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Quarterly reports on the challenges of creating and sustaining whole-system transformational change in school districts

ACTION NOW AGAINST ONE-SIZE SCHOOLING

by

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Pinpointing the Blame

It is far beyond TIME FOR ACTION. We who believe in “FutureMinds: Transforming American School Systems,” and other similar advocacies, are to BLAME for the current political domination of the field labeled education. We need no more articles (including this one), books, speeches, conversations regarding our views. We have been NEGLIGENT in allowing—especially in the past three decades—more rigid one-size schooling to be enforced against the great majority of learners of all ages. We have failed to organize as one undefeatable voice. Current budget shortfalls, family relationships, poverty communities, and looming technologies are realities, but not excuses for being far too passive.

We have misinterpreted the concept of “whole system change.” We have not face-to-face challenged the controlling traditionalist school people, misguided, misinformed politicians, and college-prep oriented parents. We have not been lunatic! The wonderful Don Quixote provided our essential commitment: “*When life (education/schooling) itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies? To SURRENDER dreams may be the madness—and the maddest of all—to see life (education/learning) as it is, and NOT AS IT SHOULD BE.*”

Our Unified Army

It really is ACTION TIME. We must mobilize as an invincible UNIFIED ARMY, let passion change to demand, and become personally verbally combative if our opponents will not reasonably listen to our views. We need to say NO to the majority of members of Congress, State Legislatures, School Boards, PTA Members, and Chief Executive Officers who support and pass negative regulations. We must refuse to conform to their illogical curriculum mandates, grade level standards, and the insanities of current and proposed testing designs. We must RISK!

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To achieve widespread success against decades of tradition and power, it does now require a group—a critical mass—of supporters. Meanwhile, individuals can yet act on a limited scale to assist the greater effort:

1. A mother refusing to let her daughter take the state/national tests,
2. A principal modifying the algebra requirement to allow math difficult students to “pass,”
3. A superintendent trying to convince his/her board to provide more learning options,
4. A college dean pursuing choice options for education majors.
5. A parent home-schooling or supporting a charter school.

However, unless an individual has money or personal connections with a politician, one person can no longer gain an appointment, or even a response from most—local, state, national—politicians and traditional superintendents. Speaking before a school board for two minutes during “public input” is frustration. An army IS required.

During the President Johnson era, communication was more personal. In most situations one individual could often succeed in being heard and in many cases which can be documented, transform one-size schooling into options for large numbers of volunteers. One example: in 1967, the author created the nationally recognized public K-6 Lincoln Learning Laboratory in a closed 1904 building in a place called Watertown. Though he had support from community members, staff from South Dakota State, and Senator George McGovern, there would not have been a Lincoln without this one person. In those days, good politicians listened.

Our focus must be to unify many Individuals as a Group to achieve success in overcoming current closed political structures. A plea for ACTION should be unnecessary, but there is no existing UNIFIED army. Therefore, before we suggest “how to proceed now,” historical reviews of why change efforts have occurred in most every decade, and reminders of successful transformations during the past one hundred years of learning versus schooling are deemed essential. From this, we must understand how to reverse the political and educational cultures, enabling a return to the cooperative years of the 1960s/70s and before that the 1920s/30s. We also need to validate a century of protests. In 1911, one million youth in England went on strike against one-size schooling. It is now past 2011.

Assessing the Problems

Politicians are typically lawyers, business people, landowners who know little regarding LEARNING. They and their moneyed corporate supporters only know SCHOOLING. They tolerated this format while seeking entrance to college and future success. Even if they received straight “A’s” and advanced to power, they have no vision of how most of them could have benefited much more through choices of opportunities. They fail, because of their success in traditional structures, to recognize that “one-size-fits-all” schooling systems do not allow the overwhelming majority of learners of all ages to receive maximum benefits, especially those labeled as low achievers. Conventional school practitioners have been “brainwashed” in an obsolete system for sixteen years (K-college) before they begin “teaching.” In the zest by the

good “Pied Pipers” to help youth and have employment, even they have accepted the required compliances—usually without a whimper.

The 2012 corporate political action groups attempt to buy elections and the status quo by spending billions of dollars on campaigns funded by millionaires while unemployment rates are a disaster, people are homeless, and many exist in poverty. Political donations have flowed to tax-exempt groups which do not have to identify donors—another unethical breach. Their answer to all these societal ills related to schooling is to raise test scores and have everyone college-eligible. The rationale that the traditionalists like is that the U.S. supposedly ranks 18th to 27th on various “global tests” in science and math; therefore, to compete, schools need to be more rigid with enforcement of stiffer penalties on those rated as “failing.”

Misguided politicians look at China, a nation with high test scores, as an example of those whose results we must beat! China has extremely rigid methods of schooling; many students do not take these global tests. Conversely, Finland, the nation with the highest test scores, though still primarily group-paced schooling, conducts it in a relaxed, informal, flexible education structure. Both countries have very homogeneous populations. Ironically, these two examples of extremes prove that learning can be very different in environment, yet still produce high test score results. These opposite comparisons validate learning alternatives for everyone.

We know that in most of our fifty states, there are large heterogeneous populations consisting of many ethnic, racial, cultural, religious dissimilarities. The low income, low achieving test score populations often come from past stereotyped “minority” backgrounds. All these learners can learn, want to learn, and do learn in existing programs. Some benefit from rigid structuring, but the great majority benefit more from personalized programming and non-traditional school settings. They are especially enhanced by self-pacing, nutrition support, flexible requirements, and warm loving “pied piper” guides and environments.

These assessments are not new to readers of the *Duffy Reports* and related publications. However, we as educators have done little to “transform” schooling. We write articles stating that change should occur, promote some philosophical viewpoint, or propose system change. The fact is that negative one-size schooling systems continue. Many groups, as the *Fairtest* supporters, have “fought” for ten years against *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), but it still exists even if in a modified form; worse, it allowed “Race to the Top” to emerge as a better “design,” the administration states. Even if Anti-NCLB groups were now successful, why should it take ten years to right a wrong? Think of all the students in the past decade who have suffered from the “dummy label,” because of their supposed low test scores.

Futile Past Activities

Highlights of the past 100 years reinforce the beliefs of learning visionaries and should lead to a willingness to commit to confrontational ACTION. Continuing verbal dialogue is no longer an acceptable option. Transforming education, mechanically, is very simple. We must promote and demonstrate the benefits of choices for everyone. In “whole system change,” there is no objection to continuing traditional one-size schooling as long as it is only one of many voluntary learning

environments. A minority percentage will for now select that preference. However, freedom of choice, self-direction, and program variations are the keys to “whole system change”—not just replacing one mandated system with another “transformed” structure.

Traditionalists argue that options already exist. There are charters, private schools, home-based learning, on-line designs, distance learning networks, alternative schools—a terrible misnomer and often only for those “at risk”—GED exit exams, and yes, even a small number of defiant public schools. Unfortunately, those enrolled in such deviations from “the regular school” represent perhaps only two percent of the K-12 youth. Most charters, for example, are too small with limited facilities, opposed by unions, have waiting lists—how do you have waiting lists and lotteries for learning—and follow politically controlled local and state curriculum mandates and testing dates. Some charters are for gifted, bored, or rebellious; most small programs do not have football teams and music specialties to draw a cross-section of youth.

Districts create “royalty segregations, called gifted programs,” require algebra, and enforce unjust testing. Probably ninety-eight percent of the public school students in America today are still locked into the horrible “7th grade” syndrome—the “7th norm” being one of the prime illustrations of the overwhelming fallacies of current one-size schooling structures. For the great majority, whether low or high achievers on tests, education is not characterized by boundless optimism. Neither are most conventional college classes still taught on the equivalent of the old M-W-F lecture schedules.

Mandated 100-year-old patterns yet prevailing—augmented now by the technological world—continue to reflect broken learning philosophies. Traditionalists who now control education politics and purse strings follow the belief feelings of the cheerful cherub’s dogmatist: *“In controversial moments, my perspective’s rather fine; I always see both points of view: the one that’s wrong—and mine!”*

Current Schooling Dilemmas

The prevailing focus of the schooling traditionalists has been on low test scores. Overlooked is the fact that most “A/B” report card students are bored and do not need or desire the current twisted “adult-designed” curriculum. The grandson of the author is only one example among thousands: he did not go to high school, instead going two years to community college. He then enrolled in the “famed” University of California at Berkeley where he graduated—without going to high school or earning a high school diploma. Neither did the Wright brothers, who not only revolutionized travel, but changed the world. Think of the success achievements of many home-educated youth, including several early U.S. presidents.

Budget problems have California considering a 160-day school year, not 180. This would not affect the “fast learners.” If the state were really concerned over low achievers, they would adopt for them a year-round continuous learning schedule and use the saved money for intersessions for the poverty and second language communities. The notion of “summer learning loss” via the

nine-month calendar has been well documented by extensive studies, led by Harris Cooper and associates at the University of Missouri.

Perhaps worse for many learners is the elimination of the exciting fields related to home economics and industrial arts (regardless of their new names), drama, and the reduction of offerings in art, music, immersion language programs, and elementary physical education taught by a specialist. The latter is basically non-existent in the conventional K-3 years, by far the most important period of development—not the high school level. Visionaries know that learners learn best at their own pace when immersed in their strengths and interests and their student-designed curriculum. Most learners suffer when forced into their adult-perceived weaknesses, failures, and mandates. The former do not avoid “essentials;” they engage in them when ready and perceive a need regardless of their age. Obama, Biden, Romney do not understand this reality.

Ample proof of this dichotomy can be provided. We as visionaries have not brought this truth to the center of attention. Again we have failed; it is our fault that mandated learning has become such a tragedy for so many learners, whether scoring high, middle, or low on irrelevant paper tests. It is the “orchard test” that really counts: *By his/her fruits you will know the individual.* Education should first reflect the PERSON and what skills and abilities shine. The primary goal should not be a score on “common core standards” on state and national tests in two or three “subjects.” Learning is interdependent, not compartmentalized.

This article is focusing on the ills of schooling and the related political arrogance. What we should first address is the realization that education should have as its number one curriculum concern, the gradual destruction of Planet Earth. The drastic damage being done to our oceans worldwide and resulting environmental changes take center stage. Our youth and politicians should first consider saving the natural world. In general, people can live five minutes without air, five days without water, and five weeks without food. Are reading test scores really our priority? Senior citizens will make it through, but the real concern should be for the children and great-grandchildren. What world will be left for their future?

Challenging Bureaucrat Values

Learning visionaries know that it is the affective domain, related with the psychomotor, that will determine the person—not the cognitive test scores. Yes, we need cognitive-developed weapons for defense if we are attacked, and medical research for illnesses, but how these are used is the priority evaluation. Bureaucrats who insist on testing, but send young people off to unnecessary wars do not comprehend the confluence of spirit, mind, body. We need to insist that these cognitive in-control bureaucrats reflect on their stated values by doing some of their own reading and not worry so much about NCLB-style legislation.

Have they read, among hundreds, *Doctors from Hell* (Spitz/Nuremberg Trials) describing what brilliant, high test score physicians did as experiments on those trapped in the holocaust concentration camps? It is hard to believe the brutality of these medical “saviors of life.” Have they reflected on *The Zookeeper's Wife* (Ackerman/German brutality in Warsaw), or *Unbroken* (Hillenbrand/worse brutality by the Japanese)? The Germans and Japanese had excellent

schooling systems prior to World War II. Add to the many, *Sarah's Key* (De Rosnay/Vichy France holocaust) and *War* (Junger/Americans in Afghanistan). Such lists over centuries are almost endless.

War is Hell, but occasionally as in World War II, we are left with no choice. How many wars since have been essential? How many of the current politicians sending our youth recently to the front lines are themselves combat veterans? The First Infantry Division had 60 percent casualties invading Normandy, plus a higher percentage IF including those lost to combat as psychological casualties. This latter problem is even greater in the Afghan/Iraq conflicts. Why really do our present youth volunteer (not drafted as in World War II) to fight now? What psychology is at play when they enlist—but more so, on the battlefield? Does the laying of a wreath on Memorial Day ease such decisions for bureaucrats?

How many of our test-score mania bureaucrats have lived in poverty, have been called “dummies” and have been sentenced to remedial reading at the wrong age, eventually “failing” and being pushed out of school? How many bureaucrats have been homeless or had no health care? Very few politicians who pontificate while occupying seats in the state and national legislatures—and including politician school board members—have had to go without basic essentials. Congressional members—even those opposing “Obamacare”—have taxpayer paid health care, food on the table, nice cars, and comfortable homes. Groups like Smile Train beg for money to create one smile at a time for children with cleft palate defects. Meanwhile the affluent pay \$40,000 for a dinner ticket to listen to Obama or Romney speak to add to their campaign war chest funds for attacks on each other. Where are humanity and humility in politics? These same corporate-supported individuals insist on algebra for everyone. Why?

How can we allow politicians to tell our citizens that world class test scores create the humans that we would hope represent the United States? Need we mention the corruption on Wall Street and in some government programs—or the corporate mentality learned in our “world class schooling” that it is legal to offer a “sale item” at “\$19.99” rather than being honest enough to state it is really \$20.00. Politicians and schooling are not to blame for the outlandish salaries given to movie and TV luminaries and sports figures. New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees signed a hundred million dollar contract, forty million guaranteed the first year. Our Unified Army cannot change this societal culture, but as learning experts, if we cannot rid ourselves of the “7th grade,” we all need to fold our tents. More written protests are of little value.

Publications Versus Implementations

We have been overwhelmed by well-meaning networks of excellent people concerned for our learners and the education system. We need this bigger picture direction of what we are seeking; the networks keep ideas and processes alive. These intellectual, philosophical approaches may have long range value. As illustration, William Spady has a large computer-web of conversationalists who would agree that changes in schooling are needed. His new book, related to inner growth of the person, reflects the need for the affective domain to be the focus of education and human development.

The Transformational Leadership for Education network in 2012 held a workshop subtitled “Transformational Leadership for Educators: Leading from the Inside Out in an Upside-Down World.” There is a need to consider this focus on social and emotional intelligence, cultural responsiveness, and strategies for whole system change. The Southern California Association of Transformational Leaders, and similar groups, present wonderful workshops, write books, and are believers in change. Such efforts are laudable, and may pay dividends by 2020, but now these intellectuals need to join our cause and help us change present daily schooling.

We can no longer allow the horrible “7th grade” (to be documented), “Race to the Top” mentality, and grade level norms for one-size results. Who are the political and educator bureaucrats who insist they have the nirvana for everyone? They allow students to fail and drop out of schooling—7000 a day, one every 26 seconds. Legislators send many off to war while most of them stay home. We must overcome the current political mentality regarding schooling. We must implement—not just publish—programs for everyone.

The Golden Era

In 2012 we often forget that “transformational, whole system change processes” were well known and practiced in the 1960s and 70s, and were advanced decades before this era. Looking at just the 1965-66 years reflects our current ineptitudes and the redundancy of information well-known fifty years ago. This backward mirror demonstrates that politicians and school people can work together to enhance learning options. In 1965, Everett Rogers and four other colleagues involved with the Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration, University of Oregon, completed a booklet, *Change Processes in the Public Schools*. We knew how then. The publication is still relevant.

In this same period, the *Phi Delta Kappan* journal, December 1966, published an article titled “Changing a School.” The *Kappan* stated: Since employing progress-minded superintendent Martin Garrison and a “vice-president in charge of heresy” (the author), the schools of University City, Missouri have become a case study in the dynamics of change, and a prototype for change-conscious educators.

In cooperation with the federally funded regional education laboratory (CEMREL—one of nine such laboratories nationally), a multi-state conference was held in University City titled “Innovative Practices and the Process of Change in Education.” Session topics included the “Role of System-wide Change Agent,” “Changing Community Attitudes,” “Changing Teaching Strategies,” “Changing the Schoolhouse,” “Changing the Curriculum,” “Changing Organizational Patterns,” and “Changing Administrative Roles.” Do we really need another fifty years of conferences and articles on transforming education?

This same 1965-66 era produced the great education speech by President Lyndon Johnson, February 16, 1966. President Johnson speaking to 10,000 school superintendents in Atlantic City, New Jersey, outlined the transformational vision:

Tomorrow's school will be a school without walls—a school built of doors which open to the entire community. Tomorrow's school will reach out to the places that enrich the human spirit—to the museums, theaters, art galleries, to the parks and rivers and mountains. It will ally itself with the city, its busy streets and factories, to assembly lines and laboratories, so that the world of work does not seem an alien place for the student. Tomorrow's school will be the center of community life, for grownups as well as children, a shopping center of human services. It might have a community health clinic, a public library, a theater, and recreational facilities. It will provide formal education for all citizens—and it will not close its doors any more at three o'clock. It will employ its buildings 'round the clock, and its teachers 'round the year.

Why, fifty years later, have those of us who believe in “transforming the American schooling systems” not created “Tomorrow’s School” today? Have we presented with vigor this vision to current politicians? NO! Why not? Because as individuals we write articles and have interesting conversations, but this individual process is not working. We must form a UNITED ARMY now and enlist others who will support our cause.

In this 1960s Golden Age, with the support of President Johnson, Congress, in passing the ESEA legislation, included Title III. This section provided federal funds for innovation, experimentation, research, and evaluation. The criteria did not include creating high test scores or closing “failing schools.” This legislation passed with bi-partisan support from Democrats led in the Senate by Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, and Walter Mondale, and in the House with support from such Republicans as Albert Quie and William Frenzel. Corporate dollars for innovation efforts came from the Ford, Kettering, Danforth, Mott, and Chrysler foundations. Two leading states in the use of these funds were Republican-controlled South Dakota, and the split control of the DFL (Democrat) and Conservative (Republican) Parties in Minnesota.

The Twentieth Century

In the fast-fading 20th century, the 1960s/70s were not the only periods of efforts in the United States to transform education. The famed 1907-1937 Gary, Indiana *Platoon System* blended extreme innovation for its time with numerous traditional structures. The exciting 1917 *Winnetka Plan*, the 1922 *Dalton Plan*, the 1912 year-round plan in Newark, New Jersey, and the 1925 continuous-year plan in Nashville, Tennessee are random examples. In 1922, in the 24th yearbook published by the *National Society for the Study of Education*, Parts I and II both documented the essential need for individualization of learning. The great research project, *The Eight-Year Study* (1932-1940) produced exciting evidence proving it made no difference as to the courses taken in high school, laying the groundwork for transformation then. Earlier in England, in 1913 Edmond Holmes wrote *The Tragedy of Education*, citing everything wrong with our current 2013 one-size schooling system—yes, 100 years ago.

Concurrently, the 1910-11 Russell Sage Foundation reports in the United States further validated the need for change, agreeing independently with the 1913 report from England. In 1932, Sing Sing Prison warden Warren Lawes wrote that schools were doing too well, in that his inmates

could all read and figure math, but that something was missing in schooling: the affective domain. In 1926, the brilliant mathematician and noted philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote *On Education* in which he cited why he was reluctant to place his children into the hands of schooling.

Again, how much more evidence do we need? Why, after 100 years, are we still acting as if these histories—and many more similar citations—never existed? Why do we feel the need continually to re-invent the old wheel? The 2009 book *Toxic Schooling: How Schools Became Worse* (Harber/Education Heretics Press) documents many of the 1970s era critics: Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Goodman, *Compulsory Mis-Education* (1969), Holt, *How Children Fail* (1969), Illich, *Deschooling Society* (1971), Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (1968), Leonard, *Education and Ecstasy* (1970), Reimer, *School Is Dead* (1971), and Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (1969)—the same timing of Glines, *Creating Humane Schools* (1969) and Silberman, *Crisis in the Classroom* (1969).

Graduate Leadership Now

Many graduate schools of education have Educational Leadership programs. These leaders have allowed Algebra to be required for high school graduation. Why did the Visionaries not “go on strike” and refuse to accept such a wrong? This is Educational Leadership? Universities need to rethink their role in the war against schooling. The longstanding program at the University of Florida and the more recent program at Minnesota State are just two examples of the over 100 that could be cited in colleges of education.

There is the *Change Leadership Academy* at Gallaudet (yes, a unique university), but the “7th grade” still exists for everyone in Washington D C. Approximately 103 schools in that district have been cited for cheating on the NCLB required tests, yet we allow without confrontation such individuals as Michelle Rhee, the fired superintendent, to travel the country under the guise of “Students First” while advocating firing teachers, closing schools, and breaking unions and teacher tenure laws. Where is OUR educational leadership? Are we touring the country?

Comparison competitive testing causes cheating. The *Atlanta Constitution* newspaper investigation identified 196 school districts nationally fraudulently raising NCLB test scores. In the exclusive “Ivy League” prep Stuyvesant High School in New York, 70 students were caught cheating via smart phones. Hundreds of students at a similar high school in Houston were caught cheating on final exams. Such lists of “academic dishonesty” are legendary, but old news.

We know what needs to be done—and how—but we are not doing it. When does our Unified Army strike a blow against one-size mandated schooling? We were on our way in the 60s/70s. The cradle-to-grave Wilson Campus School in Mankato, MN was cited as the most innovative public school in America. The program made 69 changes all at once, overnight, from traditional to non-traditional structures (examples: no testing, nongraded, and no curriculum requirements for all ages, preK-college). In that period, Minnesota was acknowledged as the most innovative education state in the nation. By 2012, except for some of the alternatives sites, it had lost that

recognition. The education system was overrun by traditional politics and school people. The Visionaries there did not say NO strongly enough to the enforcement of one-size rituals.

Similar patterns existed in many states. In the late 60s/early 70s, Colorado, Michigan, Illinois, New York, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Florida, Arizona, California, Ohio joined Missouri, Minnesota, and South Dakota with nationally recognized “must see” non-traditional programs—focused on learning, not schooling. At the time of the famous national 1976 *Queen Mary* Continuous Learning Conference, 1100 persons spent a week on board her majesty in Long Beach, CA, to learn how to break the nine-month calendar lockstep and create twelve-month futures oriented bicentennial programs. California alone had 205 districts offering continuous learning in many schools in the various communities.

From 1900 to 1980 such lists of exciting non-traditional programs were in abundance. The renowned Ridgewood High in Norridge Illinois, directed by visionary Eugene Howard, is but one example. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) sponsored, with assistance funding from the Danforth Foundation, “The Model Schools Project.” Twenty schools volunteered to implement the “Trump Plan,” based on the book, *A School for Everyone* by the renowned J. Lloyd Trump, Associate Director of NASSP. Sadly when conservatives gained control, and with his death, the diverse member-based NASSP could not sustain the project. Bishop Carroll High School in Calgary was the only one to retain most of the plan, demonstrating the merits of one “model,” but it later lost to the conservatives too.

Transformation in Reverse

Circa 1980-2010, the traditionalists gained control and managed to eliminate most public school alternatives options. They reinstated the mindset of endless one-size-fits-all schooling. The glimmer of hope in this era—along with home-schooling—was the 1991 passage in Minnesota of the first charter school education code.

The original concept was great—educators, students, parents could create variations in learning environments as choices. Politicians and school boards turned the national movement which followed into nightmares of disappointments—away from the original intent. Even the “new” technological explosion and on-line learning continued to reflect the stranglehold on charters.

What happened to the National School Boards Association related to their 1976-3 report on alternatives? The 60-page booklet stated: “Students have different styles of learning; public school systems should offer each student the environment that best enhances individual development.” In 1972 the National School Public Relations Association report on alternatives stated: “Alternatives may vary from district to district, but they all share the philosophy of providing students and parents with a choice in education. Districts do not have to decide between traditional and innovative schools. Instead they can offer a range of different options for different needs for all the learners.” In 1977, Educational Research Services provided positive studies in their Report: *Evaluation of Alternatives*. In 1970, the American Association of School Administrators report *The Year-Round School* advocated for year-round learning alternatives.

Those were the 1960-1980 Golden Years. Where are these and similar national organizations now, related to choice?

The return to inflexible tradition had already begun (example: the passage of the horrid tax reduction for education in California via Proposition 13), but the election of President Reagan sealed the trend. The slogan of return America to its roots via honoring apple pie, Chevrolets, and motherhood—and conventional schooling—enabled those who voted for Reagan to gain control of local school boards, and eventually the state education departments. Hired were traditionalist superintendents who in turn hired the same-mold principals and teachers. School boards began to eliminate the “non-regular” programs, including such as “free schools”—so brilliantly documented by Ron Miller in *Free Schools, Free People*.

Student-centered programs were being eliminated, and the guide-by-the-side faculty (as opposed to the sage-on-the-stage approach) were assigned back to “egg-crate prisons” and schedules. As a result, the wrong vocabularies of “alternative school” and “at-risk” emerged. In desperation, the Pied Piper staff who wanted to continue to help learners via non-traditional settings and personalized programs said: “We will take the low achievers and discipline problems that most do not want in their classes, if you will let us continue our individualized styles.” Boards and unions said okay, for not many wanted these undesired youth. At the high school level, as example, in a facility for 2200, 2000 students were placed in the “regular program” and 200 were enrolled in the “alternative school” or “at risk” program. This erroneous concept and labeling has continued for thirty years.

Three State Responses

In Pennsylvania, the state “leaders” designed the “Disruptive Youth Program”—what a title! In Minnesota, the Area Learning Centers (ALCs) are considered by alternatives supporters as the best programs in the state, but to enroll, youth must be “bad” (by law) in one or more of eleven ways. You have to be “worst” to enter the “best” programs in the state.

In California, the once long-historically good voluntary Continuation Schools became mandated for the unwanted from the “regular school.” It is time to stop these illogical references to the non-regular alternative school and the “at-risk” labeling. Where is the Army of Visionaries who have allowed such “educational philosophy” to exist?

In the 60s/70s visionaries used educational alternatives (always with an “s”)—though “alternative school” was often used by the media. The “regular school” was just one of the choices. Whatever approach the student/family/teacher selected, that was their regular program. The renowned Wilson School in Minnesota was NOT an alternative school. It was just a choice for those who volunteered to attend—whether “above average,” “average,” or “below average” in traditional terms. There was no such “nonregular” stigma at Wilson.

In these good days, the Minneapolis Southeast Alternatives (s) Project involved clusters of four schools of choice: Contemporary, Continuous Progress, Open, and Free School. Parents,

students, staff selected from the four. The famous St. Paul Open School was just one of the alternatives in St. Paul—not “non-regular.” The current Minnesota Association for Alternative Programs (MAAP) has had to fight to keep low test scoring charter schools from being labeled as “bad at-risk programs.” They are saving hundreds of youth who otherwise would drop out. Students are progressing and legitimately graduating. As good as the MAAP people and programs are, they are wrong as an Association to be seen as “alternative.” Non-traditional approaches are the regular (not alternative) program for those enrolled.

Options are easy to implement in any district of any size within existing budgets and staff numbers. Historical proof is available that choice has been and can be implemented. It is time to insist on personalizing environments for those who volunteer; youth should not be limited to such “exciting” choices as French or Spanish, chorus or art, gifted or at-risk, or online “regular” courses. Personalized programs fit the individual; the individual is not forced to fit a program.

That Awful “7th”

Attention must be paid to startling research, tragic programs, and illogical schooling structures to further strengthen the resolve of our UNIFIED ARMY. We can begin with one of the most awful designs ever invented in this field labeled education. Continued reference has been made to what we have allowed to be called the “7th grade.” Why, as believers in transformation, have we not fought this concept?

There can be NO 7th grade “standards” or norms, or curriculum requirements for those usually 12 years of age chronologically. Overwhelming physical evidence is easily validated that physiologically this 11-12-13-year age grouping is spread a minimum of six years. Some boys/girls are 14/15 physiologically; they are men/women. Others are only 9-10-11; many have not reached puberty. The wrist bones have not merged. Traditionally speaking, some are “5th graders,” some are “9th graders”—yet we label them all “7th.”

On achievement tests, the scores of these same youth, on the famous “common core standards” tests designed to ensure “world class schools,” result in a range of ten years. Some are only at 3rd/4th/5th grade achievement levels, while others score at the 11th/12th/13th grade levels. There can be no “7th” norms, as at most 15 percent fall in that spread. All the group-paced mandated courses are wrong. Those “behind” are frustrated and are in trouble; those “ahead” are bored academically, or disgusted physiologically as 9th graders having to play with 5th graders—or embarrassed as “5th” playing and showering with “9th.”

Two booklets in the 1960s published by ASCD revealed the results of national evaluations. The first, *The Junior High We Need* (1961) preceded the second findings, *The Junior High We Saw* (1964). The two research teams found the “need and saw” documents were miles apart. As a result, led by Bill Alexander of Florida, a group of us designed the “middle school.” It was for students chronologically from 10 to 14, knowing that developmentally the spread was 8 to 16.

This learning center concept was to include the traditional grade levels of 5-6-7-8. Unlike a “junior high,” it was nongraded, flexibly scheduled, age-mixed, and had individual evaluations (no report cards), few requirements, personalized programs, and team teaching. Arguments ensued from the traditionalists whether to include the 5th with the 8th and whether to self-contain the 6th. The latter two usually won. For needed space reasons at that time—not for learning—the middle school became 6-7-8, not 7-8-9 or K-8, with the 6th self-contained. Next the school board changed the name over the door from Garden Junior High to Garden Middle School. The old junior high structure and curriculum remained. In 2012, “middle schools” are worse than the 1964 programs that were evaluated as needing major changes by the ASCD research teams.

The original middle school discussions involved a K-12 mix, but this was not seen as politically viable. The design was to allow these “middle ages” youth to grow and develop at their own pace over four years. The preferred school size was 500—not 1500-3000 as in some communities—small enough to know everyone, but large enough to have faculty selections and curriculum fields available to meet individual preferences.

There were some early excellent models: Mt. Kisco NY, Nova FL, Lima and Berea OH, Eagle Grove IA, and the K-12 mix at Mankato MN. When Mankato Wilson removed all course requirements K-12, the follow-up studies on student choice found that the “grade level” that deviated most from the previous adult-mandated curriculum was the 7th, followed by the 8th, and then the 6th. Later follow-up determined that those most actively engaged in multiple learning interests were—yes—the 7th, followed by the 8th, and then the 6th. Why do we as visionaries not insist that the option of humane middle years programs be available so that students can avoid the 7th—for most the worst school year of their lives as emerging adolescents. “Grade levels” are absurd!

More Continuing Insanities

The same even more insane stories continue for younger folks—traditionally the K-3 “grade levels.” Each state has a magic entrance date. The eligibility to begin “school learning” is determined by one minute on the clock. If little Mary is born at 11:59.05 PM she is eligible for kindergarten when she turns 5. But poor little Sally; she was born at 12:00:05 AM and therefore is not eligible to join Mary; she must wait another year. The poor kindergarten teacher is immediately faced with a chronological spread of 15 months (12 plus transfers from other states with different dates), and realistically faces a 24-month developmental spread related to physical growth, home environments, cultural differences, social maturity, and intellectual gifts. In one half day for 175 days, she (most are female—more males are needed in a team arrangement) is expected to bridge the 24-month gap and have all the students ready for page 1, book 1 in the “first grade.”

This is impossible. The growth gap remains and expands. By the time the kindergarten class reaches into the mid-second grade, the gap is 60 months. Some developmentally are still closer to “K/1st grade” growth, while others are at the “4th grade level.” The majority are not “2nd graders,” but all are expected to be happy with second grade reading. If by the 3rd grade the students

cannot reach readiness for the 4th grade curriculum—in reading skills, physical attributes, social adjustment—they are “remedial.” It is lucky schools do not teach walking and talking. Think of all the remedial classes then.

This has been known for decades. In 1959, John Goodlad and Robert Anderson in their book, *The Nongraded Elementary School*, proved conclusively that the “self-contaminated” one-teacher classroom with 25 students was the wrong organization. In rural America, the well-known one-room schoolhouse teachers knew this without research or a book. Yet in 2012 this illogical grade level syndrome dominates. Why? In 1920 the Detroit intelligence study of first graders documented that there was a natural spread of 70 days from the first student to finish the assignment to the last. Yet all were in the “1st grade” together.

Efforts have been made to transform K-3. In 1963 the Walker Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, among others nationally, completely nongraded a K-6 program with open environment facilities, flexible scheduling, and a structure with the “wiggles” built in each day. Students moved throughout the wonderful facility. They did not spend the day in seats but instead carried their supplies when needed in their tote tray. They were not strapped to “their desk.”

For over 80 years, the kindergarten cutoff entrance date in California was December 1. That day—if one was pronounced—worked fine. However, the date was recently moved back to August 1. Why? Because the full day first grade curriculum was pushed into the half-day kindergarten, and reading instruction was mandated. How absurd! Being four months older, students can now meet the demands of kindergarten? With the many second language students in the state, the entire scheme is fantasy. Reading research clearly indicates that most students, if they progress at their own pace and interest, learn to read somewhere between ages 3 to 13. [Reading for all in kindergarten is wrong](#). Yet that is what politicians have done with no objection from the “education community.” Is there any other conclusion but for we believers to UNIFY to overcome such insanity.

The *Alliance for Childhood* is trying. They have a strong statement objecting to K-3 Common Core Standards. This group has presented their case at the U. S. Department of Education. Though they are right, closed-minded decision-makers continue to ignore them. Our Army would unify with the Alliance to use the sword, not just the pen.

At the secondary level, the return from modular or non-scheduled time formats to a six-period day for 36 weeks is continuing evidence of the fallacies of one-size schooling. Algebra should not even be taught as a separate course in a “math department.” It is obsolete, but if desired by a family, it should be optional, not mandated. Yet most states now require algebra for high school graduation! Again, why? The MIT/CalTech caliber of math student can learn algebra in six weeks. Give them a book and get out of their way. Other college bound sociology majors may need to know about radicals in politics, but not radicals in algebra. They may need 50 weeks to reach an “acceptable” algebra level. All are squeezed into 36 weeks; the brilliant are bored and the slow are frustrated, but the semester structure mandates 36 weeks.

Formulas for Illiteracy

Today the political and school people (not educators) are so caught up in trying to raise reading, math, and science test scores that they ignore another craziness of one-size schooling. If we want American-speaking youth to have the opportunity to learn a second language, it is impossible now except for a few existing immersion programs. Studying any language at the secondary level for 55 minutes each day, five days a week, for nine months, times two years is a formula for illiteracy. (55x5x9x2) Yet though illiterate, they have taken the class for two years and are thus eligible for university entrance.

Everyone knows that the best time to learn a second language is from birth in already bilingual homes. If not started until the school years, then it should be an immersion program in the K-3 period with continuing follow-up expansion. At any level, it takes immersion, not 5 x 55. Programs should allow students to become reasonably fluent in one year. Learning a language for non-native speakers is a gift, like learning to play a flute. Some become excellent, some are acceptable, and some are very limited in their ability. Why do we permit illiteracy formulas to continue? Are the traditionalists all-knowing “deities” who can determine what is best for everyone?

Research Supported Programs

One-size schooling rushes most students into math instruction at ages 5 or 6. Failed is the recognition that research may indicate age 6 is wrong for numbers of students. One interesting international study of achievement in Mathematics directed by Torsten Husen from Sweden in 1967 found that when two groups of matched students were compared, those who began the same math curriculum at age 8 rather than age 6 did better in math achievement. A further bonus was that the attitude of the older starters toward continuing math in later years was much more positive. Why do we as visionaries not insist on such options for learners?

There is so much research evidence supporting our views regarding differences for learners that we could fill the proverbial book. As a reminder, just remember the most insightful but ignored data that emerged from the famous Eight-Year Study (1932-1940). Recall that matched students from 30 high schools in cooperation with 300 universities participated in forms of non-traditional schooling. Of the many outcomes, one was very conclusive in conjunction with transforming American education: the courses taken in high school made no difference related to future success in college and life pursuits. In fact, of the 30 high schools, the 6 who were cited as the “gooniest” had the best evaluation results, and of the 6, the one rated “most gooney” in deviating from tradition had the best evaluation results of all the 30 schools.

The Wilson Campus School in Mankato, MN, cited earlier, did make those 69 changes overnight—from traditional to non-traditional. Wilson repeated the Eight-Year Study, but with elementary and college students as well as high schoolers. Six hundred cross-section of Minnesota students again reinforced the results of the eight-year five-volume 1932-1940 results. Wilson also had the

best “traditional” test results in the district when asked to volunteer participation in a draft of a newly developed Minnesota standards test.

Back to the original premise of this article: is there any doubt that educational alternatives for everyone should replace an archaic one-size-fits-all 100-year-old system? Is there any doubt that it is time for ACTION against the closed-minded politicians and the corporate America testing industry? Is there any doubt that we should UNIFY as an ARMY, and not rest until non-traditional learning forms are accepted as “regular” options replacing one-size schooling?

Trapped by Uniformity

Can anything really be accomplished in fighting against the dictatorial requirements imposed by politically driven schools? Buckminster Fuller once observed: *You can never change things by fighting existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes existing models obsolete.* Historically, Fuller was basically correct. However, in the 1960-1980 period, as briefly cited, there were many programs nationally that changed what existed; most did build a “new model” to break the mold in education. However, at that period they were in the minority. They were overrun when the Traditionalist Army gained control while looking for popularity votes by promising to improve national test scores and gain status as number one in global schooling comparisons.

There have been some breakthroughs in attempting new models via charter schools, vouchers, and on-line designs, but these stayed too close to the old mold. They have not changed the American schooling system. Most public school youth and college enrollees continue in schooling designed to control students, parents, and communities through uniformity rather than support learning choices for everyone. Those in power have argued that budget cuts prevent such actions, and better test scores are required to compete—with whom? Rigid programs are needed to keep youth off the streets and out of the workforce. Mandated common structures are designed “to meet the 21st Century societal demands of America.” It sounds as if this is rhetoric from the Presidential campaign ads.

The Fuller advice has merit. When discount stores came to the forefront (Walmart, Costco), Montgomery Ward and Sears tried to compete by redesigning their stores. Ward went bankrupt and Sears has been in trouble. The Dayton Department Store family followed Fuller. They kept the Dayton label, but went outside the system to begin a new model—yes, Target—which now competes favorably.

In most school districts, if there were four religious centers on the four corners of an intersection, they would each be different: perhaps Catholic, Baptist, Jewish, and Unitarian centers. But if on the same intersection there would be elementary schools, all four would be the same. Diversity is accepted in religion. Only uniformity is accepted in education.

Many “reformers” believe the system cannot be changed. Therefore the answer is to improve the existing system or go outside what exists and create a parallel structure—Target to go outside the

Dayton name. The irony is that the majority of visionaries believe the best opportunity for success is through the existing system, but by creating learning alternatives. Facilities, staff, budgets are in place. It is easy mechanically to create options. Over 30 examples were provided in the IALA book, *Educational Alternatives for Everyone*. The school-within-a-school model is easy to understand and a simple way to offer choices. Depending upon enrollment, multiple options can be housed in one facility. Current charters, on-line, and alternatives programs do not provide real-life solutions for most learners.

Pens Not Swords

There have been many negative politicians and school people the past three decades. They refuse to understand learning versus schooling. The reverse has also been true. There have been many excellent people and groups working to overcome politically controlled education. They have used the PEN rather than the SWORD against defenders of the obsolete public school systems. Those using a modified sword have primarily been small private schools: Albany Free School, Sudbury, Clonclara, Waldorf, Montessori, and Democratic Education or IDEC schools. If you personalize programs for everyone, is that not democratic? Some alternatives demand all students follow “project-based,” “outcome-based,” “place-based” curriculum, or “Passages” toward graduation. Why? Fine for some, but not mandated for all!

Learning visionaries know that usually the best alternatives choices are those programs/schools that are very eclectic. They steal the best ideas from wherever found, and therefore remain open to continuous change. They do not have to defend or advocate “their model.” Home-based and on-line designs can fall either way. The many schools associated with the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) represent efforts to change one small (usually private) school at a time. Most members are fans of A. S. Neill and Summerhill in England. Though the eclectic leaders admire the longstanding Summerhill commitment, they do not advocate it as “the model.”

AERO has the largest network of people and alternative schools representing efforts in the United States and several foreign countries to promote choice in education. They communicate through the e-newsletter *Education Revolution*; their conferences have great speakers and wonderful workshops led by caring people who have created programs themselves.

Many act at their local levels, but they have not affected the national pushout rates or the fact that 30% of public school students are cited as “D/F” levels, 40% as “C.” Seventy percent of the enrolled youth are at best mediocre or “below average” or “failing”; the 30% “A/B” youth need different choices. Realizing this, numerous fine people focus on one program or a small group or school, but they do not confront, as a larger unified group, federal and state mandated “one-size” schooling. Recent films illustrating small schools that have changed are encouraging, but the large negative picture for most students still hangs on the wall.

Concept and Philosophy

The writers and groups using the PEN against conformity have kept the concept and philosophy alive, but they have not overcome the 7th grade. Most readers of the *F.M.Duffy Reports* represent the PEN. Great people and ideas, but for 17 years the articles have not created significant levels of concrete change. Neither have the many other networking groups who agree with transformation. Most to date have only been on an intellectual level, or perhaps a small specific program. *Uniting4Kids*, led by Angela Engel in Colorado, is trying for change—even working with a few legislators. State alternatives associations in Minnesota, Iowa, Washington, New York, Pennsylvania have had success, but mostly with “at-risk” programs; they have not eliminated the 7th grade for the trapped 98%.

Internationally, the best advocates of transformation have been those with the Centre for Personalized Education (ironically PEN), and the 100 exciting books from their Education Heretics Press. With excellent leaders, as Roland Meighan, Peter Humphrey, Clive Harber, Chris Shute, and fine workshops, PEN focuses on personalized learning. They too have made progress, but have not been able to overcome the rigidity in the traditional school systems of England.

Individually, Marion Brady writing articles for the *Washington Post* via the Valerie Strauss column, has attacked the insanities of current testing and curriculum mandates. He has called Congress, traditional educators, and the Department of Education every name in the book that the *Post* could print. With all his accurate criticism based upon research and common sense as to “how it should be,” his PEN efforts have been to little avail. His work has been printed in Washington DC, but other than to reinforce those of us believers who agree that we must ACT, these great columns do not stir Congress. Another major leader, Wayne Jennings, founder of both the famed St. Paul Open School and IALA (International Association for Learning Alternatives—not alternative schools)—with support from several state organizations—could not create current success using the PEN. Neither have Lynn Stoddard and his fine *Educating for Human Greatness* group. The SWORD is needed now!

There are at least 300 great books by believers in changing our one-size schooling system. Think of the excellent PENS from such as Ivan Illich, John Holt, Carl Rogers, Jonathan Kozol, Paul Goodman, George Counts, Paulo Friere, Mario Fantini, James Herndon, Everett Reimer, Edmond Holmes, Roland Meighan, George Leonard, Ron Miller, Bertrand Russell, Neil Postman, Lloyd Trump, John Goodlad, Robert Anderson—and yes, even the *Schoolboys of Barbiana*. In spite of 100 years of advocacies for change, we have the 7th grade.

Facing Impossible Odds

Common sense would indicate that there is no way “whole system change” and a transformation of the American schooling system can occur. The 2012-2013 election year cycle and installation, and the existing political grip on testing casts an “impossible” shadow on the education landscape.

Combined with the horrendous budget deficits, mass unemployment and international conflicts as in the Middle East and Africa, these factors would seem to ensure that no change can occur now—or in the near future. Most people are not ready under these conditions to talk about changing algebra requirements or non-grading a school, or eliminating unjust testing. So many are in difficult straits personally, and combined with deficits in their communities, who is going to support transformation now?

California, for illustration, is in debt by 16 billion dollars. Several of its cities have filed for bankruptcy. If a tax initiative fails, the school year will be reduced. Individual Visionaries who try to lead change discussions or initiatives find it nearly impossible to get an appointment with legislative or school board members. Therefore, it is generally conceded by most that nothing can be done for at least three years—when hopefully the recession has eased and politics are temporarily more stable. Coupled with all the natural disasters—floods, tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, fire—the current picture is bleak. Add to these the continuing concerns with growing global warming evidence.

Forgotten is that in peaceful prosperous years over the past three decades, nothing has changed in schooling either, except to make it more like a prison which requires passing one-size tests before the inmates can go to the exercise yard. Conversely, in times of high levels of poverty and wars, nothing has changed either.

The archaic system we call education is decades behind. It has been obsolete for much of the 20th century, except for those brief moments of Camelots. Now there are the 21st realities. Are we going to permit another three decades of youth suffering through the 7th grade, or are we going to attack one-size schooling? Are we going to force attention to the inexcusable learning losses suffered by students, the result of policies of politicians and corporate-driven schooling advocates?

Successful Action Realities

What are we going to do to implement our beliefs, move schooling to learning, eliminate one-size-fits-all mandates, and promote educational choice for everyone? Many continue to believe it is impossible. Futurist Robert Theobald provided the direction: *It is time to do the impossible; the possible is no longer working.* Against seemingly hopeless odds, we are going to do the impossible. The Colonial Army did it in 1776. The fleet at Midway did it in 1942. We, as educational visionaries, can find success in 2013—through unwavering commitment and by unifying a currently fragmented band of believers.

Few Visionaries can argue with the rationales, facts, and histories that we have summarized. There is always room for “better ideas” from those who will step forward as leaders in our revolution. We are tired of more theories and “what should emerge” articles. We can no longer be “intellectual.” As in the 1770s, we do need to remove the rust from our muskets and “march on the British.”

Frank Duffy is coordinating an ongoing conversation with thought-leaders including

1. Bob Hill (Ball Foundation)
2. Nicholas Donohue (Nellie Mae Education Foundation)
3. Nelson González (formerly with the Stupski Foundation, now associated with the Learning Genome project)
4. Scott Thompson (Panasonic Foundation)
5. Glenda Eoyang (Human Systems Dynamics Institute)
6. Stephanie Pace Marshall (Founding President and President Emerita of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy)
7. Phillip Harris (Association for Educational Communications and Technology)
8. Charles Reigeluth (Indiana University and the AECT FutureMinds initiative)
9. Francis Duffy (Gallaudet University and the AECT FutureMinds initiative)

Enrollees from the Duffy-led *Change Leadership Academy* and those who have been trained through it could become the “interns,” doing much of the leg work to identify members of Congress who will be willing to converse with us. Needed are hearings before the Senate and House Committees. They could also find “somebodies” in the U. S. Department of Education who will help us there, regardless of the election results.

The many readers of the *Duffy Reports* could also act individually (and as part of a group where possible) to meet with their local state legislators, representatives to Congress, school board members. Each of the readers could gather commitments where possible from their colleagues and contacts to join us in our “march on the politicians”—but not like “Occupy Wall Street” movements where the protests did little; we need specific positive outcomes.

Identifying State Leadership

It can be any state, but as a concrete example of what a unified state group could achieve, we will use Minnesota as a model. We will ask the Minnesota Association for Alternative Programs (MAAP) to change its name to include “alternatives,” not “alternative.” Our goal is not to eliminate all traditional schooling, but to make it only one of many alternatives that states/districts should offer. For example, in California, *Education Codes 58500-12* allow the state superintendent to waive all code requirements except for earthquake safety. Though not being enforced now by the traditionalists in control, it is one illustration of how districts can accommodate via state legislation, multiple choices of learning options at the same cost as one-size-fits-all schooling.

The Minnesota group of 600 members would agree to challenge their state legislature on the many one-size mandated erroneous requirements. One state can establish a pattern for other states. Minnesota was once the most innovative education state. MAAP can go to court, if necessary, as research is on their side. They can, for example, refuse to implement the requirement of Algebra I and II for high school graduation in the schools they represent, and defy the Legislature to produce research supporting this wrong mandate.

They can refuse to administer the state and national “common standards” tests. They can refuse to honor specific curriculum mandates, as the *Eight-Year Study* proved courses made no difference in being a “person”—not a test-score number! They can refuse to mandate reading in the kindergarten, as many young people are not yet ready to “read to 2nd grade standards.” They can refuse to adhere to grade level norms, as there can be no such “groupings.”

They can insist their Area Learning Center legislation be changed to allow all students to enter the best programs in the state (ALCs). Remember, currently a student must be bad in one or more of eleven ways—be “bad” to enjoy the “good.” Everyone should be allowed to volunteer for these flexible structures. They can insist that the Charter School Codes be improved to eliminate the negative and return to the original intent, as Minnesota was the first charter school state. MAAP can provide data related to cheating on tests and the number of dropouts and low-achieving students caused by one-size schooling. It can accomplish these items without teachers getting fired, for they represent education professionals. Support would come from in-state and out-of-state believers who could assist in winning court battles, if necessary, regarding learning research issues.

Interesting too is that Minnesota has 164,000 youth in 600 alternatives sites, which begs two questions: (1) why are 164,000 not fitting into “regular programs” and conversely, (2) why are there not enough opportunities for more than 164,000? Most sites are too small to offer “everything.” The Minnesota post-secondary code allows students to earn college credit while in high school. Why limit the opportunity to grades 10-11-12; why not open the opportunity to anyone who can complete the work? The Wilson School had elementary age students earning college credits.

MAAP—or any other state group—can accomplish these goals through various options: (1) be very confrontational and demanding, (2) be conciliatory in meetings with the Governor and legislative leaders, (3) write legislation to be introduced in the legislature, and (4) seek assistance from specialists in the state department of education. The method or methods can be determined by the leadership. In any state, the evaluation should confirm successful outcomes.

Our Unified Leadership

Our unified leadership can seek universities willing to create choices in teacher education. During the Golden Years Era, the College of Education at Minnesota State University offered personalized BS and MS degrees in Educational Alternatives and Experiential Education. Pied Piper teacher candidates could intern rather than take traditional required teacher preparation classes. The University of Massachusetts under Mario Fantini and Dwight Allen offered doctorates in alternatives and futures through personalized studies.

The leadership group can arrange visits to reach understanding from national groups as ASCD, NASSP, AASA, NAEP, and the World Future Society. These groups were once very supportive. Frank Duffy was on the ASCD Board and knows the politics of member-based organizations. He founded the Rowman and Littlefield Education series on transformation, and has contacts with

professors of educational supervision and those of administration. We can prove learning alternatives for everyone should be supported by them rather than one-size-fits-all schooling.

In formulating our ideas, we can have an internet “national dreamers conference” where we can propose what should be done and how to do it. Our new UNIFIED Army would not be formed with dues, but would be by commitment to transform schooling to learning. We could work together on a consortium of “Project Innovations” where we could encourage local efforts and provide support to further prove our views make sense. We would enlist assistance wherever possible, as in specific schools/districts/universities. With the amazing rapidity of technologies, the former “need for a conference” can be replaced by quick online discussions and agreements.

Obviously, others could offer to lead rather than the Duffy group supporters. Offers would be welcome. There must be not only a unifying group, but commitment to ACTION. Frank Duffy has produced the fine *Directory of Revolutionaries*, but we still have the 7th grade. President Johnson called for change in 1966. Edmond Holmes wrote of *The Tragedy of Education* in 1913. Can we really continue to write publications, give speeches, hold conferences, arrange conversations? Can we really justify letting lawyers and the corporate world dictate schooling requirements when we know more about learning than they could ever imagine?

Postscript for Leadership

The author hoped to have on his gravestone, *Here lies the person who eliminated the 7th grade.* Now, unless we unify and ACT, he can only hope to have inscribed, *He tried to eliminate the 7th grade but failed.* The 7th is a symbol of what is wrong with one-size schooling for all. He has given three-day workshops on this issue: Day One—*What is Wrong*, Day Two—*What Should Be*, and Day Three—*How to Do It*.

He is proud of the transformational leadership he provided over many years. He no longer can lead, but can support and follow. Therefore, this postscript is a plea for younger, vigorous visionaries who read the *Duffy Reports* to unify our army and ACT. The author needs help to achieve the dream of no more mandated “7th grade.” Who among the Duffy readers will step forward with a battle plan and provide the leadership for our success?

About the Author

Don Glines was labeled by the Kappan as the Vice-President for Heresy. His famous Mankato State University Wilson Campus School was labeled the most innovative public school in the nation—a true cradle-to-grave personalized learning environment. His career in education has focused on how to engineer innovation, experimentation, research, and evaluation—through Imagineering: Imagine, Invent, Implement. His 2012 book, *Declaring War Against Schooling: Personalizing Learning Now*, is available from Rowman and Littlefield publishers. The Wilson School documents and the efforts of the author are both archived in Memorial Library, Minnesota State University Mankato.

Thank you for your interest in these Reports.

Francis M. Duffy



Please feel free to share copies of these Reports with your colleagues. All that I ask is that the information you find in these Reports be attributed to the author(s).

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The Rowman & Littlefield Education *Leading Systemic School Improvement Series* is a collection of books about “why” systemic change in school districts is needed, “what” some of the desirable outcomes of systemic change should be, and “how” to create and sustain systemic change. You can visit the website for the series by going to <https://rowman.com/Action/SERIES/RLE/LSI>

These reports often contain articles written by readers. If you would like to write an article for these reports on a topic related to whole-system change in school districts, please send a copy of it to me as an E-mail attachment to duffy@thefmduffygroup.com.

The FutureMinds: Transforming American School Systems initiative seeks to create a shift in the teaching-learning paradigm in school systems. You may visit the FutureMinds website by going to www.futureminds.us