

# HORACE

## The Essential Conversation: Getting It Started, Keeping It Going

***Time to talk. Space to talk. People to talk with, ideas that spark more ideas, and a school climate that invites honest inquiry to happen. If Essential School ideas about teaching and learning are going to take root, these things must come first.***

TODAY, PUEBLO COUNTY HIGH School in Colorado's District 70 looks like a traditional "shopping mall high school," its 920 students moving through a six-period day along five ability tracks, its teachers working in separate disciplines, seeing 150 students a day in isolated classrooms. But behind that appearance a whole new way of talking about teaching and learning is in the air—in the halls and the faculty lounges, among parents, students, and teachers. And out of that conversation ambitious changes are stirring. "By next year at this time," principal Dick Amman declares, "our goal is to come up with an alternative schedule, a new curriculum design, and a plan that uses advisors to help students assemble graduation portfolios representing the best of what they know and can do."

Central to these goals is Pueblo's commitment to a whole-school consensus on the changes, which revolve around the Nine Common Principles of the Essential School movement—though as little as one year ago only 35 percent of its teachers even felt change was needed. Already this year, a committee of Pueblo students have met to put the Common Principles into their own words, and 85 percent of the teachers have endorsed the document. And the school's steering committee, made up of community leaders as well as students and staff, is solidly behind the proposed changes. Formally and informally, in

ways overt and subtle, people here are talking with each other continually about what they want their school to be like.

If Essential School change is to take hold and endure, its advocates maintain, the importance of talk like this cannot be ignored. "It's tempting for critics to dismiss our emphasis on this as sentimental," says Theodore Sizer, who has long called the Coalition of Essential Schools "a conversation among friends." In fact, he argues, "conversation is *fundamental* to school change. Without it, schools will go nowhere; with it, they will succeed." But how can a school achieve the kind of involvement among its staff, its students, and its community that places like Pueblo demonstrate? How does it even know what to talk about? What does it take to get those opposed to any change talking about new ideas? And how can the conversation, once begun, be nurtured and sustained so that school people's sense of their own professionalism will thrive and flower?

### Why Bother to Talk?

In the typical isolation of the American school workplace, the barriers to conversation are formidable, research has shown. As Susan Moore Johnson points out in her 1990 book *Teachers at Work*, most teachers have little systematic contact with each other; they see students only in the classroom and do not usually discuss them with their colleagues. Rarely do

they turn to each other for help on instructional matters, and rarely do schools encourage collaboration by setting up structures that support it. "The last time many teachers routinely talked about issues of education was probably in graduate school," says the Coalition's Beverly Simpson, who works with schools at the start of their involvement.

With the full weight of that status quo against them, some school people, excited by TheodoreSizer's ideas, have tried getting an Essential School program going more or less on their own—as a school within a school, for example. But seven years of Essential School experience shows that such decisions are likely to backfire. "If you don't include people

in the conversation, they feel excluded; and excluded people make things fail," says CES Director for Schools Bob McCarthy.

Back in 1984, for example, a small group of interested teachers at Houston's Westbury High School started meeting as "Horace's Company," discussing the Coalition's Nine Common Principles and how they could try them out. Westbury became a charter member of the Coalition, but the effort remained a school-within-a-school; a succession of principals was only one of the reasons that the rest of its faculty never became actively engaged in talking through Essential School ideas and practices. After a close faculty vote against whole-school involvement, Westbury temporarily shut the program down and went back to the planning stages, this time taking deliberate steps to build dialogue into every teacher's day. Today, the school is steadily transforming its structure, and it predicts all of its 2,000 students and 97 teachers will be working with Essential School ideas within a year. Many of the most resistant faculty, like shop or art teachers who saw their subjects as threatened by change, are now contributing key guidance as the whole school readies to introduce graduation exhibitions, says Karen Owen, Westbury's Essential School coordinator.

The conversation's aim, however, cannot be to put in place a predetermined agenda of Essential School reform. Instead, Ted Sizer emphasizes, it has to have a democratic focus; each school must find its own ways to work through its particular challenges. But conversation is the necessary medium to do this, he argues, and so setting up a context of collegiality in which it can thrive must be a school's first task.

### New Conditions, New Norms

"Collegial workplaces depend on teachers' openness and readiness to improve," Susan Moore Johnson concludes in *Teachers at Work*. They

## Conversation Starters: Some Key Questions

The Coalition has used this technique in beginning the conversation at schools in the exploratory stages. In groups of around five people, consider a few of the following questions. (Warning: For each set allow two to three hours; to "cover" all of them will only lead to superficial conversations.) For each one, come up with three answers to share with the larger group, and then together "cook down" the list to no more than five items the whole group can stand behind.

### I.

- What do we want students to know and be able to do when they leave our school? What would our school be proud to list on our diploma?
- What are people like whom we really admire? What do they do? If schools were trying to help shape these characteristics, skills, and habits, what kinds of practices and structures would they have to set up?

### II.

- What is the most powerful learning experience you have ever had? Tell the stories, then talk about the characteristics and conditions that made learning possible.
- Where in our school are powerful learning experiences already going on? What are the teaching strategies or other strategies that are allowing it to happen? How could we make these conditions possible throughout the whole school? What might keep it from happening?

### III.

- Which of the Nine Common Principles would be easiest to adapt in our school? Which would be the most difficult? Why?
- What would be uncomfortable for you personally about starting to work with the Nine Common Principles? What comfortable? (Don't need to ask why.)
- If you were going to visit a school where that difficult principle was in practice, what would you see kids doing? What would teachers and adults in the building be doing?
- If you were going to put that principle into practice in your school, what would you need to make it happen? From whom do you need these things? Make a list for yourself personally, and one for the staff as a whole.

must also have "reference groups of peers for identifying problems and taking action; ample time for observation and discussion; and administrators who both encourage teachers and accommodate their needs as they explore new collegial relationships." When all these pieces are in place, it appears, a new tradition of collaboration starts to exert its own force, causing people to rely upon it for solutions as subsequent situations arise.

The experience of the thirty schools involved in the Eight-Year Study of the Progressive Education Association in the 1930s is good evidence of this. (See *HORACE*, Volume 8, No. 1.) In this large-scale experiment, thousands of teachers took bold risks to rethink and change what went on in their classrooms; they were given carte blanche by college admissions officers who guaranteed their students would not be penalized because of unconventional curricula. The study was abruptly brought to a close as World War II began, but it had lasted long enough to establish a new standard of what was acceptable and desirable in a high school education. According to some educators looking back

on the movement, most of this happened through teachers talking together at the grassroots level, and gathered strength as they realized their freedom to express and try out new ideas over time. "The very ways people looked at high schools began to change," says Sizer. "The Eight-Year Study legitimized a national discourse that called for much more student engagement with their work, in ways that mirror many of the ideas the Coalition now stands for."

Small schools have a distinct advantage over larger ones in creating the conditions for conversation, as do independent schools over public ones, Susan Johnson's research shows. Both face fewer bureaucratic and organizational obstacles to informal encounters. Among today's Essential schools, one of the longest-standing traditions of an active conversation about teaching and learning is that of the 320-student Thayer High School in Winchester, New Hampshire. Thayer is small enough that people can hardly avoid conversation; and its principal, Dennis Littky, promotes teacher-talk with unflagging energy and a seemingly endless stream of strategies.

Every Friday Littky's T.G.I.F. memo is required faculty reading, an exuberant amalgam of his reflections and questions, copies of provocative articles, lists of the subjects and times of the next week's meetings, and other diverse items. Two years ago, Littky passed out "those hardbound journals with pretty covers" to his staff in which they could correspond with him weekly about anything they chose. ("I find out things they'd never say in person," he says.) He circulates a videotape interviewing each teaching team for five minutes on its progress; he operates a consulting stable of Thayer teachers who are hired to travel and lecture; he brainstorms with teams on new strategies for parent involvement. A cable television program called "Here, Thayer, and Everywhere" is in the works, to be an interactive training tool for teachers nationwide.

At weekly hour-long faculty meetings, small groups bring together teachers from adjacent grades or related subject areas to work on curriculum and other questions. "We take turns bringing good food to the meetings," says Littky. "And I call them off after an hour. They've gotta be fun." On their own, Thayer's teachers go much further; it's common for teams to meet outside school weekly for intensive planning sessions, at a local deli or a teacher's home.

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### ***In time, a new culture of conversation develops, creating new norms for how to deal with conflict, risk, or change.***

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Partly because Thayer has been at it so long—longer than the Coalition has existed—the school has developed its own culture of conversation, creating new norms for how to deal with conflict, risk, or change. "People come to depend on it for direction over time," CES senior researcher Rick Lear says. "It becomes a touchstone; when people get tired or things get difficult, they're able to look back and say, 'We talked about that, and here's why we decided what we did.'"

Creating those new norms in a larger organization can be an arduous process; many in the Coalition argue it can only happen, in fact, when schools are broken into separately managed units of 500 or fewer students. However it is carried out, a number of linked conditions appear to be crucial to the process:

- Ample paid or release time for reflection and conversation, not just as retreats and "day-away" programs, but built into the teachers' daily schedule.



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- A small enough student load so that teachers know their students well, and have the energy to think and talk creatively about their needs.

- Arranging school space, from lunchrooms to faculty lounges, so as to make conversations natural, attractive, and easy.

- Public and positive feedback by the administration for taking risks in the classroom, even if they do not always succeed.

- Periodic grouping of teachers with others who can help them, whether across grades, across disciplines, or across institutional boundaries.

- Regular meetings of the entire faculty to address substantive educational issues over which they have real power.

- Involving virtually every teacher in shaping some aspect of what is at stake.

- The inclusion in the conversation of students, parents, and teachers not in the vanguard of change.

### How to Include Everyone?

Given how hard it is to bring about even one of these conditions, it is no wonder that so many member schools in the Coalition's first years chose to pass up the last three points and start with a school-within-a-school structure. Patrick McQuillan and Donna Muncey, who have followed the Coalition's progress in depth for several years, have analyzed several such situations as part of their School Ethnography Project. Schools that start this way, they note, do so believing they can start up Essential School practices cautiously and at less cost, while preserving the peace among a faculty that did not always agree on the need for change. Invariably, however, the school-within-a-school efforts ran into even bigger troubles because they were separate from the rest of their schools. Their teachers were resented for receiving special treatment, like smaller student loads and extra planning periods. With everyone's eyes on the new program, Essential

School proponents felt pressure to publicize its success, making it hard to distinguish between real educational progress and public relations, and inviting the insulting impression that the rest of the school was somehow mediocre. Though in most cases the programs were intended to expand eventually into the whole school, uninvolved faculty often felt ill-informed as to what Essential Schools were about, and wary about extending practices like interdisciplinary efforts and longer-block scheduling that they saw as threatening their own domain. In the end, the conversation about school change was actually limited by the school-within-a-school choice, not promoted by it.

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If things start to go wrong like this for an Essential School, McQuillan and Muncey warn, they may never go right again. Insiders to the program become exhausted with the continual political divisiveness, they say; outsiders harden their stances against changes in their teaching practices; and faculty relations (which historically are relatively tension-free compared to tensions between faculty and administration or teachers and students) only deteriorate with time. Successful Essential schools, say these observers, "cannot afford to focus purely on philosophical or pedagogical issues, or even structural concerns." Instead, right from the start they must give plenty of *political* attention to making everyone feel part of the new picture.

What techniques prove effective for getting this kind of whole-school participation going? "The evidence is that during the first year of planning, teachers need to move *outside* the school structure if they are to talk about ideas of teaching and learning," says CES's Bob McCarthy. Many Essential schools, for example, schedule a one- or two-day staff retreat where teachers are introduced to the Nine Common Principles and encouraged to brainstorm about ways they fit into their practice. (See sidebar, page 2.) Other schools systematically send teachers to regional symposia, introductory workshops, or other offerings of CES or regional and Re:Learning efforts. "By the second year," McCarthy says, "they begin to build the conversation into their ordinary school structure—through faculty meetings, study groups, or task forces to report back to the whole staff."

But having a direct, clear, and productive conversation about matters on which people disagree strongly is a skill that does not come easily, especially in a profession as isolating as the classroom teacher's. For this reason, some contend that any staff efforts must include training in discussion and decision-making skills. This is a key focus of national programs such as the Citibank Faculty and the Thomson Fellows, which train Coalition teachers and administrators in facilitation skills they then use in extended work with several client schools. Some schools also use consensus training or team-building workshops to get at the same problem.

Many schools, especially those involved in the Coalition's Trek experience, have used two excellent videotapes to spark their initial reexamining of values and priorities. "The Power of Vision" and "The Business of Paradigms," both hosted by Joel Barker, are available at discounted rates to educational organizations through Charthouse International Learning Corporation (1-800-328-3789). Other schools have taken advantage of "coalition-

building" workshops and materials available through the Education Commission of the States, which specifically aim to bring more of the community into the conversation.

Calling on every teacher to contribute something to the effort has proved an effective way to strengthen communication and unity for many schools. When the move to whole-school involvement finally did come at Westbury, says coordinator Karen Owen, all teachers of core subjects joined teams. The ones who had already been involved with Essential School ideas were urged to continue, "but with teachers who were brand new to it, we only asked that they meet and talk to each other as professionals about their kids," Owen says. "They didn't have to do interdisciplinary work or anything else, just meet and learn how to work as a team. For the most part teachers were so excited to have a team to rely on—to share students, share problems, and offer suggestions—that they actually did more, even though they weren't required to." This year Westbury moved further, asking every team to talk about how it would handle attendance,

discipline, and interdisciplinary questions. Elective teachers are not on core teams, Owen says, but they are often asked in to give input about students, and they dominate the committee that is writing the proposal for graduation exhibitions. "Many of the elective fields are performance oriented, such as industrial technology, home economics, music, and physical education," says Owen. "They can really help along some of the more academic teachers."

### What to Talk About?

Once the climate for conversation is secure and teachers feel encouraged to talk freely, what do they talk about? "One of the big differences between the Coalition and other restructuring movements," says Bob McCarthy, "is that it offers substantive and intellectual content. In that sense the Nine Common Principles provide a new structure for change—an intellectual structure."

Hashing out what those common principles mean—rephrasing them, noting where they are already being realized in a school, identifying what

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would be hardest or easiest about translating them into practice—is one of the most effective ways to get the Essential School conversation going, CES staff people say. Another way into the conversation is to ask every teacher, especially those who have not been in the vanguard of change, to help shape the answer to "What do we want our students to know and be able to do on graduation?" At Parkway South High School, near St. Louis, Missouri, a Danforth Foundation planning grant of

## Some Techniques to Keep the Conversation Going

- Get a diverse student committee to rephrase the Nine Common Principles of Essential Schools in their own words. Then circulate it among the teachers for their reactions.
- Train people in the consensus method of decision-making, where a decision is arrived at only when everyone agrees to help implement something. This proves useful for major decisions from contract negotiations to school vision statements.
- At a faculty meeting, introduce one Essential School principle; then ask each teacher to write down its meaning on an index card without using any of the words in the CES version. Collect the cards and make them into a list to send every teacher, showing how many ways each principle can take shape.
- After faculty members have been introduced to the Nine Common Principles, ask department meetings to come up with a list of ways they already carry them out, and ideas for how to expand into new practices.
- Ask each department to elect a respected representative—not necessarily an Essential School proponent—to a faculty committee who will be paid or given release time to reflect weekly on the issues that face the school and report back to their departments. Add a few "at-large" members who may nominate themselves for election by the full faculty.
- If teachers tend to eat in department offices, institute a faculty lunchroom, to get members of different departments talking together more regularly. Lengthening the lunch hour helps, too.
- If your school has a video lab or photography class, videotape 5-minute interviews with anyone who is trying new things alone or in teams. Put them all on one tape, make copies, and present them at meetings of other faculty groups.
- Praise and publicize teachers who are taking risks by departing from time-worn procedures. Write personal notes to acknowledge their efforts, and send a copy to the central office files.

\$100,000 freed more than a dozen teachers for two hours daily to hash out a set of six interdisciplinary "proficiency areas" the whole faculty could agree on as graduation requirements. Elected by their departments, few of these teachers were already deeply involved with Essential School ideas, and principal Craig Larson had no guarantee that the group would eventually integrate those ideas into the graduation guidelines. "They had more to read and absorb at the start because they were unfamiliar with the concepts," he said. "But in the end their enthusiasm carried more weight with their departments, because they could identify and sympathize with people who were suspicious of the new ideas." Going back again and again to their colleagues for feedback,

these teachers worked and reworked the proficiency guidelines until they had articulated not only the minimum graduation requirements but a higher level, called "mastery," as well. Subcommittees also studied other areas of change, like proposed schedule changes and advisory groups. This year, against considerable odds, this 2,000-student suburban high school has made several significant steps toward whole-school involvement with Essential schooling.

Sometimes a school comes to the Essential School conversation indirectly, through another movement that reflects many of the same ideas. Over the course of three years, for instance, some 30 to 40 teachers from the Croton-Harmon school district in New York's Hudson River

Valley have been released for fourteen school days a year to attend a workshop about writing across the curriculum. The experience challenged their assumptions about teaching and learning in ways that were sometimes uncomfortable, says Croton-Harmon High School's Chris Louth, who now coordinates the Essential School effort there. "But it sent a clear message that this was time valued by the school district. And the aim was always to talk out our responses, to make the writing workshop reflect our own thoughts." When principal Sherry King invited teachers to start talking about Essential School ideas, "they fit right into what we had already been talking about," Louth says. Pueblo County's school district does something similar by sending dozens of personnel, from principals to custodians, for training in the consensus method of making decisions. "It makes talking about everything from school change to labor disputes a much better experience for everybody," says principal Dick Amman.

## Conversation Starters: A Discussion About Decency

One way to focus a conversation is to ask participants to discuss in depth one of the Nine Common Principles as it relates to their school. Neil Culhane, staff coordinator at Connecticut's Avon High School, asked teachers to read a recent issue of *HORACE* that focused on the principle of decency (Volume 7, No. 4), and to join him for coffee and talk about the following questions:

- How do we define decency? Is decency a minimum of an expectation, or should we expect a higher standard?
- How does our school, or your classroom, demonstrate the principle of decency?
- Is having high expectations a sign of respect or an imposition and/or a cause of unnecessary pressure? How do you distinguish between the two? When does high expectation cross the line and become unnecessary pressure?
- The article describes a "last chance" school effort where teachers pay home visits to students (pages 2-3). What is your response to this? Would you do this? Is this going beyond the call of duty?
- The article states, "The best teachers are learners themselves" (page 4). Do you agree with this? What have you learned from your students this year?
- The issue of tests and grading is raised (page 4). There's an example of students collaborating on tests. What is your reaction to this? Is this "legalized cheating"? What is the purpose of tests? Is a score the only indicator of learning? What else would or could you consider as mastery of learning?
- If you were limited to having only three rules for the entire school (faculty, students, and all staff) to follow, what would they be? What would the consequences be for any infractions of the rules?
- Could our school initiate a plan so that every single student received some form of positive recognition? Is this type of plan necessary? Feasible? What do you envision it to be?
- "Conditions in our society have changed to the point where the very norms of respect have altered," Pat Wasley states in the article. Do you agree or disagree? What conditions do you think she is referring to? Can or should teachers do anything about the "changed conditions"?

## Where Does Talk Get You?

Early results from the Coalition's pilot study in the Taking Stock effort suggest that teachers linked with Essential School efforts do talk more with each other about the ideas of teaching and learning than their colleagues in traditional school structures. But conversation is merely sentimental if it does not result in real improvement at the classroom level—if students are not more deeply engaged because of what their teachers are doing with Essential School ideas. "A lot can talk the talk," Bob McCarthy cautions, "but not many can walk the walk."

Aside from pointing to specific schools' increased student success—both on quantifiable levels like attendance and in more intangible aspects like engagement and school climate—how can you tell if conversation will make any difference in the long run? Some evidence comes from looking at other movements of



classroom change—the practice of teaming teachers in middle school, for example, or the “whole language” trend that links reading and writing across the disciplines. In both cases, only when teachers really began to talk about the new ideas—and to change their practices because they believed that kids would do better that way—did the movement really take hold and spread. “It doesn’t really matter if these ideas originate at the university level or the classroom level,” says CES senior researcher Rick Lear. “But if teachers don’t talk about it and come to believe in it, no matter how good an idea is, the actual practice won’t change—and ultimately student achievement won’t change either. Talk enables structural changes.”

To be effective, a conversation among teachers has to continue, creating new norms and rebuilding consensus as time goes by. “People keep asking me, ‘How are things going?’” Craig Larson says. “It’s tempting to give an easy answer: ‘We planned for three years and now we’ve changed this and that, and everything’s fine.’ But the real answer is that collaboration and change never end—it has to go on all the time.”

Talk travels, from schoolhouse to statehouse, from the academy to the classroom and back. When he speaks of his “conversation among friends,” Ted Sizer is actually aiming to bring alive a new national discourse, in which ideas about teaching and learning are slowly shifting at every level. He jokes with Sizer, Bob McCarthy says, about holding that conversation with a bullhorn among 10,000 friends at St. Louis’s Busch Stadium, as the Essential Schools effort gains momentum. But school change does not happen in a stadium, no matter how inspiring the speech. It happens at levels at once more modest and more enduring, between individual people involved in teaching and learning, as they begin to talk freely to each other, and to trust that if they speak their voices will be heard. □

## Conversation Starters: Coaches Talk About the Fifth Common Principle

At Fairdale High School in Jefferson County, Kentucky, to extend the conversation about the metaphor of “teacher as coach, student as worker,” several athletic coaches offered the following teaching guidelines in their own words.

- Work specifically on individual weaknesses one on one, demonstrating the correct execution of the stroke, etc.
- Communicate exactly what is expected in terms of punctuality, behavior, and performance.
- Plan practice to be challenging but keep some fun in it. Vary what you do—don’t let it get monotonous or boring.
- Model the correct movement and break it down into its basic, fundamental parts.
- Have a sense of humor; poke fun at yourself sometimes. Joke with the kids some to help them relax and enjoy the sport.
- Let the kids know that you love your job and you care about them and their success.

—Lloyd Harris, tennis coach

- Emphasize to all members of the team that it is their team, not the coach’s team. We use the word “our” a lot.
- The ultimate goal is for the student to take total control of the task at hand within the framework of a team concept. We want them at the conclusion to be able to coach the game themselves. Throughout the season we continue to shift the burden of responsibility to the player. It never ceases to amaze me how readily the student accepts these problem-solving activities under highly stressful conditions.

—Robert Thompson, assistant football coach

- Be open-minded for change—learn from your students. Everyone is different.
- Treat all students fairly and care about each of them.
- Involve everyone daily—no standing around.
- Distribute responsibility, as much as a student will take; don’t force it.
- Instill pride!
- Be truthful; kids can see right through half-truths and exaggerations.
- Be enthusiastic, and don’t be afraid to show emotions—love is a very strong motivating factor.
- Encourage maximum effort daily; emphasize that you play like you practice.
- Never let a student have two bad days in a row.

—Mike Fletcher, football coach

- Personal commitment of time to each player.
- Teach and reteach; they can’t get it right the first time and forever more.
- Patience—patience—patience.
- Set goals players can reach.
- Reward success.
- Never let one fail; find his success niche.

—Stanley Hardin, basketball coach

- Set your expectations to the point where they are difficult to obtain, and don’t relax on these expectations. Be consistent!
- Never leave a kid with a negative feeling about himself or herself. If you have to correct them, make sure before they leave that you pick them back up.

—Mark Wilson, assistant football coach

## The Nine Common Principles of Essential Schools

1. The school should focus on helping adolescents learn to use their minds well. Schools should not attempt to be "comprehensive" if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose.
2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, 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.* The aphorism "Less Is More" should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort merely to cover content.
3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those 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 directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students. To capitalize on this 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.
5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker rather than the more familiar metaphor of 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 are those who can show competence in language and elementary mathematics. 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. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation — an "exhibition." This exhibition by the student of his or her grasp of the central skills and knowledge of the school's program may be jointly administered by the faculty and by higher authorities. As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of "credits earned" by "time spent" in class. The emphasis is on the students' demonstration that they can do important things.
7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious 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 should be treated as essential collaborators.
8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (*experts in but one particular discipline*). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school.
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 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional comprehensive secondary schools.



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