Doing Different Things

The purpose of this paper is to describe my thoughts on designing a school system which will meet the needs of students of today and the life long learners of the future. What is lacking in the school system of today? What is the most important element of the learners’ environment? What skills do learners of today need to be productive in the future? And lastly, how will the school system finance this endeavor? These are the critical questions which when answered will illuminate my thoughts on designing a school system which would serve the learners of today and into the next millennium.

What is lacking in the school system of today?

The most important elements missing in the school system today are the technological tools necessary to bring added value to the classrooms. Internet access, a base map of educational links, one computer per two students and technology fluent teachers providing context and relevancy to the information rich world wide network. By configuring each classroom with the tools of the future the teacher will be able to extend the learners experience and discoveries beyond the walls of the classroom. The technological hardware will allow the learners to access and utilize a wide variety of electronic resources from video tape to the world wide web. Learners will be able to share ideas and questions with other learners around the globe. This networking builds confidence, pride and self-esteem in the process of discovery and learning. Moreover, the technology enables learners to build connections of further resources to extend their life long learning experiences.

What is the most important element of the learner’s environment?

Teachers will still be the number one factor in the learner’s environment. Our teachers will provide context to the information rich environment, technology skills necessary for the learner’s success and creative problem-solving skills. Our teachers will understand the necessity for integrating various software programs such as data base, spreadsheets and word processors into the learners lessons. Utilizing these software applications our teachers will be able to elevate the critical thinking level skills. Moreover, learners will gain the necessary skills to perform just in time problem solving through instant access to the information rich world wide web. Our teachers will hone these skills. Interactivity is the term used to describe the ability of the learner to control the learning environment. Our teachers are fully cognizant that computers are the medium that allows that control.
What skills do learners of today need to be productive in the future?

Our school system believes that the learners of the future will need to be prepared to change jobs or careers several times. This premise leads our school system to develop a set of skills which will be useful across a broad range of careers. Our schools will infuse the skills of collaboration, cultural diversity, technology fluency, systematic thinking, excellence, pride-loyalty-ethnics, and balanced lives into the curriculum. Our school system will incorporate three types of learning environments in the classrooms to acquire these skills. The first revolves around the teacher. The teacher guides and helps their students construct relevant projects based on the curriculum area. As the learner develops and investigates the project the teacher gives context to the information gathered. The second strategy involves the students discussing their projects with one another and/or with the online global student network developed by the school system. This paradigm has the students expressing and exchanging ideas and thoughts regarding their projects. The third strategy requires the students to take the time to reflect and ponder their projects individually. This is the time to make sense of their efforts, redefine their thinking or glean insight from their discoveries.

How will the school system finance this endeavor?

Our school system relies on the federal and state tax dollar to support its ambitious goal. The Congress is lobbied heavily for funds. Our message is simple. The defense of our country lies in the productivity of the citizens of the future. Our goal is to transfer monies earmarked for military defense to social defense. The communication revolution left to its own devices will increase the gap between rich and poor. Such disparities eventually lead to bloody conflicts. So in defense of the enemy within funding school systems will be synonymous with defense. This strategy has enabled our school system to garner integral funding to accomplish our goals.

Summary

In summary, our school system has defined educating learners in a different fashion. Providing technology to extend the classrooms beyond its walls is the first step. Redefining the role of the teacher to providing context and relevancy. And finally, instilling the pertinent skills with which to be productive and proficient learners for a lifetime.