

The Seamless Web: Minnesota's New Education System

Appendix A

The Eight National Goals

GOAL 1: Ready to Learn

By the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn.

GOAL 2: School Completion

By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

GOAL 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship

By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, Mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy.

GOAL 4: Teacher Education and Professional Development

By the year 2000, the Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare students for the next century.

GOAL 5: Mathematics and Science

By the year 2000, United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

GOAL 6: Adult literacy and Lifelong learning

By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

GOAL 7: Safe, Disciplined, and Alcohol and Drug-free Schools

By the year 2000, every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

GOAL 8: Parental Participation

By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

Appendix B

Sex Education that Works

by **Katherine Kersten**

Originally printed in the Star Tribune. Reprinted by permission.

When it comes to educational freedom, Minnesota has long been an educational leader. From open enrollment to charter schools to education tax credits, Minnesota has been out front, championing increased choice for parents.

Now the Osseo School District, one of the state's largest, is breaking new ground. Next fall—in an apparent national first—Osseo will allow parents to choose the kind of sex education instruction their children receive. Responding to a two-year effort by dedicated parents, Osseo will offer a two-track sex education program for junior and senior high students. Parents will judge which approach is best for their children.

Osseo parents' first option will be the comprehensive, or "safer sex," curriculum that the district now offers. This curriculum assumes that many young people will have sex, and aims to provide the knowledge and skills they need to do it safely. Abstinence is discussed as the only 100 percent effective method of birth control, but it is presented as one of a variety of lifestyle choices. Students learn the details of birth control, along with "communication" and "decision-making" skills.

Osseo's new "abstinence until marriage" track will have a very different goal. It will present abstinence as the desired standard of behavior, and help students develop the character traits necessary to achieve it—self-discipline, fidelity, integrity and respect for others.

Along with reproductive biology and sexually transmitted diseases, the new course will cover the social role of marriage and the personal benefits that a committed marriage can bring. Students will learn about contraceptives, but will focus on their health-related shortcomings rather than how to get or use them. In addition, they will study how to set goals, hone self-control and avoid sexually compromising situations.

Parents have good reason to expect their children to benefit from the new abstinence-until-marriage track. Teens are crying out for strong messages about abstaining from sex. Today, almost 52 percent of high school students report they are abstinent, an 11 percent increase since 1991. Data suggest that abstinence courses have played an important role in this development.

In a recent New York Times poll, almost half of the teens said that sex before marriage is "always wrong." In a 1997 survey by the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 68 percent of teens said that is "very important" that young people be given a "strong message from society that they should abstain from sex until they are at least out of high school." In an Emory University survey of sexually active teenage girls, 84 percent reported that what they wanted most from adults was information on how to "say no" without hurting boys' feelings.

Kids who choose abstinence need strong social support. What helps most? Last year, the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health found that young people who take a pledge to remain a virgin—and those whose parents oppose teen sex and contraceptive use—are at significantly lower risk of an early sexual debut.

Osseo's abstinence-until-marriage course will support teens who fit this category. Far from restricting sex-ed opportunities, the district's two-track plan will significantly expand parents'

options. Nevertheless, the plan has encountered opposition—from teachers who resent parents' "lack of trust" and advocacy groups that champion comprehensive sex education.

Critics' reaction has been revealing. They complain, for example, that Osseo's abstinence-until-marriage track is "not inclusive," and fails to reflect the district's diversity. Just the opposite is true, of course. The new plan creates diversity where none existed before. It gives a voice to parents who believe that sex belongs within marriage, and want public school instruction on this vital aspect of their children's lives to reflect their beliefs.

But the "diversity" claim is just a cover. There's another, deeper reason why people who elevate choice and tolerance to quasi-religious principles in other contexts so vehemently oppose parents' rights to govern their children's education in sexual morality.

For 30 years, America's "knowledge class" has embraced the tenets of the sexual liberation movement. This movement holds that sex is at the core of our identity, and that sexual self-expression is critical to personal authenticity. In its view, to suggest that sex has a moral component—to make "value judgements"—is to impede life's central task of unfettered "self-actualization."

The American Civil Liberties Union—a longtime champion of this position—has taken the notion the next step, elevating sexual expression for children to a legal right. It opposes abstinence-only programs on grounds that they withhold information students need to "control their lives," thus impairing full exercise of "reproductive rights" and constitute "censorship." Fortunately, Osseo's school board has put educational freedom and parents' rights above the objections—raised by people who are all for "choice," except when it threatens their own narrow agenda.

In the Twin Cities, more than 40 churches have joined forces to promote abstinence by sponsoring a release time event entitled "Where Do You Live?" The event will take place at Crystal Free Church in New Hope at 11:30 a.m. Thursday. Junior and senior high students from all districts are invited, and need only a permission note from their parents to receive release time from school. Free supervised bus transportation from school will be available for interested Osseo and Robbinsdale students. Participating churches are also sponsoring a three-part series for parents. For more information call 651-484-1040.

Katherine Kersten is a senior fellow for cultural studies at the Center of the American Experiment in Minneapolis.

Appendix C

'Profile' Sacrifices Kids' Best Interests to Save Face for Bureaucrats

by Katherine Kersten

Originally printed in the Star Tribune, reprinted by permission

Your high school-aged daughter bounces into the room.

"Mom, my social studies teachers says I've got to `violate a folkway'—that means go out and do something weird. I'm going to wear my prom dress to the mall, and my partner has to watch people and write down how they react. First, though, my small group has to visit a hospital four times. We've got to observe people there, decide what their social class is, and figure out how it makes them do what they do. Sorry, mom, you'll have to drive.

"And did I tell you about health class? We're putting together treatment plans for people we invented, like a boy with AIDS and a depressed adult. We've got lots of pamphlets from clinics, and I've got to find one with child care on a bus line so a homeless mom can use it. Too bad we won't have time for the unit on communicable diseases."

It's here, folks—the brave new world of Minnesota's Profile of Learning. And absent an outcry from parents, it's here to stay.

The profile's new graduation standards promise to transform our public schools, affecting everything from class schedules to transcripts. Out with subjects like English and science, in with "learning areas" like "read, view and listen" and "inquiry!" The profile requires kids in grades K-8 to complete 54 content standards in 10 learning areas; high school students must complete 24 standards.

To pass a content standard, a student must complete a performance package—a set of hands-on tasks like those described above. (The tasks mentioned are from model state packages.) Packages generally take between three to six weeks, using class time formerly devoted to instruction. A high school student can get straight A's in class, but if he doesn't pass his performance packages, he won't graduate.

The profile's goal is to increase academic achievement, but there's absolutely no proof that it will work. Yet in its wisdom, the Legislature has mandated this huge and costly experiment across the state.

No matter that the American Federation of Teachers and the Washington-based Fordham Foundation have both panned the profile. No matter that the St. Paul Federation of Teachers has voted to abolish performance assessment warning that it "may actually lower academic standards" and that it dooms teachers to "exasperation, frustration and exhaustion." No matter that very few districts understand exactly what the profile requires of them—in terms of recordkeeping or anything else.

Advocates praise the profile for getting teachers to communicate about what's going on in their classrooms. But good standards—like those in Virginia and Massachusetts—would do this far more effectively, without all the red tape.

Unfortunately, in Minnesota, standard designers at the Department of Children, Families and Learning have raised utopian ivory-tower musing to a high art. Then—hiding behind the mantle of "local control"—they have graciously left the mind-bending details of profile implementation

to school districts. Districts must figure out for themselves how to keep mountainous records, and find ways for kids to meet standards through extracurricular activities. ("My daughter went to spring break in Mexico. We want credit for the People and Cultures standard.")

Many teachers are fuming. But administrators—many of whom privately concede that the Profile of Learning is a giant diceroll—are strangely silent. Why? One superintendent told me that many fear opposing Children, Families and Learning: It might invite an audit, kill the chance of getting a grant, or sidetrack a career. The department, of course, won't admit that things have gone badly awry. The state has spent millions on the profile. It must have something to show for it.

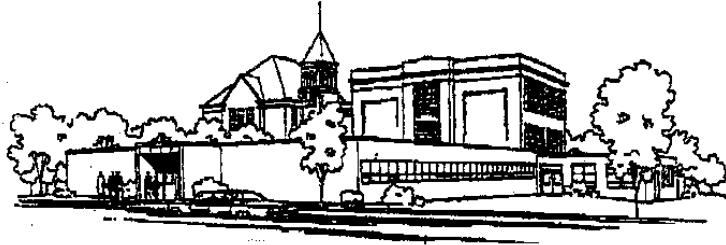
As a result, we are sacrificing the best interests of Minnesota children in order to save face for bureaucrats. Disadvantaged kids, as usual, will pay the biggest price. We know how to close the learning gap. Eric Mahmoud's highly successful Harvest Prep School in Minneapolis does so by stressing content over process. But the profile emphatically rejects this approach; its anti-knowledge methodology will ensure that the gap remains. Gifted kids, too, will pay a price—from struggling to meet college entrance requirements to facing the possibility of lower ACT and SAT scores. All students will suffer as education in Minnesota becomes little more than job training.

The Department of Children, Families and Learning is determined that those who oppose the profile have nowhere to hide. Its Board of Teaching has proposed massive new teacher licensure rules, which will withhold certification from new teachers who are not prepared to teach the profile. The rules will apply to private as well as public school teachers.

The Profile of Learning will burden our children's future unless parents demand that legislators call a halt. Why not join the 80 teachers from Apple Valley High School who signed a letter exhorting Gov. Ventura to end this "wasteful" and "academically harmful" mandate? Most likely, there won't be another chance.

Katherine Kersten is a senior fellow for cultural studies at the Center of the American Experiment in Minneapolis.

Appendix D



Dear Parents:

Please fill out the form below for your student.
RETURN TO SCHOOL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Thank you for your attention on this matter.

REQUEST FOR STUDENT SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	Return Completed and Singed Request to: MAPLE RIVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OFFICE
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Our school district is required to participate in a State of Minnesota computer reporting system. This system will provide data on each student to calculate our portion of state education dollars. Data from the system will be totaled to also provide counts of students for state and federal reporting requirements. The new system will use social security number as a means of accurately reporting student data. We request that you fill out this form by **PRINTING** all requested information. Please sign and return this form whether or not you provide the social security number so that we can meet state information needs.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

Student's Full Name: Last, First, Middle	
School of Attendance Maple River Elementary Good Thunder, MN 56073	Grade
Birthdate (Month, Date, Year)	Social Security Number
	_ _ - _ - _

I verify that the information provided above is accurate.		
_____ Printed name - Parent / Guardian	_____ Signature - Parent / Guardian	_____ Date

In accordance with the Federal Data Privacy Act of 1974 and the State of Minnesota Privacy Law, you do not need to provide the social security number. If you do not wish to provide the Social Security number, our district will assign a unique number for the student.

Appendix E

School-to-Work Programs May Sound Appealing, But They Aren't

By Lynne Cheney

Originally printed in the *New York Times*. It was reprinted in the *Star Tribune* on February 3, 1998.

Washington D.C.—Almost everyone agrees that schools need to do a better job of preparing students for the workplace. So the school-to-work programs now up and running in 37 states should be uncontroversial. Keeping employer needs in mind and preparing students to meet them, as these programs intend, seem a sensible thing for schools to do.

But many parents are angry about these efforts and the \$2.3 billion federal plan that helps support them. Instead of focusing on students in vocational education, these parents point out, school-to-work programs, by law, include all students. And in practice, the programs assume unwarranted authority over their children's lives.

A central thesis of school-to-work plans, for example, is that eighth-graders should choose careers. To help them along, schools administer interest and personality assessments that direct students toward specific occupations, often ones that have little to do with their ambitions.

Kristine Jensen, a Nevada mother, told me that her daughter, an honor student who wants to work for NASA, had been advised to consider a career in sanitation or interior design. Eunice Evans, a parental-rights advocate in Pennsylvania, described a boy in her neighborhood who wanted to be a doctor but was told it would be more appropriate for him to be a gas station attendant or a truck driver.

School-to-work programs don't just direct job choices. They also seek to inculcate attitudes. The Federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, which prescribes much of what is going on in the states, requires that young women be encouraged to consider "nontraditional employment."

In conformance with this mandate, a publication of Texas education Agency recommends that students be repeatedly tested to see whether they think some jobs are more suitable for one sex than the other. Thus, it advises, teachers can determine "if growth occurs in the student's views of nontraditional occupations" or "if there is need for early intervention."

A nonprofit group called the National Center for Education and the Economy has been a force behind both the federal school-to-work legislation and the efforts in many states. Hillary Rodham Clinton served on the center's board and before she became First Lady, promoted school-to-work ideas.

Ira Magaziner was another active board member, and the sweeping scope of school-to-work, as well as faith in central planning, calls to mind the health-care proposal advanced by Hillary Clinton and Magaziner five years ago. In 1993, the concept was regional alliances to survey health-care plans and decide which ones people should choose. Now the idea is workforce boards to consider future market needs and decide which career choices schools should encourage.

But predicting work-force needs is an iffy business. In 1989, for example, a prestigious study declared that by 1997, there would be a substantial shortage of humanities Ph.D.s—when, in fact, there now is a glut.

Redirecting schools to prepare students for jobs that central planners recommend does not guarantee the economic well-being of those students, and can even be a hindrance. A student whose high school career focuses on specific jobs in one field may discover in college that another area is more interesting and therefore more likely to inspire high achievement. But early specialization leaves such a student unprepared to take the courses that his or her more mature aspirations require.

School-to-work materials frequently insist that all courses, even those in elementary school, relate to the world of work. In Salida, Colo., the entire curriculum from kindergarten through fifth grade—reading, writing, arithmetic and social studies included—recently focused for a year on careers in health care.

According to a school-to-work publication from the Education and Labor departments, individuals learn best "by relating what they learn in school to their experience as workers." But that claim is not based on research and reflects an excessively narrow view of education.

Schools prepare citizens as well as workers, and they do so best when students are encouraged to read literature and history not merely for what they tell about the work-place, but for their insights into the human condition. The liberal arts, shoved aside or distorted by the school-to-work system, were so named because of habits of mind necessary for "freedom" (in Latin, "libertas").

School-to-work opponents face an uphill battle, largely because school-to-work legislation sounds so appealing. Their task in the next session of Congress and beyond is to explain forcefully why further school-to-work programs, worthy though they may sound, are a terrible idea for our schools.

Lynn Cheney, former chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, is senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Appendix F

The New Standards Project: An Overview

No page numbers and no date are given on the following briefing paper. It was written sometime prior to August, 1992 (before the well-known letter from Marc Tucker to Hillary Clinton included in Appendix G).

Learning Research and Development Center and the National Center on Education and the Economy

The National Center on Education and the Economy formed a partnership over one year ago with the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh to develop national standards in several subject areas together with a national, performance-based examination system to use as a means to gauge student, teacher, school and system performance. The effort is the New Standards Project. Major funding for the project is being provided by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation.

The Partners

The two Centers were joined in this endeavor by 17 states and six school districts that view a national examination system that embodies world class standards as an essential part of their work to restructure education systems in their communities.

A National Examination System

Our object is to create a national examination system, not a single exam. Development of the system would take place in four steps. First, we plan to involve a lot of people in establishing consensus on frameworks (or content standards) for student achievement. The frameworks will specify what students should know and be able to do in different subject areas (e.g., science and mathematics) and across disciplines. Then those frameworks will be used to develop an examination and standards for grading it. At the same time, we plan to develop a technique by which examinations developed by others can be calibrated to the reference exam. With these tasks completed, the conditions will have to be met under which a National Examination Board could judge whether any given examination meets the national standard, oversee the process of calibration, and continuously update the exam used as a reference standard. In this way, the nation could have a unified examination system without requiring everyone to use the same exam.

Components of the Examination

The exam would consist of two main components: a Performance Examination component and a Cumulative Accomplishments component. Performance examinations are exams that students prepare for in advance and take on a planned day or days under appropriate supervision. These exams might consist of substantial essays, laboratory demonstrations, oral response to questions or problems and, where needed, a group performance.

The Cumulative Accomplishments component is a record of several kinds of work carried out over a period of two or three years. Included in this record would be projects, exhibitions and portfolios.

Portfolios are continuing collections of students' best work that can be organized to include a deliberate mixture of assigned tasks and student and teacher selected tasks. They offer the opportunity for substantial degrees of choice in how students will demonstrate their competence. Portfolios also involve students in making judgement about their own work, as they select the items to be forwarded for external evaluation.

Exhibitions are prepared by students to display the products they have created in the course of their studies. Exhibitions engage students in long-term preparation of displays and performance for interested audiences whose judgements are valued. Students preparing exhibitions must work to target dates and audiences, much as sports teams, performing artists and visual artists who are preparing for museum or festival displays do. The conditions of exhibitions match those of the workplace occasions when workers must present ideas and demonstrations to coworkers.

Finally, projects done alone and with other students, require students to do significant pieces of work—research papers, field work involving scientific analysis, musical performance and the design and construction of working models. Project work may take older students outside the confines of the classroom into the community or work sites. Mentors and tutors, in addition to teachers, may be involved in guiding and judging students' work. Projects also provide situations in which personal qualities such as learning skills, capacity to organize and sustain work, judgment, and teamwork can be developed and evaluated.

The Performance Examination component would take place over a period of hours or days. The work on projects, exhibitions and portfolios would be similar in scope to the tasks set by the Scout merit badge system, permitting the student to accumulate the "badges" over a period of years. They could work at their own pace and choose for themselves the tasks and projects that they would use to demonstrate their competence against a set of published criteria, just as the scouts do.

Topics and Skills

The examination system would focus on the skills of thinking, problems solving and the capacity to apply what one knows to the messy, complex problems found in real life. It would call for real mastery of bodies of knowledge. It would assess not only what one could accomplish working alone, but one's capacity to function effectively as a member of a group. The subject matter would encompass reading, writing, listening and speaking, as well as mathematics, the sciences, history and the social sciences, and work skills. The examination system would put a premium on the capacity to integrate knowledge from many of these disciplines in solving problems.

The Idea of the Mastery Standard

The typical American approach is to use tests as sorting devices. An exam is given once and the scores of those who take it are distributed along a curve. In order to have "winners," there must be losers. Our proposal is fundamentally different. We call for an examination which sets a high standard of mastery for all students, and permits them to take the exam as often as they like until they pass it. Some components of the exams might be optional, but those that are not must be passed at least at the criterion level and the criterion level would be the same for everyone.

The Idea of a System that Promotes Student Effort

Today's schooling and testing practices promote the idea that it is native talent or family background that matter, not one's own effort to learn and achieve. Only a few students—those who know early on that they will compete for selective colleges—have any reason to study hard in school. With only a few exceptions there is no chance for students to work against a known standard with teachers as their coaches, allies and mentors. We plan to build an examination system in which effort clearly pays off. Students passing a final examination in high school and completing all their required merit badges will receive a certificate that will signify true accomplishment, not just time in a seat. Intermediate versions of the performance examinations will be developed for roughly the end of elementary school and the end of middle school so that younger students, as well, could work towards a clear achievement goal. In such a system, students will be able to see their own efforts can make a real difference and that school is a place to learn and become competent, not just to be labeled as smarter or slower than others.

Examinations that Students Can Study for and Teachers Can Teach To

For an effort-oriented system to work, it is critical that everyone—teachers, principals, parents and students—know just what is expected of them. So we propose an "open" examination system, one in which the questions, as well as the many responses judged acceptable, are released as soon as the exams are over. The secrecy normally associated with exams would be gone. Students would be working toward a clear objective with clear criteria for success.

Clear objectives for students does not mean a "national curriculum." Properly used, the exam would be part of a reform strategy, embraced by a growing number of states, that pushes decisions about what to teach and how to teach it down to the professionals in the schools. With the objectives for students clear, those professionals would be free to decide for themselves how to help students reach them, producing much more variation in the curriculum and in teaching methods than we have now.

Embedding the Examination System in a Systematic Strategy for Restructuring the Schools

The governors, through the NGA, have called for the restructuring of American education. In essence, this means a system in which agreement is reached on a detailed set of goals for students. Instruments are devised to accurately assess student progress toward those objectives, decisions about how to best assist students to reach those objectives are pushed down to the professionals and parents in the school, and the professionals are held accountable for the results of their efforts. The framework that is used to define the objectives for the students must also guide the professional preparation of teachers, the development of curriculum at the school level, and the techniques used to teach. No single element of this system—including examinations—is likely to produce the desired improvement in student performance unless the others are also implemented. Our approach to the examination system embeds development in a larger effort to put these other exam components in place at the same time.

Setting a High Standard: Starting with a Volunteer Association of States and Districts

It is critical, in our view, that, whatever national examination system is established, it reflect international standards of performance. It is very unlikely that that will happen if all fifty states and the territories have to agree on the standard. We are also sensitive to the resistance that the

idea is likely to encounter if the effort is perceived as led by the federal government. But it is equally important that the development program be perceived to have the kind of legitimacy that comes from strong participation on the part of key officials from general government and education. For all these reasons, our plan, on which we are now embarked, calls for assembling a volunteer group of states and school districts to guide the initial development effort. All the members will be required, as a condition of participation, to commit themselves to the general principles just outlined, and, in particular, to set the standard for the examination at a world class level. Senior representatives of these jurisdictions—governors, chief state school officers and superintendents, for example—will provide the policy guidance for the entire project, along with others. Our two Centers are now well along in the process of assembling the participants in this "New Standards" consortium.

How the Standards Get Established

Our project is now assembling standards frameworks and assessment materials from all over the world, as well as the United States. These items are the work of national government agencies, states, disciplinary associations, school districts and others. We are sharing those materials and our evaluations of them with a group of teachers, central office personnel, superintendents, chief state school officers, governors' aides, state and local school board members and others who constitute our temporary working party for the project. Using these frameworks for guidance, and in consultation with a wide variety of organizations and constituencies with interest in education goals and standards, the working party will recommend an initial framework for assessment development to the governing board for the project. The governing board will decide what the assessment standards will be. Thus we have in mind a model that is neither bottom up nor top down, but rather both at once.

Timeline and Funding

The John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation and Pew Charitable Trusts have provided \$2.5 million to fund the first eighteen months of the project. We expect to have initial pilot tests completed by August 1992, and to have examinations for the core subjects—reading, writing, speaking, listening and mathematics—within 3 years. Within seven years a full examination system can be in place. We estimate that it will take three years beyond that before students can be examined and their performance used as the basis of entry jobs or further education, because it would be both unfair and illegal to use the exams for such purposes unless the students had been adequately prepared for them.

Project Leadership

Marc Tucker, President of the National Center on Education and the Economy and Lauren Resnick, director of the Learning Research and Development Team at the University of Pittsburgh co-direct the project. Daniel Resnick serves as Director of Standards Development, Warren Simmons is the Director of Equity Initiatives and James Gilchrist is the Director of Operations....

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