



The Leadership Connection

January 2006



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Gene's Corner: Whom Do We Serve?

Like all of you, I have been paying close attention to recent developments in the high school reform movement regionally. In particular, I have read the research compiled by the American Diploma Project, the National Governors Association, and economists like Anthony Carnevale, among others. And all of us in the state of Idaho have read the information produced by the State Board of Education and attended at least one of the State Board-sponsored presentations on proposed high school reforms, which include increased math and science requirements and a high school exit exam.

Within these calls for reform, the rationale for reform—indeed, the direness of our current situation—is made plain: Students currently graduating from American secondary schools struggle to enter (much less complete) postgraduate programs of study. But the full reasoning behind the need for all students to complete some form of post-high school training is omitted by many reform advocates and understated by nearly all of them. Underlying the current push for reform is one basic premise—without postsecondary training, young Americans will not have the skills necessary to compete effectively for jobs in the ever more competitive global marketplace.

So, the unstated assumption here is that education—elementary, secondary, and postsecondary—has as its primary end the development of human capital for these global markets. These reformers have a worthy and pragmatic goal. After all, our students need to earn a living somehow; we're simply looking out for their best interests by ensuring that, when they graduate from high school and postsecondary training, they will be well-equipped to compete with workers in Bangalore and the European Union, for example.

In such an environment, what is an educational leader to do? Many that I have listened to talk about resources, the funding needed for these changes, and how these changes will affect students already struggling to graduate, among other issues. But, by and large, discussions of the fundamental impetus of this movement—and whether or not the aim of education is primarily to prepare students for employment—have been foregone or have been dismissed, at worst, as a waste of time and, at best, as impractical.

But isn't this what educational leaders ought to do? True, many must feel in the current educational climate that superintendents, principals, and other educational leaders have been relegated to the role of 'managers,' working out the details of the mandates that come down. And, while this hard work is

necessary and laudable, who is carrying on the discussion about what we *should* be doing, about what education is and ought to be about.

So, what do you think the goal (or goals) of education should be? And are these reformers right in supporting the primacy of economic needs above all else? We want to hear from you!

Please send us your thoughts, ideas, or even the names of some thinkers or texts that have been instrumental in forming your idea of what the goals of education should be. Email your responses to wittryan@isu.edu or fax them to (208) 282-2244.

Help us resume the conversation about what our students need most from their schools.

Be Heard at the 2006 Superintendents' Forum!
Reserve now! Spots are filling up fast!

The Eastern Idaho Superintendents' Forum, sponsored by Idaho State University, the College of Education, and the ICEE, will be held at the Pond Student Union Building in Pocatello on January 12th, 2006. The event will focus on three areas deemed critical by superintendents in Regions IV, V, and VI:

- Alternative Schedules (4 Day Week, Block Scheduling, etc.)
- Athletic/Activity Scheduling
- Continuous Improvement Plans

Other highlights of the forum include

- Scheduled appearances by Dr. Michael Gallagher, interim President of Idaho State University, and Dr. Larry B. Harris, Dean of the College of Education.
- A catered luncheon buffet.
- An open forum session to discuss other matters of current importance with other superintendents.

Best of all, this event is provided at no cost! Please take some time out of your hectic schedule to discuss matters of real importance with your colleagues.

RSVP as soon as possible to ensure your spot. For more information, or to make reservations for yourself and two of your key district-level administrators, call Jaymie Grow or Dr. Charles Zimmerly at (208) 282-3202. You may also email your questions and reservations to edsticce@isu.edu.

New from the CPD: Needs Assessment Data, Common Course Information
Use our tools to make targeted professional development easy.

The Center for Professional Development has a couple of highlights to share:

- **New Common Course Information**—The Center for Professional Development, in coordination with regional school districts, will begin listing professional development opportunities across the region that are being offered for credit through ISU. Through this Common Course listing, districts can identify needed training and make arrangements with the host district to participate. The benefits of Common Course listing include

- Economies of scale—workshops can be provided to the largest possible group, thereby reducing per-participant costs.
- Potential cost sharing between districts to maximize professional development dollars.

To participate, simply complete a course proposal form (downloadable [here](#)) and indicate whether you would like to have the workshop listed as a Common Course; we'll list the course and district contact information on our website. To view current Common Course listings, please visit http://icce.isu.edu/Develop/Develop_Upcoming.html. More will be added regularly, so check back often!

- **Needs Assessment Results**—To date, nearly 400 educators in Regions IV, V, and VI have completed needs assessment surveys, and another 200+ will be completing surveys soon. Below is a brief sampling of schools districts and schools who have conducted or are conducting needs assessments:

Bonneville School District #93
Oneida School District #351
Declo High School
Rigby High School
Pocatello-Chubbuck School District #25

The survey, which can be administered online and in a paper-based format, reveals a pattern of region-wide training needs. While the results are preliminary—and more data flows into the Center on a daily basis—here is a sneak-peek at what schools and districts have learned so far:

- The highest-rated training need, to date: **helping improve student achievement overall**. Nearly one-third of respondents rated this as a “high” need, and 75% determined this to be at least a “medium” need.
- **Dealing with diverse learners** is number two. Over 70% of respondents rated this need as “medium” or above.
- **Motivation** training is number three. Thirty percent said this is a “high” need, and 66% called this at least a “medium” need item.

Haven't conducted a needs assessment in your district? Schedule one today! Contact your regional coordinator for details:

Region IV: Ryan Witt—(208) 282-4885; wittryan@isu.edu

Region V: Precious Mudiwa—(208) 282-5466; mudiprec@isu.edu

Region VI: Ryan Leavitt—(208) 282-3768; leavryan@isu.edu

Research in the Spotlight

A Brief Look at What's Happening in the Field

- **Schools Look to Forests for Heating Fuel**
Anne Wallace Allen (AP)—COUNCIL, IDAHO

The tiny Council School District used to pour thousands of dollars into outmoded oil and electric heaters. Nearby, the Forest Service burned brush piles on the mountainsides to keep the brush from fueling forest fires in dry summers.

Looking for some savings, Council Superintendent Murray Dalglish developed Idaho's first public school biomass heating system -- a project that's expected to save Council \$1 million on fuel over the next 15 years.

[Read the full text by clicking [here](#)—from the Casper (WY) Star Tribune.]

- **American Indians Trail Far behind Peers in Educational Progress**

States face problem meeting No Child Left Behind targets

John Miller (AP)—FORT HALL, IDAHO

One of Michele Hernandez's earliest memories from 1960s southern Idaho is calling across the playground to a kindergarten classmate.

Suddenly, a teacher pulled her inside the schoolhouse by the arm and washed her mouth out with soap.

The punishment wasn't for profanity. It was for speaking Shoshone, her grandmother's language.

[Read the full text by clicking [here](#)—from the Rocky Mountain News (CO).]

- **Which School District Is Best?**

Jay Mathews (Washington Post)—PARK CITY, UTAH

Three weeks after saying how boring it is to write about school districts, I am about to suggest we figure out a deep and useful way to compare one district to another. How is that for consistency?

The switch is not entirely my fault. After that school district rant I spent some time in Park City, Utah, with a group of smart and determined educators and parents who want to match their district up against all the others in the country.

[Read the full text by clicking [here](#)—from the Washington Post (may require login).]