

IMPACT OF THE WORLD IS FLAT (Globalization) ON SCHOOLS.

NOTE: The following are notes taken during the discussion segment of a workshop provided by the Washington State School Directors Association, November 15, 2006 in Spokane Washington. The topic discussed was around a book by Thomas Friedman called "The World Is Flat" and what school board members should do to offset its impact on students as they enter the workforce.

What do we need to know, so we can get there?

- Offer options to kids
 - Project based learning to everyone (costs? Logistics/transportation?)
 - Educators may buy in/not buy in
 - How do you get enough bodies in the seats?
 - Dealing with political realities (fewer electives, arts)
- Communities are happy with the way things are; don't want to change
 - Apple farmers mad about losing market share
 - Don't incorporate lessons from World is Flat
 - We need to do things slowly, incrementally
- Concern about reducing 40 math curricula down to 3
 - Boards typically aren't involved in these kinds of 'bright ideas'
 - Don't make them mandatory...provide guidance/baseline
- Identify what is needed for basic education - don't make unfunded mandates
 - Let the communities decide what will be funded
- Alternative schools - there is a waiting list of parents/students waiting to 'vote with their feet'
- Have OSPI review curricula, so we can get an idea of good ones
 - Don't mandate, but give us information about effectiveness/research
 - Advise which curricula are good for those who need help
- System change is hard
 - First hurdle (funding); then the second hurdle (transportation); after a while the accumulation of hurdles tends to block progress

- We have a hard time getting rid of existing programs
- We must take a stand in order to sustain changes
- Yet new programs tend to have waiting lists
- It is about incremental change, not wholesale change (can get a board thrown out of office if we go too fast too soon)
- Parents remember "how we did things in my day"
- Math Wars
 - Board members must be careful about relying only on their experience
 - Should rely on research data
 - Goal of curricular adoption is to enable all students to "do math and science" (vs the status quo of some not being able to "do math and science")
 - We have to teach math in different ways
- If the curriculum you adopt is not helping prepare well for WASL, what then?
 - Multi-year effort is needed; cannot just drop recent adoption
 - Curriculum is not the only thing; teaching is critical
- We need the legislature to just hold us accountable for RESULTS, and leave program decisions to us
 - Legislature is not where program decisions should be made
 - Mandates from the legislature are not a good idea
- Put the money into all-day kindergarten, to get the kids ready to learn
 - Teachers say kids are not coming to elementary school with basic skills
 - Need to pay for all-day; then pick something else
 - Need to educate parents about what is required to get kids ready to learn
- State should pick a high standard for students, and pay for higher education costs
- Traditional approach is not the only approach that yields achievement
 - High tech high doesn't use traditional approach, but still succeeds
 - Traditional approach to math can lead to students hating math
- Education should be cutting edge...that means change
 - Can't look for overnight change
 - Can look for incremental progress
 - Funding should target incremental progress

- Local levy is one tool
 - State could sponsor grants to get new programs off the ground - then evaluate success before going state-wide
 - Funding formula needs to be addressed - disappointment of the WA LEARNS study is that it did not address funding formula
- Legislature should refrain from mandates
 - We can't get lawmakers to get in the door to learn what is going on in our schools
 - Sad when good old boys want things the way they've always been
- Districts in our region have come together to approach the legislators as a united group
 - Legislators are kind of like moths - they are attracted to light
 - They read editorials
- Student achievement is all about the teaching and the relationship between the student and the teacher
- Project-based learning that builds basic skills is intriguing
- NCLB is a big issue at state and local level
 - Have to change the K-12 model
 - Some kids are going to take longer, some sooner
 - Give kids the opportunity to succeed
 - Give kids the help they need
- Still stuck with 180 day schedule and seat-time thinking
 - Push-back on online classes is one example
- If you're on a board for 29 years, I hope you don't see this kind of discussion years from now, having not seen much change
 - If there is going to be change, it will be through a partnership between you and the superintendent
 - Your job is to go out to the community and tell them what you are doing, and generate the interest in kids