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ABSTRACTS

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REPORT CARDS: STEPPING AWAY FROM TRADITION

Sharon L. Whittle, Ed.D.

As educators at York Suburban School District, we are interested in providing accurate information to parents concerning their child's education. During the last few years, curricular changes have been made, but the report card for kindergarten through grade five had not been changed to reflect what was being taught. Parents began asking for more information than what a grade based upon percent revealed about a student's progress. Teachers had difficulty assessing writing samples using percents. It was time for a major review and renovation of our reporting system.

In order to insure a permanent change in the philosophy of assessment, a process approach utilizing five steps was used. A literature search on assessment and review of report cards in other school districts was conducted prior to the first step of the process. Parents, teachers, community members, and school board members were invited to become committee members. Surveys of parents and teachers provided information for future decisions.

The time line for the project was three years. The first year included the three steps of exploration, decision making, and design. A review phase followed in the second year, and final revisions in the third year.

The Exploring Phase included defining committee focus and role of members, a review of research, and development of common themes. Common themes led to the generation of guiding beliefs and a philosophy of reporting as part of the second step, the Deciding Phase.

In the third Phase of Design, it was recommended that one person develop the prototype for the committee to review and make recommendations. In the Review Phase, teacher staff development, parent information meetings and surveys were conducted. The final step was the Completion Phase during which final revisions were formulated.

In the new reporting system, a progress report will be sent to parents after each 62-school day period (a school year is 185 days). The progress report is a summary of student learning, and one component of the entire reporting system. Other components include parent/teacher conferences, standardized testing, and student portfolios.

The new progress report includes a section called Language Arts which includes writing, speaking and listening, in addition to reading. Grades based upon percent are no longer mandated. Grading categories include 'minimal progress with significant guidance and support;' or 'developing progress with guidance and support;' or 'capable progress with minimal support;' or 'significant progress with independent work.' Each curricular area includes a list of skills instead of one summary percentage grade. An extensive comment section is provided for each subject area, including student work habits and social development. A sentence designating completion of assignments is included in each subject area.

Several aspects of the process were found to be problem areas during the project. A process approach is difficult for people to understand. The committee leader needed to constantly focus and restate each phase and direction of the committee. Decision making for some educators with parents and community people on the committee was new and demanding. Time had to be taken to encourage participation. Constant communication had to be fostered between meetings to include all groups represented. If an extensive vacation occurs during the project, be prepared for a fragmented effect on the work of the committee. Finally, school administrators needed to keep a positive and united front.

The rewards of working on a three-year project to revise our reporting system have been numerous. Committee members were proud of the accomplishment and discovered the strength of diverse groups working together for an important goal. Parents, teachers, and students acknowledge the relevance of more information reported in an appropriate manner for students' assessment of achievement over time.

PARTNERSHIP - STEWARDSHIP

Carolyn Warner

The economy of the 21st century will be global in nature. Nations will engage in a new type of competition: economic competition based on the quality of their workforce, rather than the strength of their armed forces. The only real competitive advantage that one nation will have over another is in the ability of its workers to learn new skills, to continue learning throughout their working life, and to be able to apply creativity to new work challenges.

This new economic and competitive reality means that nations must place the same level of emphasis on education in the 21st century as they placed on armaments in the 20th century.

Education of the workforce in the 21st century will also require that both secondary and post-secondary educators communicate closely with each other, and also with the industries that will employ their graduates. Because of the increased costs inherent in training and re-training the workforce, it will also be necessary for corporations and businesses to form working partnerships with schools at every level.

In most countries, economic reality will likely dictate that schools will not have enough money to afford either the equipment or the instructors needed to provide the necessary level of entry-level and advanced training. It is an unfortunate reality that there is never "enough" money for education. Therefore, educators must develop strategies for involving businesses, industries, and trade unions in the partnership process.

Although this has not been, in most nations, a traditional role for private sector institutions, these entities have a vested interest in forming partnerships with schools. It is only through the formation of these partnerships that employers can be assured that the education and training provided by the schools matches the needs of the employer.

Neither employers nor educators can meet their responsibilities in isolation. Working together, corporations, businesses, unions, and schools can form the vital partnerships that will ensure that the citizens and the economy of their nation can compete successfully in the coming century.

APPLICATIONS OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Polly Ashelman, Ed. D. & Catherine Dorsey -Gaines, Ph.D.

This presentation will have a twofold purpose. The first is to describe the development and implementation of a portfolio model for assessment of students in the Department of Early Childhood and Family Studies at Kean College of New Jersey. This plan for portfolio assessment is based on the principles of constructivism (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1990), research on stages of adult development (Knowles, 1980; Jones, 1993; Wadlington, 1995; Duff, Brown, & Scoy, 1995) and the Cognitive Model for Assessing Portfolios, designed by Paulson and Paulson (1990). It emphasizes a personalized approach to professional growth, that is consistent with the faculty's beliefs about how children and adults construct knowledge and the strong connection between assessment and instruction. The presenter will share strategies for development of a portfolio model that is commensurate with departmental goals and in keeping with the needs of individual students.

The second purpose will be to share examples of portfolios which have been implemented in graduate students' professional settings. The focus of this part of the presentation will be on demonstrating the procedures for developing literacy portfolios that support home/school collaboration and providing samples from a variety of applications. An additional emphasis of this presentation will be to describe the ongoing mentoring that is essential to sustaining portfolio development.

A SCHOOL DISTRICT LEARNS HOW TO CHANGE ITSELF

Beverly G. Ausfahl

The process of change for a district of 14,000 students, 2,300 employees, and 34 schools was triggered by finding limitations, doubtful community satisfaction, low income/high mobility problems impacting schools, and a high student dropout rate. So, the first question - "What do we want to accomplish?" Improve classroom interaction with all students to enable them to finish school with good skills and the ability to learn effectively. "How will we know if we have accomplished that?" A decrease in the "dropout rate," improved test scores, good quality demonstrated skills, and increased numbers of students successfully attending and completing college would be good indicators of success.

The school district entered a contractual agreement with the local university to work collaboratively to provide a pre-kindergarten-college (preK-16) aligned education system that would share resources and expertise. To find money to pay for necessary changes/retraining, community business people, district teachers and administrators, and college professors and administrators analyzed district business and administrative practices to find ways to become more efficient, thus freeing dollars for classroom instruction. They were successful. Some of their ideas: reducing the number of central office administrators, self-funded insurance and combining some district/university business functions. These funds became available to support our change process and to be returned to instructional uses as determined by building committees.

Simultaneously, meetings were held with parents, community members, business interests, school employees, and students to discuss ideas and tentative plans, what their needs were, how this all might work, and what we were trying to accomplish. Representatives of the employee organizations, the school board, and administration began to investigate other districts involved in change, became educated about systemic change, and established a process to support change in the district. The resulting decisions were: (1) The district would decentralize, moving clearly defined decision making authority to a school council made up of parents, community, teachers, non-teaching staff, school administrators, and students. Councils would have authority for their building's designated (determined by formula) portion of the reallocated funds to support academic projects they identified as necessary for their school to attain identified goals. (2) The principles of total quality management would form the basis for systemic change, activities, and training. (3) Personnel would begin using new practices for hiring people compatible with working in teams using critical data (information) to make decisions. (4) A three to five-year temporary position would be created with responsibility to coordinate the activities and training to accomplish the changes. (5) The Superintendent's Cabinet (a key decision making group) was expanded to include the change coordinator, a college representative, and most key district divisions. Cabinet members learned the principles/practices of systemic change and discussed how the implementation was progressing. (6) A two-fold system of training was begun - (a) district-wide (academic goals/work structure/change), and (b) individual schools (learning needs or instructional skill development).

Change begets change. The district discovered it had to redesign its accounting system so sites had better information on money for which they are accountable. The schools began to focus on specific learning techniques that best fit the needs of their student populations. College completion rates began to be collected. Dropout figures were reduced by 50% in two years. It takes a little time to see if test scores change, but indications of fewer behavior problems in schools and better attendance seem promising.

THE PROMISE AND THE PATHWAY

Joel A. Barker

CHILDREN NEED BOTH A PROMISE AND A PATHWAY

A promise that there will be a future worth preparing for and that we who are adults will work very hard to guarantee this.

A pathway that prepares them for the future that they will inherit and teaches them their responsibilities to the future generations.

CONNECTION BETWEEN PROMISE AND VISION

With a powerful enough vision, nations, organizations, adults and children will outperform their assets.

FIVE SCHOLARS STUDY THE POWER OF VISION

- Fred Polak, Dutch
- Viktor Frankl, Austrian
- James Collins, Californian
- Benjamin Singer, Canadian
- Martin Seligman, American

THE PATHWAY

The path must prepare our children for the 21st Century, not the 20th .

TEST OF A GOOD CURRICULUM

- Must have a 25 year half life
- A Kindergartner can understand IT - all of it.
- Clearly connected to the real world.
- Obviously useful.

THE THREE DOMAINS OF STUDY: THE EFG'S & the CORE

- E = ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION
The study of the relationship between all living things and homosapien
- F = FUTURES EDUCATION
The study of our relationship to time
- G = GLOBAL EDUCATION
The study of our relationship with the people of our planet

THE CORE SKILLS

- Skills necessary for successful citizenship in the 21st Century

THE SHAPE OF THE CURRICULUM

A cone

THE PATHWAY

Spiral up the cone to competency

LEARNING ARCHITECTURE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY THE EFG "PATHWAY"

Barbara Bames

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

The original EFG design was conceived by Joel Barker, Futurist, in 1978. In 1990, I formed the EFG Curriculum Collaborative, a non-profit corporation, to design and implement a Learning

Architecture for the 21st Century with educators, business leaders, community participants from around the world.

THE EFG LEARNING ARCHITECTURE- 6 Components

*EFG CURRICULUM

The EFG Curriculum is a project-based curriculum that is relevant to the real world and the 21st Century:

- Ecological Education
- Futures Education
- Global Education
- CORE skills

*COMPETENCY EFG competency is measured using a variety of authentic, performances based assessments:

- Portfolios
- Timed Performances
- Demonstrations
- Total Quality Tools
- Products
- Juried Presentations
- Exhibitions
- Personal Web Pages

*COMMUNICATION and technology tools. The Learning Architecture and the EFG Curriculum require that all learners and Learning Leaders utilize the latest in technology and communication tools to provide up-to-date, real-life information:

- Computer Programs
- Satellite Communications
- Internet
- CD-ROMS
- Satellite Curriculum & Training
- World Wide Web: <http://www.efgedu.org>

COMMUNITY The community involvement and service includes:

- All of the parents and families
- Community Organizations
- Mentors

*COLLABORATIONS, careers and partnerships include working with:

- Business
- Corporations
- Higher Education
- International Networks

*CHARACTERISTICS and organizational strategies include:

- Multi-age grouping of students
- Learning leaders in teams
- Field Studies
- Alternate schedules & calendars
- International Learning Partners

CONCLUSION: The EFG LEARNING COLLABORATIVE is a transparent network of people who are increasing learning worldwide.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

Sharon Osoba Brown, M.Ed.

With the ever-growing acceptance and understanding of Howard Gardner's Theory' of Multiple Intelligence comes a call to expand upon the intricacies of each specific type of