

# **Gateway to Creating a Learning Culture: Pat Smith's Challenge**

Scott and Sandra Wegner  
Southwest Missouri State University

## *A Problem Based Learning Activity about Student Learning and Professional Development*

This problem based learning module is divided into four parts.

1. An Introduction
2. Problem 1: "Welcome to the District."
3. Problem 2: "Where the Expectations meet Implementation"
4. Problem 3: "Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?"
  - The activities are organized in three "problems" which are designed to take from 2-3 weeks and 6-9 classroom hours per "problem." The instructor is encouraged to add additional supporting materials and resources, especially in regard to local circumstances.

# Gateway to Creating a Learning Culture: Pat Smith's Challenge

Scott and Sandra Wegner  
Southwest Missouri State University

## *A Problem Based Learning Activity about Student Learning and Professional Development*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **To the Student**

In this problem based learning activity you will assume you are Pat Smith who has just been hired as a principal. Because of the reputation of the principal preparation program from which you graduated, the Superintendent has asked you to assist him in bringing about some changes in the district.

In the following pages, you will have three (3) problems to address. These are designed to be taken in succession:

1. You will start with Problem 1, "Welcome to the District."
2. At your instructor's direction you can then proceed to Problem 2, "Where the Expectations Meet Implementation."
3. Later, as your instructor indicates, you will finish the activity with Problem 3, "Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?"

The problem based learning activity is designed to help you acquire knowledge and demonstrate performances related to Standard 2 of the standards developed by ISLLC. Below is Standard two and related knowledge and performance concepts:

#### **Standard II**

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Key knowledge and performance concepts in Standard II Student Growth and Development:

- Knowledge Concepts
  - Applied Learning Theories
  - Motivational Theories
  - Curriculum Design
  - Effective Instruction
  - Measurement and Evaluation and Assessment
  - Diversity
  - Change Process
  - Technology
  - Staff Development
  - Culture
- Performance Concepts
  - all individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect
  - professional development focused on student learning with the school vision and goals

- barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed
- diversity is considered in developing learning experiences
- life long learning is encouraged and modeled
- there is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff
- technologies are used in teaching and learning
- multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students
- the school is organized and aligned for success
- curricular, co curricular, and extra curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined
- curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies
- the school culture and climate are assessed on a regular basis
- a variety of sources of information is used to make decisions
- student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques
- multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students
- a variety of supervisory and evaluation models is employed
- pupil personnel programs are developed to meet the needs of students and their families

### **To the Instructor**

We have provided some materials that suggest some ways to enhance the learning. The suggestions are derived from our experiences in teaching this activity in graduate courses in education administration. You are, of course, welcome to add and modify as conditions in your setting suggest.

Associated with each problem are:

- Products to be developed with specifications
- Guiding questions
- Suggested readings and other resources
- Support materials related to the problem
- Notes to the instructor (these provide suggestions for managing the activity)
- Performance criteria to evaluate the students performances and knowledge

You may now proceed to access each of the three problems and their related materials:

# Gateway to Creating a Learning Culture: Pat Smith's Challenge

Scott and Sandra Wegner  
Southwest Missouri State University

*A Problem Based Learning Activity about  
Student Learning and Professional Development*

## Problem 1: Welcome to the District

### Scenario

While you are new to the district, the superintendent is well aware of the fine educational opportunities that you received at the institution from which you graduated. The superintendent knows that your institution turns out administrators with an emphasis in curriculum and instructional leadership as well as strategic planning. During the interview the superintendent made several references to "using your talents to help out the district" and now, or so it appears, is time the superintendent was talking about.

You have been asked to bring the superintendent up to speed on developing a school mission that has learning as its major focus. The superintendent has also asked that you bring suggestions as to Graduate Goals that the district could adopt that might serve as the curriculum focus for the district. You have been told that the mission and goals are going to serve as the springboard for a sweeping curriculum reform aimed at raising the district's low state test scores.

The superintendent will lead the process and work with committee to develop the products; you will serve as the resource person. You have little time (your professor will give you the deadline) to gather your materials and bring your recommendations to the superintendent.

### Product Specifications

A Report to the Superintendent containing recommendations to:

- How to carry out the mission development process and bring about systemic change.
- Committee membership (with rationale for inclusion)
- Sample ideas for district philosophies, vision and mission and recommendations for adoption.
- A list of potential Graduate Goals and recommendations for adoption.
- Samples of formats and terminology from other schools
- Impressions of possible issues related to previous student test scores and what issues for future student test scores exist.

A mock journal for the principal detailing decision-making elements including

- Identification of the key components of the problem.
- Identification of ethical questions encountered in problem solving.
- Any personal issues that were of concern to the principal during process.

Guiding Questions (for use in guiding your thinking):

- How does one infuse learning into a district mission? What would it look like? What kind of terms and verbs would be used?
- Who should be involved in efforts like this? How does one ensure diversity?
- What is the role of the staff?
- What kind of Graduate Goal statements should be formulated and what role does national, state and local standards have?
- What does good curriculum theory say about mission, goals and their potential impact on instruction and assessment within a district?
- What does change theory say about making systemic change of this type? What recommendations should you include for the superintendent that might aid in the long-term success of this project?
- What impact do you see for this project on your own situation? Should it matter? How will it effect your participation?
- How does being new to the district impact your role in this problem?

**Resources:**

- Creating the Quality Curriculum - Allan Glatthorn, ASCD, Alexandria VA 1994
- Developing the Curriculum - Peter Oliva, Harper Collins Publishers Inc, New York N.Y. 1992
- Missouri Curriculum Guidelines  
<http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/sia/msip/index.html>
- Your State Curriculum Guidelines  
<http://www.ccsso.org/seamenu.html>

**Key Terms:**

- Accountability
- Mission
- Alignment
- Needs Assessment
- Articulation
- Outcome
- Assessment
- Performance Standards
- Competency
- Performance-Based Education
- Curriculum Goals
- Philosophy
- Curriculum Objectives
- Standards
- Graduation Goals
- Vertical Articulation
- Learned Society
- Vision

# Gateway to Creating a Learning Culture: Pat Smith's Challenge

Scott and Sandra Wegner  
Southwest Missouri State University

*A Problem Based Learning Activity about  
Student Learning and Professional Development*

## Instructor Notes and Scoring Guide for Problem 1 "Welcome to the District"

### Notes to Instructor

1. The following ISLLC criteria are supported by this problem. You can enhance the students experience by assuring that either appropriate instruction in these areas has been given, or additional resource made available to support student decision-making.
  - Curriculum Design
  - Change Process
  - Culture
  - Measurement and Evaluation and Assessment
  - All individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect
  - Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed
  - Diversity is considered in developing learning experiences
  - There is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff
  - The school is organized and aligned for success
  - Curricular, co curricular, and extra curricular programs are well designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined
  - Curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies
  - A variety of sources of information is used to make decisions
2. You have several options in using this case. First you can assign this case individually or in groups, either will be okay. Second, you can have the students use the optional district and school profiles or you can have them review and use their own districts' to set the parameters for the exercise. (Ideally, using their own districts would allow for a more authentic task, but may create logistical problems for groups of students who are not from the same district.) Lastly, you may modify the project to give more or less direction or requirements.
3. As written, the project should take 6-9 hours of classroom time over a two-week period.
4. The mock journal is not only a good ploy for making students "think about their thinking," it can be expanded into a reflection piece by adding "what if statements" or personal reflections about their own setting if they are using their own districts as the basis for study. Examples:
  - What if you were a principal in your district and the superintendent asked for this kind of help? What would you think?
  - What kind of report would you try to give? What format?
  - Who might be the audience for the report? Does that make a difference?

- Given the personalities in your district who would you want on a committee of this type? Are there persons you would avoid? Why? What benefit might you see from including them? What disadvantages?
5. The use of this problem could be as an exercise in curriculum development or strategic planning. It can be a "stand alone" exercise or could be combined with subsequent problems in this series to take students from District Mission and Goals to instruction, assessment, and related learning issues.

### Guide For Scoring Student Product

Performance Criteria	1	2	3
<b>Curriculum Design</b>	Elements of acceptable curriculum design are not incorporated into the recommendations.	Recommendations contain appropriate terminology and design elements as well show some direction for future organizational issues as well as assessment.	Recommendations contain appropriate terminology and design elements and include references to future organizational and curriculum work necessary to assure alignment through the classroom level. Assessment issues are well defined.
<b>Curricular, co curricular, and extra curricular programs are well designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined</b>	.	.	.
<b>The school is organized and aligned for success</b>	.	.	.
<b>Change Process</b>	There is no reference to established change theory.	References are to change theory only in the context of the group being formed at the district level.	Change theory is addressed as a priority and includes references to change at all levels of the organization and community.
<b>Culture</b>	No reference is made to establishing a learning oriented culture.	Culture is addressed only in the context of the status quo.	Present culture is considered and recommendations include references to establishing a learning oriented culture in the future.
<b>There is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff</b>	.	.	.
<b>Measurement and Evaluation and Assessment</b>	There is no reference to measurement, evaluation or assessment present or future.	There is reference to past measurement, evaluation or assessment issues for consideration in the mission development process.	Reference to measurement, evaluation or assessment issues includes both past data as well as references to future needs caused by any new mission or goals.
<b>All individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect</b>	Recommendations do not include opportunity for input from all aspects of the community/school.	Recommendations include opportunity for input from all aspects of the community/school.	Recommendations include not only opportunity for input from all aspects of the community/school but rationales for committee inclusion shows respect for diverse ideas, cultures and opinion.
<b>Diversity is considered in developing learning experiences</b>	.	.	.

<b>Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed</b>	There is no reference to student barriers to learning	Reference is made to probable student barriers in the past	Reference is made to probable student barriers in the past as well as potential barriers to future learning caused by a new mission or goals.
<b>Curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies</b>	Research is not consulted.	Research is used in a limited capacity. Teachers are not consulted.	Evidence of research and recommendations from learned societies including state departments and national standards. Teachers are consulted or included in the process.
<b>A variety of sources of information is used to make decisions</b>	Less than 3 sources are used to make recommendations.	4-6 sources are used to make recommendations.	Over 7 sources were used to make recommendations.

# Gateway to Creating a Learning Culture: Pat Smith's Challenge

Scott and Sandra Wegner  
Southwest Missouri State University

*A Problem Based Learning Activity about  
Student Learning and Professional Development*

## Problem 2 "Where Expectations Meet Implementation"

### Scenario

While the district has adopted a mission, graduate goals, subject area goals and instructional goals, student scores are not improving. District curriculum experts have checked the alignment of the district curriculum to state standards and tests and have found that the curriculum has a good match. Content and format are consistent with state expectations and in many instances exceed state requirements. All indications are that the problem is instructional.

In your last meeting with the superintendent, you were asked to help with this situation. The superintendent's intention is to have you work with a small group of administrators to design an approach to the problem. Specifically the superintendent is interested in developing strategies for motivating and assisting teachers in effectively translating the district curriculum into instruction and using learning theory appropriately. Once a draft is completed, it will be shared with administrators and teachers for input and final adoption.

The focus is on developing an approach that can be duplicated in either elementary or secondary instructional environments. You must also account for the potential differences of students, teachers and stakeholders. No small task. The superintendent would like you and your group to give a presentation to district administrators in three weeks. The presentation is to include handouts and sample guides for administrators.

### Product Specifications

Recommendations for the following support materials:

1. A "**formula**" for appropriately translating instructional goals into instructional objectives.
2. A **teacher manual** supporting effective instructional decision-making, including:
  - strategies for increasing student achievement, especially in performance-based assessments
  - to meet the needs of diverse populations.
  - for dealing with learning from all three learning domains for developing high expectations for all students
3. A **principal's guide** to supervising the curriculum
4. A **motivation plan** for teachers and students

5. A **PowerPoint** (or other presentation software) of your presentation to the administrators
6. A **mock journal** for the principal detailing decision-making elements including
  - Identification of at least three potential problems in this scenario that might have to be dealt with in more detail at a later time.
  - Identification of the key elements to instructional decision-making.
  - Identification of issues that may support or hinder the success of this project.
  - Outlines of any correspondence that Principal Smith might send.

### **Guiding Questions (To guide your thinking)**

- A. Identify the barriers to the successful completion of this project. What strategies would you attempt to use to overcome each?
- B. What is the best way to assist teachers in translating Instructional goals into Instructional Objectives? What would be the best way to teach teachers instructional decision-making?
- C. How does one select teaching strategies that best meet the needs of students and still deliver the appropriate expectations?
- D. What is the role of the staff in developing instructional support materials? In policing adherence to district curriculum?
- E. What kind of documentation actually can aid in instructional decision-making? How do you make sure materials don't just sit on the shelf? What elements make a manual useful?
- F. What does motivation theory say about making change within people? Is there any theoretical difference in motivation for teachers and students? Can you really motivate some one else?
- G. How can you assist teachers in understanding all three domains of learning and constructing appropriate learning opportunities in each domain?
- H. What is the role of teacher supervision and evaluation in making or supporting change? Can you use these processes in this situation?
- I. What is the function of the state in these matters? How should a school or district respond to state mandates or criticism?

### **Resources**

- Developing the Curriculum, Peter Oliva, Harper Collins Publishers Inc, New York N.Y. 1992
- Teach More Faster!, Madeline Hunter, TIP Publications, El Segundo CA, 1984
- Classroom Instruction that Works – Robert Marzano, ASCD, Alexandria VA 2001
- Preparing Instructional Objectives, Robert Mager, Fearson Publishers, Palo Alto CA, 1962
- Improved Instruction, Madeline Hunter, TIP Publications, El Segundo CA, 1985
- Strategic Teaching and Learning, Beau Jones, ASCD, Alexandria VA 1987
- Teaching with Dimensions of Learning, Robert Marzano, ASCD, Alexandria VA 1992
- Internet Resources - <http://www.ascd.org>

### **Key Terms**

- Accountability
- Competency
- Horizontal Articulation
- Performance-Based Education
- Articulation
- Congruency
- Instructional Goals
- Pygmalion
- Assessment
- Curriculum Objectives
- Instructional Objectives
- Standards
- Benchmarks
- Taxonomy
- Performance Standards
- Vertical Articulation

### **Support Materials**

- Letter from Superintendent
- Letter from District Curriculum Coordinator
- Letter from the state department
- Letter from teacher

### **Letter from Superintendent**

Principal Smith,

Once again, thank you for your leadership in this very important endeavor. Creating a "Blue Print for Success", as I call it, will be the first step in elevating this district to new heights of student achievement and I am personally indebted to you for accepting this challenge.

As we spoke about, you and your group will provide the leadership in preparation of materials that will assist our district in doing a better job of translating our curriculum into learning opportunities for our students.

You can rest assured that you have the support of my office and the Board of Education in this matter. We are indeed looking forward to your materials and presentation in three weeks. To underscore this support I have taken the liberty to invite select members of Board to attend you presentation. I have assured them that they will not be disappointed by your efforts.

Any budgetary issues related to your products including the printing and distribution of any finalized products will be taken care of by my office. If you need food or refreshments for your meetings, I will take care of those too. I am sorry that there is not a budget for outside consultants or specialized materials but I know that your depth of knowledge and your own professional library should more be than sufficient for the completion of this task.

Someday I hope to convince the Board of the need for a full-time Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. I know it would be the best scenario, but until that day this district will have to rely on the talents of persons as yourself to make sure that there is a "Blue Print for Success."

Good luck

I. M. Goode, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

## **Letter from District Curriculum Coordinator**

Principal Smith,

First let me say, "Boy am I glad you are in charge of this project!". As you know I am only part-time in this role and I'm not sure I could handle another job. The superintendent speaks so highly of you and I know I'll sleep better knowing there is a competent person at the helm.

My analysis of the curriculum has been pretty thorough and I can give you some quick impressions about your task. I hope that they help.

The curriculum has an excellent alignment with the state test. All subject areas are at a 90% correlation with state objectives and tests. The curriculum in each subject is well articulated and has good specificity. The last state review of the district curriculum passed with "distinction." In fact we sold our curriculum to a neighboring school district that subsequently raised their test scores to the upper 25 percent in only two years. Its pretty good stuff.

The problem is two fold:

In the schools that are in the poor neighborhoods the teachers are so young they don't really know how to implement curriculum correctly. They do the best they can but performance based instruction is a bit different than what they learned in their college courses. They also tend to focus on the activity and not on the learning.

In our newer schools, and especially the high schools, we have great teachers; they just tend to teach what they want to whom they want. The end result is our college track kids do real well on the ACT and SAT and tests like that, but not so well on the state test. And the other kids? They don't do well on anything.

I've tried to work with these people but I only have so many hours in the day and nobody seems to want to listen to a "coordinator." Hopefully the principals will have the clout to make a difference.

Yours in education,

Ova Werkt

## **Letter to Superintendent from State Department**

I. M. Goode, Superintendent  
Anywhere R-2  
That Place, USA

Dr. Goode

Pursuant to new state laws we are considering designating several schools in the state as "struggling schools." The "struggling school" designation is to be assigned to schools who have consistently fallen below the state test averages and who are seen as "not making sufficient effort or progress" toward improving their situation.

As you are aware, you have several schools within your district that might potentially classify as "struggling" under the test scores criteria of the law. This letter is a courtesy letter to inform you of that possibility and to make you aware that you may apply for a one year grace period to allow time to improve test scores. In the application please, present any evidence of what you feel might qualify you under the "making sufficient effort toward improving your situation" portion of the law.

If you are interested in seeking the grace period please file an improvement plan with my office by the end of the current semester. Such a plan should offer proof of achievement from alternative sources as well as any documents showing a district-wide effort to improve learning.

If you desire any clarification or assistance please feel free to contact my office.

Yours in education,

Ima Watchinyu  
Director of State Certification  
Your State

## **Letter from teacher**

Principal Smith:

As a long time faculty member and current president of the teachers association I thought it might be helpful if I gave you some perspectives concerning your current project on learning and instruction in our district.

First let me say that the teachers of this district, while well educated and experienced, will be grateful for any assistance that can be developed that will help simplify and streamline the instructional process. With state and federal mandates as well local expectations, the faculty has an increasingly difficult job and anything that aids the instructional process will be appreciated. I would recommend, however, that you make sure faculty have adequate opportunity to contribute to this project. We have endured so many ineffective, top-down directives in the past that I am afraid that without some credible participants involved, this could end up being a waste of time.

I might also add that while some would perceive the test scores in our district to be undesirable,, there are several things to take into consideration. First, our constituency has changed. With so many students who don't speak English and come from families without much educational aspiration, test scores are bound to be low.

Second, our expectations are different from the state's. Teachers in this district have historically had a great deal of autonomy in what gets taught in their subject area and as our students who go on to college will tell you, it is a first rate experience. Let's face it, teachers are the content specialists and know what is needed to be successful in their subject area. The state doesn't have the high expectations that we do and teaching to the level that would produce higher test scores would cheat our good students. Please do not tie the hands of our teachers by dictating 100% of the curriculum or lowering expectation for our students.

We have a good district and the work of your committee will hopefully make it even better. If there is anything I can do to guide you in this project please let me know.

Sincerely,

Q. Pill, Teacher

# Gateway to Creating a Learning Culture: Pat Smith's Challenge

Scott and Sandra Wegner  
Southwest Missouri State University

*A Problem Based Learning Activity about  
Student Learning and Professional Development*

## Instructor Notes and Scoring Guide for Problem 2 "Where Expectations Meet Implementation"

### Notes to the Instructor

The following ISLLC criteria are supported by this problem. You can enhance the students experience by assuring that either appropriate instruction in these areas has been given or additional resource made available to support student decision-making.

Applied Learning Theories	Motivational Theories	Curriculum Design
Effective Instruction	Professional development focused on student learning	Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed
Diversity is considered in developing learning experiences	There is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff	Multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students
The school is organized and aligned for success	All individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect	Curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies.
.	A variety of sources of information are used to make decisions.	.

- 1) Your best option is to assign this case to a group. A group of three would be ideal, especially if they represent elem., middle, and high school. Most of the information needed is in the scenario; the products are basically general applications of instructional theory and the need for specialized information is relatively unnecessary. However, you could have the students use their own districts to set the parameters for the exercise and therefore require more specific details as to the reason for selection of certain materials. (Using their own districts would also allow for a more authentic task though it may create logistical problems for groups of students who are not from the same district.)
- 2) If you use specific instructional models in your state or introduce them through your instruction, you may wish to require them as part of the project.

- 3) Lastly, you may modify the project to give more or less direction or requirements. You could also require that certain technologies be used such as PowerPoint or other presentation software for the presentation to the administrators or Publisher or Pagemaker for the manuals, etc. As written, the project should take 6-9 hours of classroom time over a two to three-week period.
- 4) The scenario raises interesting questions about motivation, power and change. By adding more guiding questions you could ask for more detailed descriptions about specialized topics that you might have taught students. A few of these might be:

French and Raven's Power Bases	Motivation theories of	Change Models of	Specific Learning Theories
Lewin's Force Field Analysis	McGregor	Schein	Brain-based
Vroom and Yetton's decision-making model	Herzberg	Lewin	Performance based
Specific Problem Solving Strategies	Argyris	Senge	OBE

## Guide For Scoring Student Product

Performance Criteria	1	2	3
<b>Curriculum Design</b>	Elements of acceptable curriculum design are not incorporated into the recommendations. No evidence that the products work together.	Recommendations contain appropriate terminology and design elements as well show some direction for future organizational issues as well as assessment. Little/some evidence that the materials work together	Recommendations contain appropriate terminology and design elements and include references to future organizational and curriculum work necessary to assure alignment through the classroom level. Strong evidence that the products are linked together in a well coordinated effort to provide success for students and teachers.
<b>Effective Instruction</b>	.	.	.
<b>The school is organized and aligned for success</b>	.	.	.
<b>Motivational Theories</b>	Motivation is primarily through coercion or external in nature	Motivation has some external features but accounts for individual differences	Motivation plan recognizes the internal nature of motivation. Plans for teachers and students have mechanisms to ascertain the needs of the person and to facilitate need satisfaction on an individual level.
<b>Professional development focused on student learning.</b>	There is no reference to student learning. Materials focus on mechanistic teaching	References are made to student learning as a product of effective teaching but there is more	There is a clear emphasis on student learning as the focus of instruction. End product of all procedures leads to

	only. Only one opportunity is made available or considered.	emphasis on teaching behaviors than student learning. Some responsibility for instructional adaptation on the part of teacher is included in materials.	student learning. Responsibility of multiple learning opportunities on the part of the teacher is a focus of the materials.
<b>Multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students</b>	.	.	.
<b>There is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff.</b>	No reference is made to establishing a learning oriented culture.	Culture is addressed only in the context of the status quo.	Present culture is considered and recommendations include references to changing the learning oriented culture in the future.
<b>Applied Learning Theories.</b>	There is no reference to research based learning theory in the materials	There is some reference to 1-2 learning theories	There is reference to 4-5 learning theories. Materials lead to the expectation that research-based learning theory is to be considered and utilized in lesson design and implementation.
<b>All individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.</b>	Recommendations do not include opportunity for input from all aspects of the community/school.	Recommendations include opportunity for input from all aspects of the community/school.	Recommendations include not only opportunity for input from all aspects of the community/school but how diversity should be considered in the learning process.
<b>Diversity is considered in developing learning experiences.</b>			
<b>Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed.</b>	There is no reference to student barriers to learning or the ability of the teacher to accommodate.	Reference is made to student barriers and how teachers can accommodate for increased student learning.	Overcoming barriers to student learning is a major focus of the materials. Strategies for teachers are present and support through effective supervision is evident
<b>Curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies</b>	Research is not consulted. There is no provision for teacher input.	Research is used in a limited capacity. Teachers are not consulted.	Evidence of research and recommendations from learned societies including state departments and national standards. Teachers are consulted or included in the process.
<b>A variety of sources of information is used to make decisions</b>	Less than 3 sources are used to make recommendations.	4-6 sources are used to make recommendations.	Over 7 sources were used to make recommendations.

# Gateway to Creating a Learning Culture: Pat Smith's Challenge

Scott and Sandra Wegner  
Southwest Missouri State University

*A Problem Based Learning Activity about  
Student Learning and Professional Development*

## Problem 3

### "Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?"

#### Scenario

Things have been going pretty smoothly for you in your first year as principal. Most of the individual assistance you have given to teachers has worked well, student conduct is good and there is a strong sense of academic press. You are considered to be an instructional leader.

Through your and the staff's efforts you have a school that you, and others, feel is doing a "good job". In the past this was good enough but now the district wants to prove it. In response to the growing call for accountability, the school board has decided to have every school print a "School Report Card". The idea has universal appeal in the community and in most cases even the professional educators are anxious to show how well things are going.

There is no assessment plan in your building and you need to have one. In speaking with the superintendent you have determined that the district would like each school to take the district goals and adapt them to make building level goals. Each school would then generate its own data, at its own level, to report to the district office and its own stakeholders.

#### District Goals

1. Student will acquire and improve the habits and attitudes for responsible citizenship.
2. Students will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for a leading a productive life including a positive work ethic and respect for dignity of all occupations.
3. Students will acquire a mastery of basic communication skills required to obtain and express ideas through the effective use of words, numerals and symbols
4. Students will acquire good health habits and an understanding of the conditions necessary for the maintenance of physical, emotional and social well-being.
5. Students will develop and apply moral, ethical and spiritual values in life situations.
6. Students will develop skills to be life long learners.
7. Students will appreciate aesthetic experiences.

The superintendent has informed the schools that they may add one to two additional goals for their buildings based on specialized needs or demographics, but the main focus is to generate as much information as possible from each school concerning progress toward the meeting of district goals. The hope of the district is

that each goal would be accompanied by at least five objectives measuring the attainment or progress toward meeting each school goal. The superintendent is confident that each school will be able to generate enough assessment data from this plan to drive not only district accountability efforts but also building level school improvement and strategic planning programs.

To jumpstart the process, the parents and staff have asked you to develop a model plan for them to react to. It is obvious that they trust your judgment and your abilities to give them a good model. It is also obvious that 90% of what ever you produce will probably be adopted. So it better be a good effort.

### **Product Specifications**

1. An Assessment Plan for your Building:
2. A philosophy and rationale for assessment.
3. Recommended objectives for each goal including:
4. Suggested assessments.
  - A timeline for assessment data gathering.
  - Who will collect the data and how the data will be collected?
  - Who will be responsible for data analysis and reporting?
5. Recommendations for how and when the data might be used.
6. A sample "Building Report Card" for your building to be used:
  - To report to the district level.
  - To report to school personnel
  - To report to parents

### **Guiding Questions**

1. What kind of data is called for to show student success or progress?
2. Do different types of data require different assessment strategies? How many different assessment strategies are there?
3. What assessment strategies would carry the most weight with district personnel? Parents? Teachers? The State?
4. What is the ethical use of data? Are there unethical aspects to selecting objectives or assessments to consider?
5. How do you assure that all students can reach the goals of the school? The district?
6. How does one incorporate authentic and performance oriented tasks into assessments?
7. How does one assure multiple assessment perspectives?
8. What is the best way to use data for decision-making?
9. How does the audience affect the nature of the data reporting? Should it?
10. Who should be responsible for data collection? What is the cost?
11. How does one assure validity in the assessment data selected?
12. How does one keep assessment from taking an inordinate amount of time or energy?
13. How can research be used to determine objectives and mastery levels?

### **Resources**

1. Creating the Quality Curriculum - Allan Glatthorn, ASCD, Alexandria VA 1994
2. Developing the Curriculum - Peter Oliva, Harper Collins Publishers Inc, New York N.Y. 1992
3. Data-Based Decision-Making - Victoria Barnhart

4. Evaluation to Improve Learning - Benjamin Bloom, McGraw Hill Inc, New York N.Y., 1981
5. Internet Resources - <http://www.ascd.org>

### **Key Terms**

- Accountability
- Conditions of assessment
- Goals
- Performance indicators
- Assessment
- Congruency
- Mastery
- Standards
- Authentic assessment
- Criterion-Referenced tests
- Norm-Referenced tests
- Surveys
- Competency
- Follow-up studies
- Objectives
- Validation

### **Support Materials**

- Note from the district curriculum director
- Optional District Profiles -- Students can apply the ideas in different settings
- Optional School Profiles -- Students can apply the ideas in different settings

### **Note from the district curriculum director**

Principal Smith,

The superintendent has asked me to send a brief note to all principals concerning the new building assessment plans and report cards. First let me say that this initiative marks a new era in assessment and accountability. Not only will the district use your information to show progress toward achieving district goals but you will be able to gather data for decision-making at the building level. It's a win-win situation.

To help in your effort I have put together the following list of tips and requests:

Don't worry about coordinating with other schools in the district at this time. As each building completes its first draft of work I will collect it and make recommendations to each building to better align assessment efforts. For the time being, you are free to brainstorm objectives and assessment ideas.

As you list the objectives for each of the district goals, could you please help me by including the assessment or data-gathering tool you think would be best? This will help in setting up a coordinated district level assessment plan.

The school board has determined that each goal list the percentage of students who you feel should meet it. For example if the district goal were "Students will be able to read" Then an objective for an elementary school might be "20% of students will leave the school reading at grade level or higher."

As you select potential assessments for your school, could you please indicate how much that assessment might cost per pupil? That kind of information would be real helpful to me around budget time.

The report cards would be best if kept to a single sheet front and back. You could elect to use a two- or three-fold brochure if you like. Microsoft Publisher has some nice templates.

Don't rely on a single assessment instrument to measure too many objectives. The more kinds of assessments you select, the better. Having more than one assessment per objective would be good too.

You are only working on a rough draft. What you produce will be used for decision-making in your own building and at the district level. As always, nothing will be approved without input from all stakeholders; so feel free to generate alternative recommendations or think outside the box.

While this project should be quite a challenge, it should also be a real very rewarding experience. If you need anything just let me know. I know you will do great work.

Yours in education,

Ova Werkt

### **Optional District Information**

Your school is located within a large rural community of approximately 100,000. Though large, the community has characteristics of much smaller communities, leading one visitor to remark that it is the "biggest town of 1000 I have ever been in." The population has maintained a fairly steady growth pattern that has kept the population of your school stable over the past decade. The principal cause of growth in the community is the steady influx of retirees who desire close approximation to medical facilities and recreational opportunities of the community and Hispanic families who have been drawn by employment opportunities. Hispanic children represent approximately 15% of the school age population in your district.

The economic base for the community is small business and factory as well as medical. There is a large retail sector that serves nearly a million persons in your section of the state. The population is considered conservative though there are pockets of "liberalism" in the medical and educational populations. Support for the schools in the papers and TV stations is generally good though "bad news" nearly always makes the front page and lead story in the news. Tax support is generally under the state average though the general feeling in the community is that the schools have everything they need.

In the district, the average school is forty years old with the newest school being five years old and the oldest being 100 years old. The preponderance of elementary schools were built in the forties and fifties and the secondary schools were built in the seventies and eighties. The district practices the usual form of site-based management; the majority of the decisions are made at the district level and the implementation is left to the schools. School administrators have little control over personnel or curriculum decisions, and even less on the budget. They do, however,

control instructional programming issues such as instructional design, staff development, supervision, scheduling, grouping patterns and staff usage.

### **Optional School Information**

**Elementary:** You are the new principal of Harry Potter Elementary. Being new to the district you have been given what most would consider a “bottom rung” school. Principals and teachers alike start at Potter and, when better options become available, transfer. Your staff is made up, therefore of largely three types of teachers, new teachers, teachers who wish to transfer but were passed over and “undesirables” who were transferred to Potter as a punishment or because they were deemed as not being “team players” by other principals. The skill level of teachers is, therefore, diverse. A friend has informed you that, much to your relief, basic instructional skills are present in all staff members and you are not expected to “clean house” through out-counseling or termination.

Your building is old, but generally well maintained. It is clean and hazard free. Rooms are large and well windowed. Vandalism is negligible; rooms are typically decorated and furnished for an elementary and there is a media center and computer lab. Each room has a computer and all rooms are Internet connected. All computers are Pentium-based and have CD-ROM and multimedia capabilities thanks to state grants.

Your building is K-6 (490 students) with two sections at every class level. The school is a feeder school for a traditional 7-9 Junior High of 1100. Your children are a mixture of at-risk criteria. 35% Spanish speaking minority (33% of these are ESL the rest English speaking), 69% on free and reduced lunch and 58% from single parent or non-traditional households. Your test scores are among the lowest in a district that is in the bottom half of the state. Thirty-five percent of your students are in the bottom quartile, 40% in the second quartile and only 5% in the top quartile in state testing.

The parent organization is largely unused though there are a good number of members. The primary purpose to date has been for small fundraising projects and showcasing student work at annual school fairs. You have been told that the general feeling of the parents is hopeful though they seem resigned to the fact that nothing good is ever going to come to their school, so why fight it.

**Secondary:** You are the new principal at SW High School. Your school is the second newest school in the district being only 12 years old. You got this “plum” because the previous principal retired in August after suffering and recovering from a coronary in early summer. The staff is veteran, averaging over 20 years of service to the district. You have no new staff. The staff is highly educated and well motivated and used to running their own show. This has often led to some lively “discussions” about curriculum articulation and congruency issues around test time (or at least when the test results get back). Being long-time residents of the community, they have a good support base in the area, socialize with patrons of the district and are generally well respected. While they are very individualistic they also are fairly cohesive as a group. Up to this point administration has used a Laissez Faire approach and relationships have been good.

The building is in tip-top shape. It is wired for computer in every room, it has Channel One and phones and office communication in every room. Every teacher is on e-mail and many have web pages on the school's server. It is a modest high-tech place and students make use of it as well with class projects and assignments handed in on Word and Power Point (you are strictly PC and Microsoft)

Your building is 10-12 (1400 students) with a wide variety of course offerings: vocational, performing arts, high-end academics, you have it all. The make up of your students reflects the locale of the school. The southwest part of town is where the doctors and well heeled reside. Your minority population is only about 8%, the free and reduced population only about 17% and the graduation rate is 92%. 70% of your students go on to higher education opportunities. Despite these numbers you find that in the state testing only about 7% of the students are in the top quartile. Thirty-five per cent of your students are in the bottom quartile and another 22% are in the second quartile! All minority students and free and reduced students fall in the bottom quartile.

Parent involvement in the school is present only when there is controversy and the participants usually have vested interest and good connections to the Board of Education. The parents want the best and think, to a large extent that they have the best. Most could care less about the state scores though they don't like the bad PR the school gets once a year when they come out.

# Gateway to Creating a Learning Culture: Pat Smith's Challenge

Scott and Sandra Wegner  
Southwest Missouri State University

## *A Problem Based Learning Activity about Student Learning and Professional Development*

### **Problem 3:"When the Expectations Meet Implementation" Instructor Notes and Scoring Guide**

#### **Notes to the Instructor**

The following ISLLC criteria are supported by this problem. You can enhance the students experience by assuring that either appropriate instruction in these areas has been given or additional resource made available to support student decision-making.

Measurement and Evaluation and Assessment	The school culture and climate are assessed on a regular basis
The school is organized and aligned for success	A variety of sources of information is used to make decisions
Curricular, co curricular, and extra curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined	Student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques
Curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies	Multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students.

1. You may assign this case to either individuals or to small groups. Groups of two to three would be ideal, but should probably be formulated as elementary, middle school or high school. Most of the information needed is in the scenario since the products are general applications of assessment. However, you could have the students use their own schools and districts to set the parameters for the exercise and therefore require more specific details as to the reason for selection of certain materials. (Using their own districts would also allow for a more authentic task though it may create logistical problems for groups of students who are not from the same district.)
2. If your state uses specific reporting formats or require specialized information or assessments you want to introduce them through your instruction first and then require them as part of the project. If you choose to let the students "discover" specific state requirements you want to add additional time to the exercise or provide additional resources.
3. As written, the project should take 3-6 hours of classroom time over a two to three-week period.

## Guide For Scoring Student Product

Performance Criteria	1	2	3
<b>Measurement and Evaluation and Assessment</b>	Elements of acceptable curriculum design are not incorporated into the recommendations. No evidence that research was consulted in the formulation of philosophy, objectives or assessments	Elements of acceptable curricular structures are present. Little/some evidence that that research was consulted in the formulation of philosophy, objectives or assessments	Recommendations contain appropriate terminology and design elements and include references to congruency of curricular structures. Strong evidence that research was consulted in the formulation of philosophy, objectives or assessments.
<b>Curricular, co curricular, and extra curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined</b>	.	.	.
<b>Curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies.</b>	.	.	.
<b>The school culture and climate are assessed on a regular basis</b>	Assessment plan and recommendations do not consider assessing school climate.	School climate is assessed but does not receive any special emphasis.	School climate is assessed and recognized as an integral part of the school assessment plan and report card.
<b>Student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques</b>	Only one to four methods of assessment are used to assess student learning or behavior or is used for data analysis.	5-10 methods are identified for assessment of learning and behavior.  Data analysis clearly shows how multiple forms of data are used for decision making	Over ten different assessments are identified with alternatives listed for a majority of the objectives. Expectations for use of multiple data are clearly stated.
<b>Multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students</b>	.	.	.
<b>The school is organized and aligned for success</b>	There is no congruence of objectives, goals and philosophy.	There are several instances when objectives don't measure goals or aren't aligned with the school philosophy.	There is 100% congruency of philosophy, goals and objectives.
<b>A variety of sources of information are used to make decisions.</b>	Less than 2 sources are used to make recommendations	3-5 sources are used to make recommendations	Over 5 sources were used to make recommendations