

The Learning Network

A Newsletter for Districts and High Schools Engaged in Redesign Work

October 2006 | Volume 5 Issue 1

CESNW/SSP Fall Events

CESNW Seminar

October 12

CESNW Service Learning
Network Meeting

October 18–19

All Students College-ready High
School Institute

October 19

CESNW Critical Friends Groups
Training

November 16–17

CESNW Seminar

November 30

CESNW Socratic Seminars

December 1,
December 2

College-Prepared Workshops

December 6,
December 7

Find Out More

More information is available
on our website. Visit:

www.smallschoolsproject.org

and click the “Events” link.

Shifting Focus, Unchanged Goals

In the last issue of *The Learning Network (TLN)*, we said good-bye to you, not knowing at the time whether the Small Schools Project would have continued funding to carry on its work. Happily, we’re alive and well and eager to continue to work with you to create better schools for students, believing that we will also create better work places for adults by doing so.

In this issue, we’ll talk a little bit about ourselves so you’ll know how we’re changing. But most of this and future issues will be about you—your schools and districts, and what you’re doing.

Our primary work in Washington State continues to be with grantees of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. We’re pleased to have received a three-year grant to continue to support the Foundation’s work in Washington.

A district focus

As the Foundation’s focus shifts to encompass district redesign and improvement, as well high school redesign, our work will reflect that shift. Our coaches will work at both the district and building levels, helping people at each level work more effectively and powerfully with one another and with students. The goal is to have a system perfectly aligned to graduate all students ready for college, work, and citizenship.

Part of each *TLN*, which will be published quarterly rather than monthly, will attend to district and systems issues, as well as school issues. Whatever the area of focus for any article, our goal is to help everyone remember that all of this attention to schools, districts, systems—to adult lives and concerns—is in the *service of students*, with the intention of enriching and broadening the life of each student who comes each day to school and who places her life, however eagerly or reluctantly, in our hands.

A CES focus

The Small Schools Project has merged with the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest (CESNW), which we believe will help us to operate more effectively. Our work has increasingly overlapped in recent years, and many of us have deep roots in

CES work in Washington State and nationally. You won’t see much difference in our day-to-day work with you—we’re not going to suggest that everyone adopt the CES 10 Common Principles, for instance (though you could!)—but all of our coaches will be conversant with both small schools and CES thinking. And we’ll invite you to participate in CESNW activities if you’re interested.

A service-learning focus

We’ll also share what we’re learning in some of our “non-Gates” work, since much of that overlaps substantially with our work with Gates grantees. For instance, CESNW received a federal Learn and Serve grant, and will work with eight high schools in Washington and the Portland area to promote service learning over the next three years.

A primary goal of the grant is to incorporate service learning into the core curriculum of each school, rather than to have it remain an add-on to be offered as time permits. For those of you working to add both breadth and depth to authentic or real-world student learning opportunities, as well as those of you who are taking seriously the “citizenship” aspect of the current focus on college, work, and citizenship, these schools will become important sources of ideas, practices, understanding, and examples over the next few years.

A college-ready focus

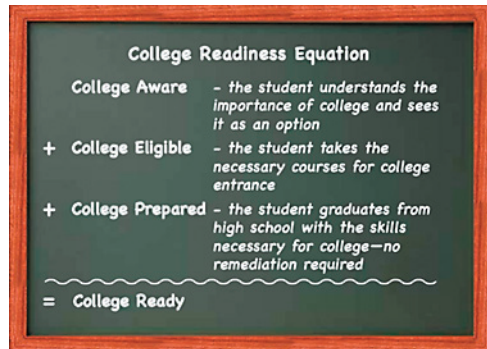
Most of this issue of *TLN* focuses on college-ready topics, and what several districts are doing to move in that direction. For some of you, this will be new information; for others, it will serve as a reminder of work that you’ve undertaken (or need to) as well.

We believe the most critical aspect of graduating all students college-ready is ensuring that *each* student graduates with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to enroll in any form of further education without needing to take remedial courses. Most of our energy will go toward helping schools and districts reach that goal, and we look forward to continuing that work side-by-side with you.

Rick Lear, Director

Washington Districts Commit to Graduating All Students College- and Work-ready

Seven Washington districts supported by the Small Schools Project have committed to graduating all their students college- and work-ready.



These districts include Bellingham, Clover Park, Highline, Kennewick, Mabton, Nooksack Valley, and West Valley.

The Learning Network recently spoke with leaders from four of these

districts to find out what their districts are doing to ensure all students graduate college aware, eligible, and prepared.

Community awareness is key

In Bellingham, awareness has been a big focus of the district's college-ready work.

"There was a general belief that we had a good school system," explains Superintendent Dale Kinsley. "We needed to raise awareness that we could move from a good system in which many students were successful to a great system that prepares all students for high levels of achievement in today's global economy."

To do this, the Superintendent led a steering committee of teachers, administrators, classified staff, and board members through a process to examine their district's data. Out of this process, the district developed its strategic plan, which Dale describes as "a road map for getting all our kids ready for college, careers, and citizenship during the next five years."

In order to build support and awareness for the district's college-ready focus, the superintendent and his communication director, Tanya Rowe, developed a number of tools and strategies for both an internal and external audience. The first step, explains Dale, was to share information about the plan with their internal audience — central office staff, building leaders, teachers and certificated staff, and classified employees.

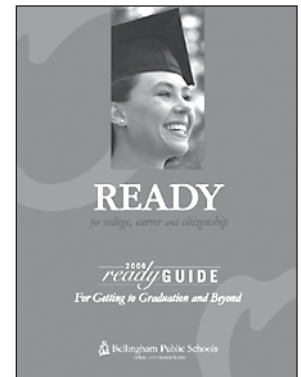
"Staff are on the front lines and teachers have the greatest deal of credibility with parents," Dale says, "so it was critical for us to reach out to them and help them to understand the urgency of our plan and the need to change."

One of the most powerful tools for teachers was a videotape of a series of Bellingham student focus groups. "Current students and recent graduates talked about what they needed to know

to be prepared after graduation and how they wished they had been pushed harder and supported more while in school," reports Tanya.

While the student voices video was an useful tool for staff, Tanya says the video was also an important reminder for her. "It reminded me that students are key stakeholders who need information and need to understand what is required for graduation, college, and careers. Even occupations that traditionally didn't require high levels of skills and knowledge in the past have changed their expectations, especially in math, science, and technology."

In order to begin sharing information about the college-ready focus with their external audience — parents and community members — the district produced the *2006 READY for College, Career, and Citizenship Guide*, which they mailed to the parents of all middle and high school students.



The *Guide* includes the district's graduation requirements, four-year college entrance requirements, opportunities for students to earn college credit while in high school, a college, career, and citizenship student planner, and the counseling and guidance resources available to each Bellingham student. The *Guide* also describes the difference between "college eligible" and "college ready."

A copy of the *Guide* can be downloaded from the district's website at <http://www.bham.wednet.edu> under "Families."

Taking a comprehensive look

In Highline, district leaders are undertaking a multi-year three-pronged approach to examine the systems that are not serving their students well.

The goal, according to Mary Roberts, Director of Secondary Learning, is "to generate a momentum of forces that push on the system and create a convergence of the district's K-12 redesign efforts that will

be coherent to administrators, teachers, students, and parents and graduate all students college-ready." This approach includes:

1. **Reviewing the expectations of 11th- and 12th-grade classes**
Because of a concern that the standards in junior- and senior-level core classes are not high enough, the district plans to review the expectations of all 11th- and 12th-grade core classes. The goal is to make sure that these courses meet college readiness standards and that students have the skills to get into college without remediation and stay.

BY THE NUMBERS

- ▶ In 2002, **three out of ten** Washington students who started public high school graduated college ready. Almost **four out of ten** white students were successful, compared to only **two out of ten** Hispanic and African American students.

Manhattan Institute, 2005, Public High School Graduation and College Readiness Rates: 1991-2002

continued on page 5...

Professional Development Opportunities

The Small Schools Project (SSP) and the Coalition of Essential Schools Northwest Center (CESNW) have several professional development opportunities available for schools and districts engaged in high school redesign work. The primary focus of professional development will be on key aspects of graduating all students ready for college. For us, graduating students college-ready includes: ensuring that students are eligible for admission to a Washington State four-year college, and that they can enroll in *any* higher education institution without taking remedial courses.

College-prepared Workshops

Before we can expect students to do “college-prepared” work, teachers and leaders need to understand clearly what that level of work looks like.

Language arts and social studies

This series of three workshops will provide participants with examples of college-level work in language arts and social studies, along with opportunities to identify their key attributes, develop processes for comparing current high-school level work, and analyze gaps between current high school work and entry-level college work.

Registration fees are \$195 per person for individual sessions or \$525 for all three sessions (\$175/session). Schools sending teams of three or more participants will have fees reduced to \$500 per person when registering for all three sessions. Registration materials will be mailed out this fall.

Dates for these sessions are:

- December 6, 2006
- February 21, 2006
- May 9, 2007

A parallel set of college-prepared workshops is available to current district grantees of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Washington State. SSP coaches and district leaders can provide those dates and further information.

Mathematics and science

This series of three workshops will provide participants with examples of college-level work in mathematics and science, along with opportunities to identify their key attributes, develop processes for comparing current high-school level work, and analyze gaps between current high school work and entry-level college work.

Registration fees are \$195 per person for individual sessions or \$525 for all three sessions (\$175/session). Schools sending teams of three or more participants will have fees reduced to \$500 per person when registering for all three sessions. Registration materials will be mailed out this fall.

Dates for these sessions are:

- December 7, 2006
- February 27, 2007
- May 10, 2007

All Students College-ready High School Institute Series

CESNW and the Center for Educational Leadership will offer three, day-long institutes aimed at helping high school leaders develop the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to create schools in which all students graduate ready for post-secondary education. These institutes are designed to help leaders to better understand the curriculum, instruction, and leadership necessary to create powerful learning opportunities in all classrooms.

Participating teams can enroll for individual institutes or the entire series. Tuition is \$185 per person or \$150 per person for a team of three. For more information, contact Joyce McGlaston at (206) 543-8977 or joycem2@u.washington.edu.

Institute dates are:

Institute I	October 19, 2006	Schools That Outperform Others in Preparing Students for Post-secondary Education
Institute II	March 1, 2007	A Closer Look at College Prep Curriculum
Institute III	May 10, 2007	A Closer Look at Rigor and Differentiated Instruction

CESNW Seminars

CESNW Seminars are a chance for teachers to share work on implementing the Common Principles in their classrooms. All teachers are welcome. Thursday seminars are all from 4–6 PM, are free, and snacks are provided. The seminars are held in the library at the Tyee Educational Complex in the Highline School District. (Take the 188th St. exit and go west about ¼ mile to the campus.)

Dates for these sessions are:

- October 12, 2006 How can we provide opportunities for all students to use their minds well?
- November 30, 2006 How can we emphasize “less is more” in a standards-based environment?
- March 1, 2007 How can students demonstrate what they know and can do?
- March 29, 2007 How can we make schools democratic for all students?

Corresponding dates for CESNW Seminars in the Portland area are scheduled for October 26, 2006; and January 11, March 15, and April 12, 2007. All seminars are at Riverdale High School from 4–6 PM.

CESNW Critical Friends Group Training

Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) are a well-established and widely-used means of providing a structure for teachers (and administrators) to meet regularly and share their practice. A CFG follows a set of practices that both provides safety for teachers to share work and questions and also invites them to stretch the boundaries of their knowledge, skill, and capacity. To be successful, CFGs require skilled facilitation and ongoing support. CFG training during the school year requires participation in two, two-day workshop sessions.

The cost for the four days of training is \$500 per person; teams of three or more from the same school qualify for a discounted rate of \$450 per person. Sessions will be held at the Professional Development Center in the Tacoma School District. Schools and districts interested in scheduling CFG training for only their own staffs may contact Holli Hanson at holli@cesnw.org for details.

The dates for this training are:

- November 16–17, 2006; 8 AM – 4 PM
- January 11–12, 2007; 8 AM – 4 PM

CESNW Symposium

The Symposium, a day-long Saturday meeting, provides CES teachers and administrators an opportunity to share their knowledge and learning with one another. This is the only opportunity this year for CES folks to gather for a full day of work and collaboration.

- February 10, 2007 How can we know students well enough to be successful with each of them?

CESNW Socratic Seminars

Socratic Seminars are based on the assumption that knowledge and understanding can be constructed by learners during deep discussion of text. This seminar will actually engage participants in Socratic Seminars as a means to learn this technique. Each participant will learn how to lead these seminars and have the opportunity to lead a seminar on text from their own classroom. Sessions will be held at the Tyee Educational Complex in the Highline School District.

Dates for these sessions are:

- December 1, 2006; 4 PM – 8 PM
- December 2, 2006; 4 PM – 8 PM
- January 19, 2007; 4 PM – 8 PM
- January 20, 2007; 4 PM – 8 PM



Washington educators participating in professional development sessions hosted by the Small Schools Project.

District leaders plan to work with Professor David Conley, Director of the Center for Educational Policy Research at the University of Oregon and a leader in Oregon's efforts to align high school graduation requirements with college admission requirements.

2. Conducting a K–12 curriculum audit

A group of outside evaluators will examine the district's curriculum, beginning in kindergarten, to determine how well courses in each grade level are aligned with the state's standards.

3. Developing an accountability framework

District, building, and small school leaders will work with Doug Reeves, CEO of the Center for Performance Assessment in Denver, to better understand how to use assessment, accountability, and standards to reach their goals. "Research shows that when everyone 'rows together' in the same direction, it leads to improved results for all students. Highline aims to keep a steady course on equity, academic achievement, and joint ownership for student success where all system levels demonstrate a deep commitment to prepare students to be college-ready," says Mary.

Using data to tackle the remediation challenge

In Kennewick, Assistant Superintendent Dave Bond knows that students who don't take math after their sophomore year will most likely require remediation during their post-secondary education. And he's got the data to prove it.

"Over the past thirty years, 50 to 60 percent of Kennewick graduates who enrolled at Columbia Basin Community College have required remediation," Dave explains. "And if a student requires remediation, they are less likely to complete their degree."

As the principal at Kamiakin High School for the past five years, Dave shared this and other data with parents and students. But he wanted to do more. "I wanted our students to have as many options as possible available to them after they graduated. Students who require remediation have fewer choices," says Dave.

Dave told parents that if their kids weren't going to take math during their junior and senior year, the *parents* were required to sign and return a letter stating that they understood the implications and that their child would likely require remediation.

The plan appears to have worked. From 2003 to 2005, the percentage of juniors at Kamiakin taking math increased from 60 to 87 percent; for seniors, it increased from 31 to 45 percent. Based on these positive results, Dave is now working

Minimum High School Core Course Requirements

These are the minimum requirements for freshman to be admitted to Washington's public four-year universities and colleges. They are established by the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board.

- Four years of English, including three years of literature and composition
- Three years of math, including algebra, geometry, and advanced mathematics
- Three years of social studies
- Two years of science, including one year of laboratory science (note: beginning in 2010, students will need to have two years of laboratory science, including one year of algebra-based biology, chemistry, or physics)
- Two years of the same foreign language
- One year of fine, visual, or performing arts or electives from any of the other required subjects

with the principals from the district's other two high schools to implement a similar math initiative in their buildings.

During the past year, Kennewick high school math and English teachers and district leaders met monthly with Columbia Basin Community College faculty. The high school teachers and administrators wanted to better understand the college's expectations for entering students and how they aligned with the district's junior and senior year curriculum.

As part of the exchange of information, college faculty shared the Compass placement test with Kennewick teachers who compared the test against their curriculum. Kennewick leaders are currently

talking with the college about having all Kennewick juniors Compass tested so that a student and her parents will know the student's math and English skill level. This knowledge may also be useful in encouraging students to take a fourth year of math.

"We are working closely with the College to learn more about their expectations for students so that we can communicate that back to our students and their parents," Dave concludes.

Policy changes make it real

In Mabton, a culture shift is taking place. "High school is no longer the end goal, it is merely a step in the process toward the end goal," according to Superintendent Sandra Pasiero-Davis.

In a community that is 90 percent low-income, 95 percent Hispanic and more than 40 percent immigrant, "that was a tough shift." For many students, parents,

BY THE NUMBERS

- ▶ Nearly **half** of all students who enter post-secondary education are required to take remedial courses in one or more subjects.

Rosenbaum, April 2002

"We've shifted out language from 'if you go to college' to 'when you go to college.'"

TAMARA STEEN, TEACHER,
MABTON JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Delve Deeper: To read more about the college-readiness efforts at Mabton Junior-Senior High School, as well as at other Washington schools, check out the November 2004 and December 2003 issues of TLN on our website.

continued on back page...

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TLN



In This Issue:

Shifting Focus, Unchanged Goals

Washington Districts Commit to Graduating All Students College- and Work-ready
Professional Development Opportunities

continued from page 5...

and community members, “their goal was to attend high school and graduate—which was a big goal and accomplishment—but it wasn’t as great as they were capable of,” Sandra explains.

To support this culture shift, in 2004 Sandra took the bold step of working with her community and board to change the district’s graduation requirements so that they now align with Washington’s college entrance requirements (see box on page 5). Also key was dropping low-level courses like consumer math.

“In order to make our commitment to college-readiness real, and not a pipe dream, we had to change our standards and then provide the means,” Sandra explains. “The adults who work with students must be accountable for rigorous preparation for all students so that our graduates can not only get into college, but stay in.” ◀ TLN

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.

Need Resources?

The Small Schools Project released four new videos featuring classroom teachers who made changes in their teaching, implemented new instructional strategies and practices, and as a result, found success for their students. These videos include:

- *Performance Matters: Assessing Student Learning*
- *Learning to Serve, Serving to Learn*
- *Teaching for Equity: All Means All*
- *Promise and Personalization*

Copies of these videos, as well as accompanying professional development support materials, were sent this fall to Washington high schools supported by the Small Schools Project.

Earlier videos in this series include:

- *Projects in Action: Real Work, Real World*
- *Integrated Curriculum: Connecting and Collaborating*

Video clips and support materials for the entire series can be viewed and downloaded for free from our website, <http://www.smallschoolsproject.org>.

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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