

# **New Innovators Professional Learning Network**

## **May 10-11, 2006**

### **Glade Springs Resort**

### **Daniels, West Virginia**

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#### **Participants**

**Members:** Peggy Herbertson and Joan Powers, Pike's Peak Colorado; Mary Ross and Horace Dicks, West Central Texas; Janie Bates and Bob Rhoden, Texoma Texas; Lisa Rice and Marci, Brevard County Florida; Theresa Reynolds, Northwest Piedmont NC; Jasen Jones, Southwest Missouri; Bill Loope, Region 1 West Virginia.

**Guests:** Jan Vaughn and Jim Dickerson, Central Missouri; Scott Cheney, NAWB; Jason Gatz and Rod Nunn, Missouri Division of Workforce Development

**Facilitators:** Nina Babich and Donna Crudder, CSW

#### **Is America Falling Behind on Math and Science – and What Should WIBs Do About It?**

An issue paper on math and science education was sent out to the members prior to the meeting. The "other" Innovators group is actually planning a day-long meeting on the topic June 26 at Argonne Labs in Chicago, to which the members of our group were invited. Juan Manigault (Northern Indiana) is planning to attend to represent us.

Janie said that when she met recently with two groups of plant managers, they complained that applicants can't pass a simple industry test. Janie then met with school superintendents who said the kids have to perform at such high levels to pass the Texas test that they can't do the basics! The problem is one of application. Kids are learning the concepts but not how to apply them. For example, they can't accurately read a tape measure. Teachers spend days testing instead of teaching. There is a trade-off; only so many contact days available, and every day spent testing is a one day less spent teaching. She added that while the plant managers want a system of testing that guarantees them qualified workers, the employers in her area are not buying into Work Keys.

Horace said teachers in Austin told him that they can't focus on the basics, but have to focus on the test – because their jobs depend on it.

Community colleges have noted that 40% of high school grads who apply can't pass college entrance exams, despite the fact that they are passing high school exit exams.

Lisa said the teachers in Florida teach to the FCAT, but industry said teaching isn't being done to meet *their* needs. Through the Brevard Tomorrow initiative, the regional leaders tried to push something different into the schools – but failed.

North Carolina has just one department of instruction that oversees K-16. Everyone thought that sounded like a grand idea to connect K-12 with postsecondary, but Theresa said the structure really hasn't mattered the way you would hope it would. When it comes to the board's ability to impact, WIA doesn't start touching youth until they are 14, and by then it is really too late. They are asking for a waiver to go down to age 12. Theresa told us about a curriculum developed by Dennis Orthner of the Jordan Family Institute that was created with the input of teachers that they are testing out in middle schools by having both experimental and control groups. They talk to teachers every month at the experimental sites about things that can be done with the skills in real life, related to careers. They want youth to believe they are learning for a "greater end." It is in middle school where youth become disenchanted, so the board wants to get to them before they hit that point.

The NW Piedmont WIB called in Dr. Robert Macnahan. He says the youth do have the basic skills, but it is the critical thinking skills they lack, so they can't use the basic skills the way they should be able to. The WIB is sponsoring Teachers in Industry as one way to work on the problem of what young people need to be taught, and how, and why.

Bill said it is easy to point fingers, but we have 50 state legislatures and a US Constitution that says nothing about education. The federal government finances education, disbursing resources to 50+ states who deliver education however they please; yet workers don't stay and work in the state in which they were educated. The workforce is mobile. We aren't doing a consistent job in preparing this mobile workforce. The right thing to do is to find experiments in education that work, take them to our local schools; convince them to follow the model.

Peggy said teachers want to see national standard. One of their counties has an education consortium that includes economic developers, educators, and workforce staff. They are convening to talk about how they can bring about change; looking for more contextual education.

Horace said a Dr. Lisa Berglumb has been working with Mary to develop customized training for employers, and employers are open to paying for the service. Lisa is identifying the kind and level of math skills workers need on the job in order to be productive, and then customizing a curriculum to teach those specific skills.

Janie asked the plant managers who were complaining to her if *they* have a campaign with their own employees who are parents to help them understand the importance and utility of math skills that are needed. Industry has a responsibility to make kids aware. Donna suggested that in addition to Teachers in Industry, maybe we need "Parents in Industry" so they'll know what the new skills are that are different from when they were in school.

Theresa said her region had a "No Parent Left Behind" conference. Some parents are afraid to ask questions, and the conference provided a safe place to do so. Lisa said her superintendent wants his school to be a school of *national prominence*, not just a place that meets FCAT scores. He is proposing two tracks: 1) dual enrollment for the more

advanced students, and 2) career and technical education for those who are not dual enrolled. This would require a complete overhaul of the curriculum.

Peggy noted that it helps to have a mediator – somebody who understands and can be understood by “both sides” (education and business) in order to act as a translator to bring the two sides together. You have to interpret their language for each other. She also said that parents are key, because parents work for industry.

Lisa talked about one small focus group around education in which 13 businesses were involved. From that focus group came a business/education forum; like a roundtable, only larger. Industry explained what they need, and educators reacted. Math and science was not a particular focus.

Bob cautioned that for these kind of efforts to be successful, you have to get *enough* parents involved. 2-3 employers are not enough to agree on the kind of change needed.

Bill said that from his perspective, Work Keys is the closest thing to a national standard. He’s saying to training providers, we’ll remediate people who aren’t up to your curriculum. We won’t send you people without good foundation skills. Janie agreed – said that for the last ten years they have not been sending participants who do not have “curriculum appropriate” skills.

Jasen told us about The New Mind, an audiotape that proposes we must be looking at soft skills to differentiate Americans from foreign nations. Soft skills can drive how math and science are applied.

In summary: WIBs have a responsibility and a role to play in addressing the math and science skill shortages that employers say are hurting the economy. What WIBs can do includes:

- Challenging industry to take responsibility for how they communicate with their employees who are parents about math and science skills, and how they help those parents act on that knowledge.
- Raising awareness through events such as “No Parent Left Behind.”
- Convening the right players to tell the facts, develop the story, and act collaboratively to find solutions.
- Researching model practices in education to bring home to their own communities and gain community consensus around a new education paradigm.
- Educating legislators about the utility (or lack thereof) of current testing/teaching content emphasis.
- Providing teachers with practical career applications they can use in the classroom (Teachers in Industry or regular information-sharing, roundtable discussions with educators are ways to do that).
- Ensuring that the workforce system’s “products” (qualified workers) are not referred to either training for which they are not curriculum-prepared, nor jobs for which they are not skills-prepared.

### ***Positions to Consider:***

The other Innovators' group will be discussing whether they should take some kind of joint position or even joint action on the math and science issue. We should consider whether we would back up the following recommendations as part of a position paper:

- It is important that all youth attain solid mastery of 9<sup>th</sup>-grade level math and science – even if it takes them four years of high school to do it. **Beginning in the first grade, no child should be passed on to the next grade or level of math or science until he/she has attained solid mastery of the level before.** Mastery of a lower level of math or science is more important than poor comprehension of upper level courses.
- **Elementary school math and science should be taught by math and science specialists,** not general education elementary teachers.
- Children do not learn alike. Some will do best with conceptual learning, and others will learn best in an applied setting. Learning style is not an indicator of intelligence, just of style, and **all learning styles need to be equally accommodated in schools.**
- **U.S. school curriculum needs to emulate that of successful foreign nations in terms of being narrow and deep rather than broad and shallow. Curricula should be integrated rather than compartmentalized.**
- When an industry sector is unable to attract the best and brightest, the practices of the industry itself are examined to see what can be changed so they can attract the right talent. **If K-12 education is not attracting and retaining the best and brightest, its practices need to be re-examined and new approaches used.** And it isn't just about money.
- The message needs to be clearly communicated to parents and backed up by school administrators and the courts: you are responsible for your child's behavior and learning. **The school is a facilitator of the learning process, but ultimately, parents are accountable.** Schools do not exist to "fix" your child or your lack of parenting skills.

### **Good to Great and the Social Sectors**

All members were sent a copy of the Good to Great book prior to the meeting.

Discussion:

- When the inputs are "type of client" and the outputs are "performance measures" the result may be "creaming."
- Bill asked whether the word should be "impacts" rather than "outputs" for workforce boards.

- Janie said that performance has to be assessed consistent with your mission. You have to have the right outputs (impacts) even if you can't measure it. Most "indicators" are flawed.
- Theresa said their philosophy is to be a plow horse, not a show horse. They set standards and let each county figure out how to get there. They set a vision, provide motivation, move the system forward, but allow others to showcase their accomplishments.
- Jasen said there is a big difference between being known and being connected. Boards need to be influential and connected, but not necessarily well known.
- Horace wants the board to be known by the work being done.
- Bill described it a little differently. The board members want to be show horses; the staff need to be the plow horses and allow the board to take credit. There is little reward for being on the board other than ego stroking.
- Janie commented that they will write grants for other entities, where the board doesn't get a dime of the money. The board becomes known by the people that count for doing that, and get reciprocity when the board needs a supporter or partner. She said they market the *system*, but the economic developers know the difference between the board and the one-stop. They just want the *right* people to know about the board. You need movers and shakers "on the bus" to open doors for you.
- Bill feels that at the state administrative level, they are limited in being able to get the *wrong* people "off the bus."
- Scott felt the hedgehog concept was wrong for boards. The board needs to be the fox. When times are tough, boards can't roll up like a hedgehog.
- Bill said he had a problem early on with staff spending too much time at work, and he didn't think that was healthy. To address that issue, he has them categorize all their activities under the board's four goals. The instruction to them is, "if what you are doing advance one of those goals... don't do it anymore."
- Donna passed out some handouts that members can use as a guide in applying Good to Great concepts at home.

## Innovators Website

Nina passed out a mock-up of the website for "members only." Comments from the members to improve the site:

- Add a bulletin board – a place for posting questions, where everyone will be notified electronically that the question has been posted and everyone can see all the responses to the question. (Our IT person will check into the notification function. The billboard function is static at the moment; she'll investigate whether it can notify people when something is posted).

- Add a section for “Products” such as Lisa’s Virtual Job Fair product.
- Include all the members’ web pages on the “related links”.
- Include a section for “Innovative Initiatives” so people can post information about innovative things they are doing that don’t fit into a category.
- For the reports and publications, provide a thumbnail overview of each so members can tell if they want to download the whole thing. (Note: CSW’s IT person said the thumbnail would need to be the responsibility of the submitter, and would need to be limited to 256 characters. She also indicated that the site is planned to be live by the end of June or July).
- Under Program Policies and Practices:
  - ◆ Change “fee for service policies” to just “Fee for Service.”
  - ◆ Change dislocated worker policies to just “Dislocated Worker”
  - ◆ Add a category for Sector Strategies
  - ◆ Add a category for Grant proposals
  - ◆ Add a category for Emerging Issues (e.g. , workforce housing)
  - ◆ Add a category for Emerging Workforce (e.g., youth ,pipeline issues)

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be in Abilene, Texas on September 12-13.

## **Benchmarking Bill**

The Innovators participated in the first site visit for a WIB Benchmarking project being sponsored by four boards in Missouri. The first conversation we had was with staff.

Notes of interest:

### ***Board Structure***

- Committees are structured around the direction of the board. Each committee is assigned a part of the strategic plan.
- The Executive Committee can bind the board and make all financial decisions. They also approve the actions of the other committees. The board chair does not make command decisions. Decisions are always made with the executive committee.
- They limit policy development. “Policy stifles innovation.” Only ten policies are required under the law.
- All committee chairs represent the private sector, and chair for a long time (4-5 years). They believe the long-term continuity is good for the board. Members don’t even know when their terms are up. There is an automatic renewal, and members are terminated only for cause. If a member isn’t actively participating, staff go to the

LEOs and ask for their removal. The disadvantage is that they rarely bring in fresh talent, but the advantage is long-term commitment to the vision.

- In 2002, they dismantled the whole board and reconstituted it around industry clusters. Bill met with the LEOs to say that the “wrong people are on the bus.” The LEOs wanted political currency and geographic distribution, but Bill convinced them membership should be based on workforce needs. Bill identifies industries (not individuals) from which he needs members, and the LEOs appoint those kinds of members.
- They would define the characteristics of a good board as follows:
  - ◆ Board members need to be involved and active. They don’t wait to be asked, they volunteer.
  - ◆ The board is diverse in terms of industry clusters and backgrounds.
  - ◆ Board members share a vision, goals, and working toward the ends.
  - ◆ Board members are risk takers.
  - ◆ The vision is clear, precise, and long term in nature. They “sell” the vision at the state and national levels to promote the issue that are important to the region.
  - ◆ The board is adaptive and flexible.
- If a new WIB member is from a targeted industry, Bill will go visit with that person to “test the waters.” If they seem OK, he provides an orientation to the work of the board, the vision, and objectives. He uses the CSW guidebook for WIB members and may bring in a workforce guru to conduct training. He has had people resign because they didn’t think the board was moving fast enough. Staff are expected to visit with board members and identify the most effective ones.
- Mandated partners on the board were a big problem early on, but most have forgotten they were mandated. They are there because they are passionate about workforce. But when they take off their WIB hat, they really take it off. “Their longest term vision is behind them.” They don’t participate enough in voicing a need for change.
- The board meets quarterly at noon. The executive committee meets monthly.

### **LEOs**

- Bill meets collectively with the commissioners on an as-needed basis, averaging about quarterly, but he also meets individually with the mayors and commissioners to maintain a relationship and communication.
- The Chief LEO sits on the board as an ex-officio, ad hoc member, but other LEOs do come to meetings.
- One LEO is on the youth council, which elevated that group.

## ***Budget***

- The board has its own budget, but Bill is transitioning the WIB staff away from depending on WIA funds. They bring in money from fee-for-service and grants, but aren't self-sufficient yet.
- Funding comes from sources such as:
  - ◆ Microsoft, for training people in technology
  - ◆ Verizon, for literacy
  - ◆ Small Business Administration (\$480,000 grant)
  - ◆ USDA, for an applied micro-loan program
  - ◆ Disaster relief money.
  - ◆ Local elected officials, who donated \$250,000 with no strings attached.
- They do their own grant writing, but have hired outside help when they needed it due to short time limits.
- Since 2002, they have brought in \$14m on top of their WIA allocation (some of that was WIA discretionary dollars) compared to \$45m in formula WIA over that same time period.
- The board is the lease holder for the one-stop system, and sees the facilities as a revenue opportunity. They get paid rent, but always charge fair market value. They tell prospective "tenants" that they will give them space in the one-stop and promise them a better place for the same money.

## ***Staffing***

- Staff are not members of the board, nor full partners. They see themselves as advisory to the board. The WIB entrusted staff to be responsible for hiring the best people, and hiring based on the need, mission, and vision.
- There is a Director of Entrepreneurship and Business Development, whose work has an economic development flavor.
- There is a Program Manager who focuses on business expansion and retention and incumbent workers.
- The Accounts Manager is responsible for allocation of resources based on training needs identified by labor market information.
- The Fiscal Agent staff person is responsible for budgeting and accounting.
- Another staff person is responsible for overseeing the one-stop. He has day-to-day responsibility for the partners and making sure all services are seamless.

## ***Firewall***

- The WIB asked for and received a waiver to be the one-stop operator. They felt like they took the one-stop as far as they could with a partner consortium. Then hired an

expert to operate the one-stops, and not only was that more expensive, but they still didn't think they had raised the system as far as they could. They didn't think they could reach the next higher level without operating the system themselves. Bill was being accused daily of penetrating the firewall, but since the WIB is known for its one-stops, when push came to shove, the firewall came down.

### ***Strategic Orientation***

- They develop their strategic orientation by asking the 7,000 businesses in the region, what do you about us that is good, and what do you know about us that is not good? Then they act on that information. They do surveys through local chambers, make telephone calls, and other actions to “listen” and collect information that helps them identify issues.
- That information married with the data from the State of the Workforce report gives them their mission and purpose. They are trying to understand the dynamics of labor market functioning across the region.
- The business services team works with a 62-member panel; the panel members are not necessarily board members. They are emissaries of the board's mission. The core business services team includes a manger from each of the partnering agencies.
- The WIB expects staff to carry out their strategic direction. They hired staff to do that work. The board sets the direction and tests for effectiveness; the staff handle all the action between direction and evaluation. The board is a non-task related entity. They are destination-related.
- They work from a premise that they can't do everything themselves and need all the help they can get. They go to others and ask, “will you help me” and then give credit back to the helpers.
- Local people have lost hope in the state and local leadership to help them. The WIB is where community change is led.
- The four goals of the board are:
  1. Increase the awareness of individuals and communities in the region of the existing and emerging demand occupations and the skill needs of workers
  2. Improve alliances between education and business to ensure the instructional content facilitates student learning of workplace competencies needed by current and future employers in the region.
  3. Promote and support economic development in the region.
  4. Raise the level of service integration and quality in the region's Workforce WV system.  
(Bill offered \$5 to any staff person who could name all four goals and none of them could do it!)
- The goals are set and have not changed since 2002, but the action steps to achieve the goals change. Every quarter, the staff prepare reports on tasks they have done

over the quarter that further the goals. Every task they do must be related to supporting one of the goals. Anything they are doing that doesn't support a goal they should stop doing.

- Each goal has metrics. The metrics equate to movement toward the vision. Some of the required one-stop system measures translate into those goals, others don't. "You measure incrementally against what you can impact." They are mostly looking for impact, not numbers. For example, colleges come to the WIB asking for a reality check against their curriculum. That demonstrates impact. Industry leaders come to them looking for solutions. Economic developers are required to have workforce at the table. "If we do the four goals well, we move communities."
- Bill is in constant communication with the committee chairs, partners, and staff to share information back and forth. The staff are responsible for keeping the WIB on track.

### ***Branding***

- They are branded as Workforce West Virginia (same as one-stop).

### ***Success***

- The board knows they had a good quarter if there is only good news to report.
- You don't measure for the sake of measuring. You *know* when you've had impact.
- One-stop success is all performance goals met and numbers served. They measure increase in usage, but *not* market penetration. Customer satisfaction and increased usage is more key.

### ***Best Practices***

Staff identified what they think their own best practices are:

- Communication – LEOs ,WIB, staff, one-stop staff have continuous back and forth communication both formal and informal. They discuss current and evolving issues.
- Common assessment – Work Keys used as the common assessment across the system.
- Collaboration with community colleges – they are not in competition, but are partners.

### ***Discussion with Board Members***

- Value add: board members believe the board's value add is talking to business to gather skills data, getting the training required to meet the skills need, and ensuring collaboration of services to make partners' jobs easier. The board is the vehicle for pulling people together toward a common vision.
- One member who operators a staffing firm said you have to look at what was going on before the board came into being. They board gives me new tools. There was

little communication before and little data. The board gives me data, about numbers needed in the economy.

- Another member said this board has enhanced incumbent worker training opportunities. We are always at the table in economic development discussions, and we're working with K-12 on career information. We're a partner in developing the technical infrastructure and chambers of commerce perceive us as important for helping communities grow. We need to ensure that training is to train people for jobs that exist, and train them with the right skills for those jobs.
- The board has an excellent director and built strong staff, which is a source of its strength. "This board, this executive director, think outside the box. A major achievement was the buy-in from partners. The LEOs are the system's best cheerleaders."
- "If you are on this board, you *work*." E.g., performance training committee ensures appropriate expenditures of taxpayer's money.
- The members said you can't divorce the one-stop from the board. The board is the policy setting entity for direction and they have to ensure the one-stop fits in with the board's direction. Our job is to listen, gather statistics, develop policy, evaluate, and hold staff accountable to the task.
- "We want to see job seekers enter work and be retained. We want to see incumbent workers get more money and more skills. We implemented the Tipping Point initiative for the emerging workforce. We make sure higher education is providing curricula needed by emerging industries. We inventory the workforce available."
- They noted that when staff from the state office attend their meetings, they can drag them into administrative compliance discussions and programs and away from strategic thinking.

## **Benchmarking Debrief**

Success factors for WIBs derived from this initial site visit include:

- Board is Goal Focused
  - ◆ Board is strategic
  - ◆ Membership is strategic around the goals
  - ◆ Staff activity is goal-focused, and non-related activity is dropped
  - ◆ Goals drive the agenda
  - ◆ Goals drive funding priorities and revenue generation
  - ◆ Goals drive committee structure
- Board is a Communicator
  - ◆ Communication is two-way and includes lots of one-on-one; a culture of communication is built.

- ◆ Communication is regular with LEOs, K-16, industry, and one-stop
- Board is a Collaborator/Convener/Engager
  - ◆ E.g., convenes economic development, staffing firms, community colleges, and business services
  - ◆ Everyone is involved by asking for their help, and they are given plenty of credit when they do.
- Board is Business-Driven
  - ◆ Emphasis on creating large business services unit
  - ◆ Needs of industry are gathered, reported, shared
  - ◆ Industry sector members attend meetings, ask questions, building agenda around the learnings, and identify trends.
- Board has Excellent Leadership
  - ◆ There is no substitute for having “the right people on the bus.”
- The Board Develops Revenue
  - ◆ Revenue generation is goal-focused
- The Board Measures Success
  - ◆ Measures are not necessarily metrics-based