Dear Dr. Thornburg and Dr. Von Oech:

I am currently in a Master’s Program in Computer Technology and one of the requirements of the program is to mail you a copy of our final exam. The purpose of the exam is to design a school for the future using the information that we have learned through your writings and from class dialogues. Bearing that in mind..... here is a copy of my final E-xam.

**Philosophy of my Learning Center:**

It is my opinion that the school of the future needs to educate the entire child; academically, socially, physically and spiritually. By spiritually I do not mean to address religion, I mean to give the student who attends my school the opportunity to experience, music, art, poetry and drama. Exposure to the arts on a daily basis would round out a complete education. As families become increasingly diverse and busy, the school of the future will need to take over some of the traditional family roles in order to prepare learners to make positive contributions to the society of the future. My learning center would teach technological skills as well as practical life skills. A child attending my Learning Center would leave knowing how to grow his/her own food and prepare it, as well as how to surf the net and access the information autoban. A child attending my school would learn that there are responsibilities that go with freedom. Each child would have chores at the Center where they would learn how to do the daily maintenance that such a facility would require. These chores and responsibilities along with an individualized learning plan would prepare the student to take his/her place as a valuable, socially responsible member of the society of the future. The Learning Center would be an ecologically sound and energy efficient facility generating much of the power needed to run the facility with solar panels and collectors and windmills. The children would learn about the scientific principals of conservation by hands on learning activities that would be required to keep the Center running efficiently.

**Facility:**

The Learning Center would be comprised of 5 geodesic domes. In the central courtyard would be a community garden and horticulture learning center. 4 of the domes would be used for classrooms and technology hubs. One of the domes would be larger than the other 4 and house a state of the art gym, a community center with a stage, an art gallery, restaurant and public library.

**Size of the Learning Center:**

The Center would serve 500 students grades K-8.

**Hours:**

The school would be open from 6:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. daily. Regular school hours would be from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The Learning Center would be open year round. Flex time would be an option for the students by special arrangement. After regular school hours the school would be available to life-long learners and for use by the community. People who use the facility to further their education after regular school hours may do so at no cost. However, they will be asked to volunteer their services in some way to the school on an hour for hour basis. (One hour of no-charge access to the facility for one hour of volunteer work, barter or service to the school.) The facility would be available for rent at an additional charge which would help with funding the school.

**Learning Plans:**

Each student attending the school would be assigned a school advisor who would work with the student and the family to devise an individualized educational plan for the student. Testing and monitoring of student progress would all be computerized with each student keeping an electronic portfolio of his/her work. Each student would attend school
for 6 periods per day. (Each period would be 50 minutes long.) Students could choose to attend school for additional hours by special arrangement. The classes that each student signs up for would be more like our current high school model. A student might have 6 different teachers during the day or be on a more self-directed learning plan with most of their academic day spent in completing online classes and projects.

**Teachers:**

There would be 10 teachers assigned to each dome. 8 teachers teaching in the classrooms and 2 assigned to facilitate learning in the hub. The teachers would rotate these responsibilities during the day. The teachers who work at this Learning Center would have to be committed to being lifelong learners themselves. They would need to keep current with the latest technology and be willing to take classes to keep improve and refine their skills. They would be required to spend 6 periods a day at the Learning Center. They would each teach 5 periods a day and have one period of preparation and peer sharing per day. Teachers would teach to their specialties, however a teacher with a multiple subject teaching credential might teach a variety of subjects. Additional professional staff would be needed at the Learning Center to manage the garden, the restaurant, the art gallery, the public library, and the gym. There would need to be 2 full-time computer lab technicians at each Learning Center. There would need to be 3 maintenance people and a variety of teacher assistants. It is my feeling that since the facility is more than a school and will be used by the community, the additional personnel required to run the school should be city employees and be paid by the city not by the individual school districts. It is also my thought that volunteers should be used extensively to assist at the facility.

**The Facility:**

There would be 5 geodesic domes per Learning Center. These domes would be the latest in high-tech energy efficient buildings. There would be energy conservation and recycling at all centers. There would be a community garden in the center of the 5 domes. The children and other community members would tend the garden. One dome would be larger than the other 4 and contain a large art gallery, community center with a stage for plays, school restaurant and public library.

**The Hub:**

Each dome would have a central hub with a fully equipped media center. There would be 150 students assigned to each hub. There would be 80 student computer work stations in each hub for internet connections. Each student would have his/her own laptop computer with which to take notes and hook up to a work station to access the internet. These laptops would be available for the student to take home on a daily check-out basis. This would give a ratio of one computer work station for networking and internet access to be shared by every two students. This ratio should provide adequate access on-ramps for the students. Activities in the hub would not necessarily be by grade level and would be a time for individual work as well as group and class projects.

**The Spokes:**

The classrooms would branch off the hub like the spokes of a wagon wheel. There would be 8 classrooms per hub and some additional rooms in each hub for small group work and “Cave” time.

**Funding:**

Funding for the school of the future would have to come from a variety of sources. It is my belief that as our present schools disintegrate and fall apart they should be torn down instead of “Modernized”. Our current idea of modernization is simply to paint, carpet and drop in a few internet connections per classroom to out of date facilities. In order to provide a place where children of the future will grow into self actualized, contributing individuals, we need to tear down the infrastructure that is weighing our society down. We need to rebuild a place where we can grow as human beings together, not in isolation. We need to make our schools places where life-long learners will work alongside teachers and children. We need to make our educational institutions places where people want to be. To do this, we need to get the support of our government and
private industry. We need to raise the money to build a better, stronger society with tax dollars and private contributions. Private Industry needs to take the lead here. In the near future they will need highly skilled employees to fill positions that have not even been conceived of at this time. If they want those employees they are going to have to put up the funds necessary to create them. I also see the school of the future being more self-sufficient by using volunteers more efficiently, by staying open year round, by staying open longer each day and by charging people and businesses for the use of the facility.

In conclusion, you can see that I have a bold vision of the future as well as a more traditional one. We cannot take the risk of creating a society where we are more concerned with the size of our hard drives than of the size of our hearts. We must strive for a balance, but within that balance provide students with the skills they need to succeed in that Brave New World.

Respectfully submitted by, Laurel Lyda