

NNER NEWS Special Edition

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OPEN LETTER FROM JOHN I. GOODLAD

Dear Colleagues/Friends:

Things change and they should. The trick is to maintain a balance between equilibrium and change. The theory of “dissipative structures” addresses the maintenance of normal processes under conditions of nonequilibrium. This is what I have in mind when thinking about the phenomena of renewal. The NNER is in an interesting phase of self-making as it moves steadily toward simultaneously renewing both the network and the member settings.

The Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI) has been in a mode of seeking to balance continued development of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy and its implementation and dissemination—through the leadership program, focused initiatives, conferences, publications, etc. In my judgment, the IEI is now seriously out of balance, with too little attention being given to renewal of the Agenda.

We have given a great deal of attention to mission, particularly the element of educating the young in our social and political democracy, but less to conditions and strategies. More attention to these will inevitably connect to the somewhat less attended-to mission elements of knowledge for the human conversation, pedagogy, and institutional stewardship. The anticipated shift in the work of the IEI will be toward adjusting the balance, with the emphasis on inquiry.

Late in production of the four books published this past

February, I was deeply involved in re-reading *A Place Called School* as I was writing the Afterword for the twentieth anniversary edition of it and finishing *Romances with Schools*, addressing the last two decades. It was a sobering—at times almost numbing—experience. Those of you who have read the latter know that a central thesis is that the major problems and issues of schooling have remained essentially the same over many decades. The recommendations and mandates of reform eras have called for our schools to do much better what they have been doing for years. And innovative inquiry-based ideas (often surfacing again and again) receive at best short-term attention in foundation-supported initiatives. I found this to be a highly disturbing picture that I have not been able to get out of my mind.

Reflecting off and on for months on these observations, I decided that I might have enough fuel in the tank for one more relatively large-scale inquiry. Conversations with others, particularly Gene Edgar and Roger Soder of the IEI Board of Directors, who were fulfilling a request from the Board regarding some matters of policy, were very encouraging. Ken Sirotnik was sorely missed in my beginning forays into the overall design. In brief, it will be centrally focused on educational renewal—one more time—but this time undergirded by insights gleaned from systems and complexity theory.

I am seeking funds for a planning period, part of which

will address funding for five years. If commitments are not forthcoming, I will be forced to change plans considerably.

The transition of the IEI into a more inquiry-based mode will proceed somewhat as follows:

1. Major elements of the Agenda will be selected and translated into DVD format in order to make them more accessible to people who prefer not to read the many books now available and for use in seminar discussions.
2. The NNER will be encouraged to join in finding funding for and conducting the basic leadership program (recently revised with heavy input from NNER colleagues).
3. The IEI will cut back on outreach initiatives but endeavor to fund and sustain the Journalism, Education, and the Public Good initiative and an advanced leadership program stemming from the ongoing new work.
4. The NNER will be encouraged to strengthen the membrane of the whole so that it will not, as so many membership organizations have, become impotent in dealing with counterculture colonization of basic beliefs and activities. The book in press edited by Nick Michelli and David Keiser makes impressive moves in this direction.
5. My participation as a convener in the work of the new Forum for Education and Democracy will strengthen the IEI role in the policy

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PAST AND PRESENT DIRECTORS OF THE NNER COMMENT ON JOHN'S LETTER

As the past and present executive directors of the NNER, we welcome John Goodlad's plans for a major new research study and offer the following remarks regarding the implications for the network.

As John's vision unfolds—that of the IEI renewing its efforts toward research and inquiry—the natural shift for the NNER as the application arm for the work is to take more responsibility for developing leadership capacity at the settings. In other words, the biggest shift for the NNER is that there will be more leadership associates sessions in local settings and NNER members will come to one another's settings, as well as Seattle, to learn with and from one another.

John's passion for research and the paths he has forged to implement the findings, continue to direct and sustain our work in the NNER. As the "proofing sites" for the research, we promote structures and craft policies that put into practice the principles of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. As a network, we continue to grow and thrive on the merits of our interactions and actions related to the Agenda. While we are nurtured by the leadership work, conversations, and writing that comes from the IEI, we must also be self-sustaining.

None of this suggests a diminished

relationship between the IEI and NNER, nor does it imply that the relationship between the NNER and IEI is unimportant. Rather, by renewing the vision for research and inquiry as central to the IEI, John makes it clear that to be of value to the NNER, the IEI must do some fresh inquiry into questions related to the overarching agenda. Further, the NNER settings have grown and developed as a result of earlier research and are not substantially changed, warranting new inquiry into the structures that are, in fact, challenging the regularities of schools and universities.

John's renewed interest in research and the concomitant changes in activity at the IEI, shift the focus of leadership associates programs to become more locally and NNER-guided enterprises. While John pursues new research, the NNER membership must accept the challenge to seek funding as a network and as coalitions within the overarching network. This is one of the strategies we identified previously for strengthening the network. We will also need to maintain our emphasis on leadership development that produces individuals well grounded in the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. Making strong connections to the realities within our local and national political arena will require leadership in all facets of our

work—teachers, students, administrators.

While the IEI will remain available for support, in complementing our initiatives, we anticipate that the NNER will look around the nation and, perhaps internationally, for settings to lead initiatives that strengthen our work. The intertwined roles of the IEI and NNER will also continue in the shared position of senior associate for the IEI and NNER executive director. The NNER executive director's office will continue to be in Seattle and serve as a connecting point for the outreach work in the settings and the inquiry work occurring at the IEI.

As we plan for the future at the tripartite council meeting in October, John's letter is a reminder that our work is about renewal—our own—as well as John's and the IEI's. We look forward to St. Louis where we will have the opportunity for dialog with John concerning his plans and the continuing relationship with the IEI and NNER.

Richard Clark
Senior Associate, IEI

Ann Foster
Executive Director, NNER



ESSENTIAL NEXT STEP IN THE EVOLUTION OF OUR COLLECTIVE WORK

If, as Ralph Waldo Emerson, once wrote, "The ancestor of every action is a thought," then the ancestor of John Goodlad's plan of action for the Institute for Educational Inquiry is to be highly honored. Moving to an inquiry into conditions and strategies necessary for the Agenda to thrive seems a logical and essential next step in the evolution of our collective work. Doing so obviously reflects the Institute's purpose—as reflected in its name—and will bring fresh questions and insights to fuel our Network's renewal and will help us move toward our stated goal of living the Agenda.

The plan points to other implications for the NNER, as well, and fortuitously,

the NNER has been taking initial steps in the direction called for. We have begun seeking funding for leadership associates programs held in New Jersey and Colorado. We have also begun to seek funding to put into action particular priorities the tripartite council recommended and the governing council seconded this past year, such as attention to issues of equity, and work with our local policy contexts.

Significantly, the plan promotes the NNER's increased self-reliance on internal structures that enliven our work locally and as a network. This is no small matter as we all know how difficult it is to keep work going locally and make use of and contribute to the Network. I believe

the challenges and opportunities that will accompany the IEI's plan will enlarge the NNER's capacity to fully realize the power of a network. I eagerly anticipate a discussion at the Annual Meeting about how the IEI and the NNER can move forward on their respective courses, simultaneously enriching each others' thought and action.

Carol Wilson
Executive Director of the
Colorado Partnership for
Educational Renewal
(*NNER Governing Council Member*)

Open Letter from John I. Goodlad

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- arena without necessitating a heavy staff commitment.
6. Planning the proposed foray into the study of subcultures of schooling and educator educating engaged in renewal will continue for up to a year—design, recruitment of a small staff of researchers willing to make a five-year commitment, and fundraising. If commitments for the full period of the planned work are not forthcoming, I will turn my attention to the educational implications of the studies done by our teams in the past and the work of others—many in
 7. Senior staff members of the IEI already are turning more attention to potential inquiry into domains of interest that have in the past called primarily for strategies of implementation. If funding for these is secured, they will become less chief worriers of initiatives and more investigators of them. This shift, if it occurs, will change the structure of the IEI and could lead to reinvigorating the role once played by our Center for Educational Renewal at the University of Washington.

Yes, things change. But I like change to be both intentional and serendipitous. What emerges from this planning will carry with it both anticipated results and many surprises. The fun is in the process. I look forward to conversation at the upcoming annual meeting of the NNER in St. Louis.

With all good wishes,
John



NEW DIRECTIONS FOR OUR WORK TOGETHER

John has laid out for us his thinking about planning for the next five years of our work together. As always, it is a thoughtful and thought provoking scenario, with some real implications for the National Network for Educational Renewal and our work together with the Institute and perhaps a revitalized Center for Educational Renewal.

First, in moving from primary attention to mission to implementation and strategy we take a very important step. And, I think John is correct that such a shift will lead to more attention to the other elements of the mission: acquisition of knowledge, pedagogy, and stewardship. I always start with the view that the most critical goal of education is preparing students to be critical participants in our democracy, and the others do follow. However, some years ago when I was thinking about leaving Montclair (long before I did) John cornered me at a meeting and started pounding on my shoulders (gently of course), saying, “You are not done. You are not done. You are not done.” I just want to be certain that as we turn to implementation and strategy we know that we aren’t done with the core moral tenant of our work—promoting education that engenders democracy and social justice. Now, there are lots of ways that the other elements of the Agenda contribute to that core element, and inquiry into the relationship will be important. For example, we have learned a great deal

about pedagogy that is culturally responsive, and that is a concept central to promoting education for all in our democracy. The intellectual aspects of being a critical participant in a democracy emerge from how we acquire knowledge and relevant critical thinking abilities and how we teach. It is these connections among mission elements that we can profitably focus on.

Second, the NNER does indeed need to join with the IEI in seeking funding for basic support, especially to think through how we will induct new settings into our midst. I continue to believe that that is critical. We are beyond boutique, but we are still not pervasive, and we need to be! Now that we have an executive director who can coordinate fundraising without causing those of us based at institutions to explain why we are spending time raising funds for someone else, it should be possible to pursue this route.

Third, we must continue to refocus on educational policy that affects our work—I’ll settle for policy that does not inhibit our work even if it doesn’t promote it. I see nothing on the horizon at the federal level, no matter what the outcome is in November, that will promote or mark a sea change in federal policy on education no matter who wins the election. The criticisms of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) tend to be that it is under funded rather than that it is wrong. So, we have begun some work in the policy area, and should

continue it. We need to learn how to work to change policy so we can carry out our mission. We should monitor John’s hope that the new Forum for Education and Democracy will be a vehicle to strengthen our role in policy influence.

Fourth, inquiry should extend to how we measure what we do in these times so that the measurement is of important things. This really is more and more critical to my last two points—pursuing funding and influencing policymakers. This is not an easy task, but we need inquiry into measuring the impact of the Agenda.

Finally, I am intrigued by the notion of translating elements of the Agenda into DVD format (to satisfy people who prefer not to read the many books). I look forward to the screenplay for *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, and nominate Roger Soder for the starring role.

Seriously, I welcome this consideration of new directions very much, and look forward to discussing it in St. Louis and beyond. This will be fruitful for all of us. I am reminded that Dwight Eisenhower once said, “plans are nothing; planning is everything.” We have the luxury of being at the planning stage for the future.

Nicholas Michelli
University Dean for Teacher Education
The City University of New York
(NNER Governing Council Member)

2004 NNER Annual Conference

“Meet us in St. Louis: 2004 and Beyond:
Strengthening the Agenda for Democracy in Uncertain Times.”



October 21 - 23, 2004

For more information see the NNER web page:

<http://depts.washington.edu/cedren/annualmeeting.htm>

Here you will find:

1. Registration form. (*You still have time to take advantage of the early registration discount if you postmark your registration by September 10, 2004.*)
2. Hotel information.
3. Attractions and Events information.
4. NNER Conference Schedule Overview.*
5. Conference Highlights.
6. Don't miss the Friday night event: *A Special Evening at the Missouri History Museum.* Please take advantage of this opportunity! The evening will include, “Salt and Pepper,” a play performed by the Metro Theater Company, the 1904 World's Fair Exhibit, book signings, jazz music, good food, and more.
7. An Invitation to Exhibit.

*Please note that the tripartite council members will meet at 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 21, 2004, followed by the governing council members who will meet at 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on the same day.

See you in St. Louis!

National Network for Educational Renewal

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We're on the Web
<http://depts.washington.edu/cedren/>

NOTICE:

McGraw-Hill has announced that they will be closing their warehouse for the month of October, 2004, so orders for *A Place Called School* and *Romances with Schools* should be placed in September (as soon as possible) to avoid delays.