rather than respect* teacher and administrator judgment and professionalism;
- a code of silence that keeps administrators and teachers from dealing with *issues of adult incompetence*;
- an assessment system better suited to *assembly-line production* than human learning;

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Scale Is the Transformative Goal

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- an *over-regulated state system*, more interested in accountability than achievement, that stifles innovation and possibility at every level;
- and *a view of student capacity as innate and predetermined*, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Yet some school and district leaders have been willing to face these challenges and work to transform their schools and districts into places that serve each student well, and that have high aspirations for each student who comes into their care. It has been our privilege to work with seven such districts over the last several years. For each of them, the issue of sustainability looms large, as it has for every other school and district that has attempted, in good faith, to change the way school works for its students.

The history of school and district reform is replete with ambitious efforts that disappear with a whimper once financial and other support ends. Yet each of the seven districts has determined that each student college-ready remains their goal. What can possibly help their commitment stand in the face of so many other failed efforts? How can their work, which is well-begun—but only begun—be sustained?

A provocative article by Cynthia E. Coburn (*Educational Researcher*, August/September 2003) may be especially helpful as schools and districts move forward. Coburn looked at “scale,” and sees sustainability as a part of this larger construct.

Coburn first discounts the prevailing notion of scale, which is most always simply a count of the number of classrooms, schools, or districts that have adopted a particular practice, or design, or set of materials. Scale, she claims, is a far more sophisticated matter, and identifies four key aspects: depth, spread, sustainability, and shift in reform ownership. A brief summary of Coburn’s description looks like this:

Depth—Getting below the surface of schooling and reaching “into the classroom to influence instruction.”

This deep change “goes beyond the surface or procedures (such as changes in materials, classroom organization, or the addition of specific activities) to alter teachers’ beliefs (teachers’ underlying assumptions about how students learn, the nature of subject matter, expectations for students, or what constitutes effective instruction), norms of social interaction (teacher and student roles in the classroom, patterns of teacher and student talk, and the manner in which teachers and students treat one another), and underlying pedagogical principles in the curriculum.”

Sustainability—Getting to scale takes place over time, but must be connected to sustaining the original reform concept. “Competing priorities, changing demands, and teacher and

administrator turnover” serve as common barriers to sustaining the reform. External reform efforts are especially vulnerable as resources are pulled away.

Two critical questions must be asked to ensure the work is sustained: 1) “What strategies are effective at developing and nurturing depth in teachers’ enactment of the reform?” and 2) “How can reformers work to create the key conditions in schools and districts that support and sustain classroom change over time?”

Spread—The traditional definition of scale has been the notion of spreading the reform to more schools and classrooms. However, “...scaling up must involve more than the spread of activity structures, materials, and classroom organization; it must also involve the spread of underlying beliefs, norms, and principles to additional classrooms and schools...”

Rather than thinking of spread solely in terms of expanding outward to more and more schools and classrooms, this emphasis on the normative highlights the potential to spread reform-related norms and pedagogical principles *within* a classroom, school, and district.”

Shift in reform ownership—Moving from a reform being seen as an externally driven effort (either by a foundation/funding source or a state/district mandate) to an internally owned reform.

This is not about “buy in” to a reform, but rather a significant shift where the knowledge of and authority for the reform shifts deeper into the system—staff and leaders maintain the reform even in the presence of competing or changing priorities. The shifting of ownership can lead to the development of capacity to generate ongoing funding for the reform.

Eight Elements of Sustainability

1. The work must be driven by a *strong moral purpose*.
2. There must be a *commitment to change the context* (the structure and culture) at *all levels*.
3. *Working across classrooms and schools* must be in place to *build capacity* within the system to have full impact.
4. “*Intelligent accountability*” (collaborative cultures that demand results) must be in place and “*vertical relationships*” (between teachers and principals, between principals and central office leaders) must be strengthened around support and accountability.
5. *Deep learning* (“continuous improvement, adaptation, and collective problem solving”) must be happening in every part of the system (from the classroom to the board room).
6. Attention to *long and short-term results* must be in place (short-term results build the momentum and the willingness to invest).
7. Keeping an eye on *energy levels* to ensure a healthy balance between “full engagement” and time for replenishment.
8. Ensuring the *long lever of leadership*—building a critical mass of leaders who can lead through the adaptive challenges of the work.

Fullan, M. (2005) *Leadership and Sustainability: System Thinkers in Action*. Corwin Press.

For us, Coburn's argument is persuasive. It provides a broader context than the single measure of sustainability, and acknowledges that we have always been able to sustain excellence in some respects: a stunning teacher here, a great school there, a powerful leader in the school across town, or the next district over. We feel lucky when we encounter such excellence, especially as parents.

But isolated examples are a far cry from, in one district leader's words, "a distinguished teacher in every classroom in every school," or a distinguished set of schools in a district that understands how to support schools well.

Framing the matter of reform in terms of Coburn's definition of scale allows us, counter-intuitively, to look more closely at what occurs on the ground, in classrooms and schools. It places students and their experience of school at the center of our work, and it makes more concrete the intertwined aspects of sustainable change.

It also allows us to make useful links to other work related to sustainability by leaders like Michael Fullan, whose thoughts about sustainability mirror significant aspects of Coburn's thinking.

In the seven districts, we see elements of scale at work and aspects of Fullan's sustainability elements [see box, page 2].

- No district refers to graduating each student ready for college, work, and citizenship as "Gates work" anymore. Each district owns the work, at least organizationally.
- Most districts are realigning their resources to support the goal, even in difficult financial times. Some have made it the centerpiece of their strategic plan.

Instructional Coaching Puts Teaching Concepts into Real-Life Practice

By Brinton S. Ramsey

Learning is a courageous act. It requires openness, vulnerability, willingness, and curiosity. To learn is to venture into the unknown and try to know it. To learn is to change, and change is unsettling. And yet, this is our job as educators, as students, as human beings.

At the Coalition of Essential Schools NW, our understanding of adult learning [see box next page] forms the foundation for our instructional coaching.

Last year, CESNW coaches Kate Murphy and Katy Karshney worked closely with a large urban high school in Atlanta Public Schools that was breaking into four small schools as part of a district-wide restructuring plan.

At the teachers' request, Kate and Katy agreed to focus on reading and thinking strategies and built their coaching around

- Several districts are diving deeply into changing classroom practice, as well as school norms about teacher responsibility.
- Three districts have created small schools and have moved quickly to a fine-grained focus on teaching practice based on personalization.
- Districts have extended the college-ready goal to their alternative high schools, giving "each student" new meaning.

Some issues are tougher—attending to energy levels, for instance, or being held hostage to the "Bartleby response" by some teachers and administrators who invoke the right of personal preference—"I would prefer not to"—when changes do not suit them, for instance. Or building reciprocal accountability mechanisms that, in turn, support distributed leadership.

Scale and sustainability take root only over time. Schools and districts claim that time only by demonstrating an unwavering single-mindedness in the face of constant demands and enticements to do yet some other thing. Look up, and you are lost.

August Wilson, the famous American playwright who lived his last years in Seattle, spoke eloquently to students at the Center School in Seattle when that small school opened several years ago. "It is always a privilege to work at the edge of your craft," he said. "Never forget that."

He closed his talk with this: "When everything else is said and done, you have to do the work. You have to do the work. You have to do the work."

Our hope for those of you who work in the schools and districts we hold dear is that you will recognize your privilege, and find the courage to do the work. ◀TLN

a framework of "four buckets" of thinking and reading skills: 1) preparing students to read, 2) engaging students in reading, 3) connecting to the text, and 4) using the text.

"We built our monthly visit around this framework, taking one bucket at a time and working with it through a professional development process, what we refer to as 'the three legs of PD'—activities that would use personal experience, text, and image," says Kate.

But after the first visit, they quickly realized that they needed to add a fourth leg, modeling, to test teacher assumptions.

"Many of the teachers didn't believe that what we were suggesting could be done with their students," says Katy. "It was abundantly clear that there had to be modeling with their students in that context for them to even entertain the possibility."

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Instructional Coaching

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During the course of the school year, the coaches taught eight to ten lessons in five different classrooms across subject areas—math, science, social studies, literacy, history, AP English, and health—to show that the reading and thinking strategies they were offering could be used across content areas.

Kate and Katy taught some classes more than once, basing their lessons each time on the content the teachers were teaching. They sometimes used the texts the teachers planned to use and at other times, brought in their own articles.

Discussing which text to use generated useful conversations with teachers as Kate explains, “Sometimes the material from the teachers isn’t compelling, but what we’ve discovered is it becomes a conversation about, ‘does this engage anybody? OK, we’ll try it and see what you think.’ That conversation has been powerful.”

Throughout the year, Kate and Katy worked as a team, with Kate doing most of the modeling and Katy working with the teachers, using observation and debrief protocols and organizers to help them see Kate’s intentional teaching moves and track student responses.

The ability to discuss what they had seen and critique the teaching moves was empowering for the teachers and could be somewhat humbling for the coaches.

“It feels so great to come in and tell a trainer, ‘Look, I don’t think this right here is going to work with our kids,’ and they are open to suggestions,” recounts an Atlanta history teacher.

Through modeling in a real-life context, Kate and Katy were able to highlight both the content (reading and thinking strategies) and the process (the need for flexibility in responding to students’ needs).

“Not only do they model the strategies and protocols in sessions with teachers but they feel free [to work] directly with our students, and try those strategies on our students in an unrehearsed setting,” says an Atlanta English teacher. “They take the same group of students that we work with on a day-to-day basis and let us see how effective their strategies are and that it does stand across all content areas.”

Adult Learning in Service of Improved Student Learning

In our work with teachers over the past eight years, we have found that for students to learn deeply, the adults who teach them must also learn and continue learning even while they are teaching.

If the principles of the 3 Rs—relationships, relevance, and rigor—are important for students, they are just as important for teachers.

Instruction must be personalized—honoring teachers’ interests, curiosity, strengths, and contributions, as well as eliciting and challenging teachers’ preexisting understanding of the subject matter.

Instruction must include frequent formative assessment, which helps make teachers’ thinking visible to themselves and their peers. And, instruction must take place within a community of teacher-learners, providing opportunities to build on one another’s knowledge, offer feedback, and refine one’s thinking.

Adult Learning: Turning the Corner to Instructional Change can be found at www.smallschoolsproject.org.

At one point, Katy was modeling a reading and thinking strategy with a science class and was not successful. “It went down in flames like you wouldn’t believe,” she said. Afterwards, she came to the post-observation debrief being led by Kate to talk about the lesson.

Katy freely admitted to the teachers that her lesson had not gone well, and her willingness to debrief the lesson generated a fruitful discussion among the teachers about what they thought worked and what they would change.

“In this case, a humbling moment became an opportunity to model collaborative conversations among teachers as well as build capacity in teachers, to analyze a lesson’s strengths and weaknesses and to give and receive constructive feedback,” says Kate.

As a coaching strategy, modeling incorporates and integrates relationship building, relevance, and rigor in ways that both challenge and support teacher learning. Modeling encourages collective and individual reflection and practice as teachers talk over what they have seen and try it for themselves in their own classrooms.

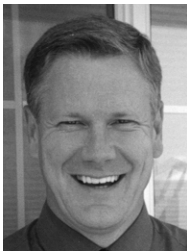
As with students, when teachers can see something in practice, try it out for themselves, talk about it with peers, and practice it again, they learn. They change. They grow. And so do their students. ◀TLN



Participants discuss college-ready standards at the May professional development session sponsored by CESNW/Small Schools Project.

Preparing Each Student to Graduate College-Ready

We invited three educators to reflect on their work transforming their districts, schools, and classrooms to graduate all students college-ready. In the commentaries and reflections below, each writer shares a unique experience and set of insights. We thank them for their contribution to *The Learning Network* and for their commitment to each student.



Ensuring the Success of All Students

Mark Johnson
Superintendent

Nooksack Valley School District

In the Nooksack School District, when we talk about each student college-ready, we start the conversation with the words “each student.” This defines the “who” in this mission and raises the bar for all of us, to a height that has yet to be scaled. We would not need to change and improve our system if the call to duty was for “some” students, as that was achieved long ago.

The phrase “each student” also establishes a sense of equity, social justice, and urgency. It requires that our strategies, initiatives, and improvement efforts become adaptive. There are no ready-made first order changes and technical answers that solve the challenge that “each student” poses for us. It pushes on our beliefs and values, both as individuals and as a collective community. Our conversations about graduating all students college-ready do not change according to the audience.

What we have learned, however, is that the conversation needs to be on-going, with both our internal and external community. We are continually engaging in this conversation with new staff and new parents. Also, as we take on new and more adaptive strategies, various stakeholders occasionally need a refresher on the necessity of our college-ready mission.

Since 2000, our mission has been *Ensuring the Success of All Students*. We established a theory of action that says:

1) improvement of the instructional core is the key variable in achieving this mission, 2) collaborative adult learning resulting in improved learning and teaching is the main vehicle to achieve the mission, and 3) this is a system and leadership responsibility and imperative.

We see the college-ready for all focus as a way to specifically define our mission. Previously, success for all was measured by traditional means such as WASL scores and graduation rates.

Examining how we might measure college-ready for all caused us to expand our measures and targets. We talked openly about the fact that the WASL was only one measure and that meeting standard did not mean ready for post-secondary life.

“The phrase “each student” establishes a sense of equity, social justice, and urgency.”

Developing less traditional college-ready measures pushed us to find new ways to improve. Through this process, we have developed other school and classroom-based measures as interim outcomes to supplement college-ready ultimate outcomes. We also created system-wide measures and milestones that begin with kindergarten-ready measures and conclude with college-ready.

During the eight years that we have participated in Gates Foundation education initiatives, our theory of action about the instructional core and our belief in accomplishing this work with and through people has not changed. In fact, it has only been strengthened. Many lessons have been learned during this time:

1. We learned about the importance of a clearly articulated and systemic theory of action.
2. We learned about the power of developing over time a collective vision of powerful instruction, and how the system can serve that development and implementation.
3. We realized that continuous improvement of the instructional core is life-time work, and that our system will never arrive at some mythical end point.
4. Our strong belief in the necessity of an engaged and committed staff has been reinforced. Attending to the systems mission, and to the spirits and care of those who work in the system, do not appear to us to be mutually exclusive.
5. We observed that beliefs and actions change together over time.

Systemic issues of sustainability, coherence, and alignment seem to always be a work in progress. They, in our estimation, are vital strategic considerations that require thoughtfulness and vigilance. Through it all, we feel blessed to have been the recipients of the Gates Foundation resources and access to such valued learning opportunities. Our school district, schools, and classrooms are better places for our children because of it.

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College-Ready Reflections

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No Longer a Gate Keeper

Casey Silbaugh
Teacher Coach

*Harrison Preparatory
Clover Park School District*

Flash back to the year 2000 at Clover Park High School in Lakewood, Washington, where I am teaching a classroom of juniors *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. After class, “Angela,” an African-American student, comes to me with a dilemma. She is offended by the derogatory terms used for African-Americans in the story and doesn’t feel comfortable reading past the first few chapters. I am a second-year teacher; I take her dilemma at face value.

The previous year, I taught in Bellevue and never had these types of conversations. Instead, my students were perfectly compliant, or at least seemed to be. They knew that *Huck Finn* was a classic American tale usually found on college reading lists. They knew this information because they had parents who had gone to college and expected them to go as well. In sharp contrast, many of my students at Clover Park were going to be the first to graduate high school, let alone go to college.

I didn’t realize it then, but I was holding a valuable key to Angela’s future in my hands. How could I make this story relevant to her, demand rigor, and help her prepare for a future that might include a four-year university?

The cultural contrast between my teaching experiences in Bellevue and Lakewood made me acutely aware of equity issues, and as I continued to teach at Clover Park for the next eight years, I began to question everything, including my own middle-class white upbringing and traditional education.

“It took seven years, but we finally got to the real conversations around equity, confronting our own biases and prejudices.”

To put it simply, I was confronted with a question of belief: Did I believe that every child could be successful in reaching a skill level that would make them prepared to go to college, even if they came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds? Or would I allow myself the excuse that it was someone else’s fault that they were not ready?

At Clover Park, we didn’t initially use the term “college-ready,” but once it was introduced, it began to make sense as I wrestled with ways to inspire students to achieve higher

standards. If I didn’t believe that they had a choice to go to four-year universities, then why teach them rigorous texts? Why push them hard to achieve beyond the WASL or other state tests? I realized that it would become a meaningless act of hypocrisy and empty ritual to teach *Huck Finn* just for the sake of teaching *Huck Finn* if I didn’t believe that each student could read and understand it.

College-ready meant that I would treat every student as if they wanted to apply to a four-year university in their senior year. I had to create curriculum that was relevant to them so that they would be motivated to learn it, but it also needed to bridge the gap between students’ skills and the skills that would be expected of them if they chose to attend a university.

Not only were there challenges in my classroom, but there were colleagues who were challenging the premise of all kids college-ready. I heard comments that reflected extreme frustration and apathy, such as “That student will never go to college. I don’t know why he’s taking that class.” Or, “Students today are so lazy and don’t understand the same things that students even 10 years ago understood.”

These comments were voiced by teachers at every experience level and in every subject area. I couldn’t deny their frustrations, but I refused to allow the apathy and resignation to turn my teaching into stone.

Fortunately, I wasn’t alone in my conviction. Several of my colleagues at Clover Park were also interested in changing their classroom practices, and we began exploring what it would look like at a systemic level to employ teaching techniques that would raise the bar and reach each student. This work was highly controversial, but it allowed for freedom and autonomy to make different choices that might create different results.

It took seven years, but we finally got to the real conversations around equity, confronting our own biases and prejudices.

Questions about grading practices, for example, became central to this conversation. Should we use a 4.0 grading scale instead of the traditional 100-point scale? And to what effect? How do we allow students to show competency rather than just work ethic? Do we reward effort? Just how much were our grades inflated?

These conversations held many conflicts since as we discussed them, our values were uncovered for others to see making us vulnerable. I am grateful for the objective rationality of my colleagues, as well as the passion that drove all of us to change a system that clearly wasn’t designed to make each student college-ready.

This year, I took a position as a teacher coach at Harrison Preparatory (HP), a new school in the district. As I acclimated myself, I noticed that the term “college prep” was often used to describe the culture that HP teachers were striving to create.

This term seemed to connote rigor, and was most often applied to classes and the work that students completed or attempted.

While I agree with this definition, I understand that my definition of “college prep” has also been influenced irrevocably by the ideas of “each student college-ready.” If I had to describe my definition to my colleagues, the biggest clarification would relate to the issue of equity. I agree that rigor is an important element, but “college-ready” means that it is equally applied to *each* student. This is subtle, but it fundamentally changes who is in a college prep class.

If we truly believe that each student deserves a chance to apply to a college, get in, take freshman level classes (as opposed to remedial classes that they must pay for), and be successful, then “each student college-ready” has huge implications for our work within schools.

Again, it is a question of gate keeping. If we subscribe to this definition and its implications, then we do not counsel students out of taking classes that are required for college entrance but that they may fail at first because of lack of preparation. Instead, as much as possible, we backward plan to anticipate these challenges and give them the tools to overcome.

As I look at my nine-week-old son, I see schools and education in a very new light. I think of the countless high school students who sat in my classrooms over the last nine years and wonder if they had parents like me, filled with anxiety and hope for the future of their child.

What I do know for sure is that our work with redesigning the system has allowed me some comfort in that I’m not allowing apathy and cynicism to take over. I know we have a long way to go, but perhaps when my son gets to high school, there will be a critical mass of educators who understand the true meaning of “each student college-ready.” I look forward to the day.



A Responsibility to Each Student

Art Jarvis
Superintendent

Tacoma School District

It seems like very few years ago, the term “college-ready” was not even discussed and the concept of each student being college-ready was totally absent from our education framework.

Understanding that we still have a long way to go in finding acceptance for the concept, I can now comfortably describe to people that each and every Tacoma student will not only have the right to choose or decline a post-high school path, but they will have all of the requisite skills and proficiencies to succeed in any choice they make.

The discussion about each student college-ready has provided a graphic conceptual framework that clarifies our work for many people. It elegantly states the premise that the accountability to make it happen rests with us for every child! In some ways this has made our work incredibly more complex and difficult. None of us can comfortably suggest that our work is complete, knowing how many students are not there yet.

Even more, it forces us to acknowledge that at the present time we do not know how to get to our goal with each student. It pushes us even further down the path of complementary learning—forging true partnerships with parents, community

“The discussion about each student college-ready has provided a graphic conceptual framework .

agencies, and service providers in order to dissolve the barriers and build the bridges to enable more students to get there.

During the past decade, I have been fortunate to work in Enumclaw, one of the first Gates Foundation Washington State district grantees, and now in Tacoma. The early work in Enumclaw, and particularly at the high school, allowed us to work on the vision, the research, the design, the capacity and the implementation of school redesign in service of graduating all students college-ready.

Prior to my arrival in Tacoma, three of the high schools received Gates Foundation Achiever grants that prepared and supported many students for college who might not have otherwise attended post-secondary education. I arrived in Tacoma with a wonderful opportunity to build on the Achiever legacy, while meeting the obvious challenges of schools in improvement status and serious achievement gaps.

Ultimately, the overall experience of tackling the toughest issues on behalf of our neediest students leaves little room to equivocate. Concepts of principle-based decision-making are crystallized in the experience. Decisions such as converting to full-day kindergarten become far simpler. The logistics may still be complex but the goal is not.

This fall in Tacoma, we will open SAMI—a new Science and Math Institute to be housed and operated out of the Point Defiance Zoo. At the heart is something all advocates of “each student college-ready” will recognize—we cannot look at the results of our traditional efforts in math and science without acknowledging that we won’t get there for each student.

I no longer remember the author of the phrase, “In the anomalies we see a glimpse of the future,” but to him or her I say—watch us in the schools. It may take us decades more, but we have begun the real change—from offering some students opportunities to learn, to replacing those opportunities with a responsibility to each student. ◀TLN

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A Newsletter for Districts and High Schools Engaged in Redesign Work

TLN



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Resources You Can Use

Case Studies of Systems Change

This four-part series illuminates the challenges of district and high school redesign processes and provides learning tools for district and high school personnel, technical assistance providers, and others involved in redesign efforts. Just completed in May 2009, this series includes case studies of four school districts and one analytical report.

Connecting the Dots: How Does District Change Affect Instructional Practice? This publication includes the first two case studies in our series. The cases examine the supports for instructional improvement in two school districts through the experience of individual teachers who are trying to change their practice in accordance with the district's reform work and their small school's vision and mission.

Funding the Vision: Resource Reallocation in Service of Student Achievement examines the process of resource allocation and reallocation in support of one school district's goal of graduating each student ready for college, career, and citizenship. This case study focuses on questions of equity in resource allocation and the leadership moves that a superintendent and other

administrators made during one year to better align their resources with the district mission and goals.

From Policy to Practice: Responding to a College-Ready Mandate focuses on how one high school responds when a district adopts a new policy—aligning graduation requirements to four-year university entrance requirements. The case study highlights the tension between wanting to graduate all students "on equal footing" and the challenge of making that a reality. Tensions are further complicated by a change in district leadership.

Creating a College-Ready System: Findings from Four Case Studies is an analytical report that looks across the four district case studies to reflect on what happens when a district commits to the goal of graduating each student ready for college, career, and citizenship. The report describes four challenge areas that highlight the need for greater connection, alignment, and capacity throughout the district systems if they are to reach this college-ready goal.

More information about how to download the case studies can be found at <http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/> under "Resources & Publications."

The Learning Network is a quarterly newsletter written and produced by the Small Schools Project, which is part of the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest Center.

The Project was created in 2000 to promote the understanding and development of small schools committed to providing rigorous, relevant learning experiences for all students, based on powerful relationships that support this learning. We provide support and assistance to high schools and districts committed to high school redesign and graduating all students college- and work-ready.

The Project offers a range of services, including school and district coaching and professional development activities for educators and administrators. We publish a variety of publications about small schools and produce hands-on tools to use in the classroom, school, district, and community.

For more information about the Project, to subscribe to this newsletter or print a copy, please visit <http://www.smallschoolsproject.org>.

To share information about your district or school's redesign efforts, or to suggest topics for this newsletter, please contact:

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