

COALITION FOR ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

KEY COMPONENTS AND PHILOSOPHY OF PROJECT RE:LEARN (TAKEN FROM RE:LEARN PACKET, RHODE ISLAND TRAINING WORKSHOP) PROJECT RE:LEARN IS PROFESSOR THEODORE SIZER'S PROGRAM ASSOCIATED WITH BROWN UNIVERSITY'S COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS.

"Diploma awarded upon successful demonstration of mastery. Getting right answer not all that's important...important thing is that students can show how they arrive at answer.

"No 'college-bound', 'general,' and 'vocational' tracks. All students expected to reach same goals in same courses of study.

"No strict age grading; no system of credits for time spent in class. Emphasis on student's demonstration he can do important things.

"No such thing as a failing mark. Either complete or don't complete. If one doesn't, must try again.

"Moral, professional and financial support must be in terms of commitment from governing authorities over blocks of years rather than one year at a time.

"Extra money - 10% or more - necessary.

"Long-term goal of Coalition philosophy is to shape the entire school."

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* Carnegie Units are a barrier to implementation of mastery learning acc. to SPADY.

The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching, to provoke students to learn how to learn, and thus to teach themselves.

6. Students entering secondary school studies at this school are those who are committed to the school's purposes and who can show competence in language, elementary mathematics and basic civics. Students graduate, receiving a diploma, when they formally exhibit their mastery of the school's program. There is, therefore, no strict age grading and no system of "credits earned" by "time spent" in class; the emphasis is, rather, on the students' demonstrating that they can do important things. Students of traditional high school age but not yet at appropriate levels of competence to enter secondary school studies will be provided intensive remedial work to assist them quickly to meet these standards. A final demonstration of mastery for graduation — an "exhibition" — should be the joint responsibility of the faculty and of higher authorities, and represents the latter's primary and proper influence over the school's program.

COMMON PRINCIPLES

Local adaptation of a set of clearly stated common principles is the essence of this Coalition's plan. The working list of principles for an Essential School is as follows:

1. The school should focus on helping adolescents to learn to use their minds well. The school should make no claim to be comprehensive, and should be free to concentrate on a wide variety of social and vocational services to adolescents, at least at the expense of its central intellectual purpose.

2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of centrally important skills and areas of knowledge. While these inevitably will reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that students need, rather than necessarily by "subjects" as conventionally defined. That is, the school should not bind itself to the existing complex and often dysfunctional system of isolated departments, "credit hours" delivered in packages called English, social studies, science and the rest. The aphorism "less is more" and the virtue of thoroughness, rather than mere coverage of content, should guide the program. *Mastery Learning = thoroughness - indoctrination*

3. The goals of the school should be universal, the same for everyone, while the means to these goals will vary as the students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of adolescents.

4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be made toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than eighty students. To allow for personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time, and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff. *Decentralization - bye, bye elected officials*

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7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of un anxious expectation ("I won't threaten you but I expect much of you"), of trust (until abused) and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers should be emphasized, and parents treated as essential collaborators.

8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first and specialists second; staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school. *therapy*

9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of eighty or fewer pupils, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than ten percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans will inevitably have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in traditional "comprehensive" secondary schools.

Necessary for C.A.I.

Skinnerian reward system

Increase in taxes!

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