

Creating a Learning Organization – The La Center Way

In the 21st century, the body of knowledge humankind has at its disposal continues to grow at an exponential rate. As a result, the “half-life” of knowledge shrinks as the overall expansion of knowledge accelerates. The likelihood of knowledge being the “truth” one day and becoming outdated and replaced the next day is more common than ever before. To be sure, change is rapidly becoming the rule rather than the exception.

The increasing number of ways information is being transferred around the world is aiding the acceleration of knowledge creation. As examples of this, just look at how Facebook, Wikipedia, Twitter, Open Source software and Google have changed the rules of information as well as who has the power and control of knowledge. Now consider this rapid knowledge creation and the accelerated rate of sharing it to how and what students need to learn throughout their lives.

We believe that the task of teaching students to “know” is rapidly becoming futile and a new focus of what is important to learn is required. Today’s students must be immersed in environments that tap into, support and foster their abilities to “think” so as to prepare them for a perpetual cycle of learning and un-learning knowledge. The old factory model of “sit-n-git” content delivery instruction developed in the 19th century and perfected in the 20th century will not help learners in the 21st century handle the ever-growing and changing body of knowledge.

With all this in mind, our opportunity as educational leaders is to create the types of learning environments that will support students for this rapidly evolving world. To this end, we believe this work must begin with the creation of a learning organization that taps into, supports and fosters our own learning as adults. As a result the goals of our district leadership team for the past several years (as well as this year participating in the Washington State Leadership Academy) has been to:

- 1) Create a district-wide learning model that focuses on the conditions for learning for all learners (children and adults);
- 2) Learn across the district (beginning with ourselves) using this model in order to tap into every learner’s innate need/desire to learn;
- 3) Harness this internal energy for learning to support all learners’ efforts to become self-directed, independent learners for a lifetime; and
- 4) Focus our district leadership team learning efforts around our own practice as learning environment leaders.

Evidence of Progress

The following are specific pieces of evidence related to our progress as a team of learners for each of the four above stated goals for the La Center School District Leadership Team. This district-wide team is comprised of all ten of the Washington State Leadership Academy participants:

Goal #1 – Create a district-wide learning model that focuses on the conditions for learning for all learners (children and adults).

- Written Description of the La Center School District Learning Model
- The Learning Environment Matrix

- FILE Protocol
- Learning Environment Planning
- Learning Enterprise
- The Learning Cycle

Goal #2 - Learn across the district (beginning with ourselves) using this model in order to tap into every learner's innate need/desire to learn.

- Lab Classroom Project (LCP) Workshop.
- School Board presentations by each of the LCP teams.
- School Board has used learning model as part of their budget workshops.
- Primary, Intermediate, Middle and High school LCP team goals.

Goal #3 - Harness this internal energy for learning to support all learners' efforts to become self-directed, independent learners for a lifetime.

- Evidence Collection Tool
- Learning Walk Acceptable Evidences Array
- La Center Lesson Studies Protocol
- Task Analysis Development
- Lower student discipline rates
- Lower teacher absent rates

Goal #4 - Focus our district leadership team learning efforts around our own practice as learning environment leaders.

- WSLA La Center School District Learning Plan.
- Teaching and Learning Administrator Position.
- District Leadership Team meeting agendas.
- Book Studies:
 - 1) Carver, J. (2006). *Boards that make a difference*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.
 - 2) DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing: a handbook for professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IL: Solution Tree.
 - 3) Elmore, R. (2004). *Reform from the inside out: policy, practice, and performance*. Boston, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.
 - 4) Schmoker, M (2006). *Results now: how we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
 - 5) Senge, P. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization*. New York, New York: Double Day.
 - 6) Mansell, M (2008). *The learning enterprise: policy governance and the learning organization*. Doctoral Dissertation, Washington State University.
- Article Discussions:
 - 1) Argyris, C (1991, May-June). Teaching smart people how to learn. *Harvard Business Review*, 99-109.
 - 2) Barr, R., & Tagg, J. (1995, November-December). From teaching to learning - a new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change*, 27, 12-25.

- 3) Gavin, D. (1993, July-August). Building a learning organization. *Harvard Business Review*, 78-91.
- 4) Nonaka, I. (1994). A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation. *Organizational Science*. 5, 14-37.
- 5) Nonaka, I, & Takeuchi, H (1995). *The knowledge creating company: how japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- 6) Sabah, Y., & Orthner, D. (2007, October). Implementing Organizational Learning in Schools: Assessment and Strategy. *Children & Schools*. 4, 243-246.

Extension of Learning for 2010/11 School Year

Our work for next year will be formally determined at our June Lab Classroom Project (LCP) workshop in June and August, as well as our district leadership team retreat in August. The following are some examples of potential efforts.

Goal #1 – Create a district-wide learning model that focuses on the conditions for learning for all learners (children and adults).

- Continue to refine our learning model with a focus of increasing the transportability of the concepts.

Goal #2 - Learn across the district (beginning with ourselves) using this model in order to tap into every learner's innate need/desire to learn.

- Expand our Lab Classroom Project (LCP) teams for next year and tap into the knowledge gained from this year's teams.
- Establish new Primary, Intermediate, Middle and High school LCP team goals.
- Gain further objective evidences of changes in learning environments across all grade levels.

Goal #3 - Harness this internal energy for learning to support all learners' efforts to become self-directed, independent learners for a lifetime.

- Continue to work on the next evolutions of:
 - 1) Evidence Collection Tool
 - 2) Learning Walk Acceptable Evidences Array
 - 3) La Center Lesson Studies Protocol
 - 4) Task Analysis Development

Goal #4 - Focus our district leadership team learning efforts around our own practice as learning environment leaders.

- Review and redesign as necessary our Leadership Team Learning Plan. The potential main focus of our work will most likely a deepening our knowledge and experience base around assessment. In particular, how do our assessments support learning and align with our learning model (both formative and summative)?