

## **Creating Institutional Memory for This Journal: Opening Calisthenics**

*By Thomas S. Poetter, Journal Co-Editor, Miami University  
With Rosemary Rotuno-Johnson, Miami University*

Welcome to the first edition of *Education in a Democracy: A Journal of the NNER*. We certainly hope that this is the first of many issues to come. My role as one of the Co-Editors of the journal is to continue the task of “getting the (intellectual) blood flowing” for this new endeavor. And I’d like to write something that starts things off by telling a little about where we’ve been, and where we are now. Only the future holds the secrets of where we’re going, and some of the truth of that journey will play out, no doubt, in the future pages of this journal.

Before going any further, I want to express my thanks to Rosemary Rotuno-Johnson, Graduate Assistant in the Partnership Office at Miami University during 2008-2009, who contributed a great deal to the background for this article throughout the year.

Of course it is a special pleasure to write this short article for you as an introduction to the journal, especially since it appears on the heels of John Goodlad’s welcome. Surely, this journal and the people, institutions, programs, and anything else associated with the NNER possessing any gravitas owe their genesis to John Goodlad. The work and the people are built on relationships and conceptual frameworks – a lifetime of teaching and learning, research and

scholarship – that emanate from John and his work with us over many years. We extend our many thanks to him for gracing this first publication with his hearty and supportive best wishes for the work ahead.

Early on in one of our formative editorial board meetings I volunteered to write this introductory piece. From the beginning I started with two very specific ends in mind, ends that were hatched in the earliest moments of the journal's conception and that constitute the structure for this piece:

1. I wanted to pay respects, humbly, to the key sparks of energy, the catalysts, that brought the idea of a journal for the organization from a concept to practice, because I knew if I didn't the authors of the energy never would and others, for now and posterity, might not understand the struggle and commitment it took to get this project moving; and
2. I wanted to share with any readers new or at least "fresh" to the NNER just a little bit about who we are as they dive into the work or as they come on board. In this regard, I hoped to learn more and more deeply about the NNER for myself so that I could share my learning with you and inform my own work inside the organization. Now let's keep moving.

### **Key Sparks**

First things first: Key sparks of energy. John Anderson (University of Nebraska-Kearney) and John Skillings (Miami University) are humble, talented, selfless colleagues in the NNER who for many years have been representative of the arts and sciences portion of the tripartite that in part defines the NNER's foundation for renewing the preparation of teachers, teachers, teaching, and schooling. Classically, these enterprises are shared by colleges/schools of education; by departments and colleges in the arts and sciences; and by K-12 partner schools. For many years, Anderson and Skill-

ings worked tirelessly through committees of the NNER discussing, probing, proposing, and constantly reworking a key intellectual spark that never could be put out. They, and many colleagues, wanted the organization itself to create more outlets for those engaged in the organization's work for scholars of all sorts – but particularly those in the arts and sciences who were committed to the work – who had few legitimate outlets for their research, scholarship, and writing related to the NNER's agenda.

As energy in support of doing something like creating a journal built up across annual meetings and in key committee meetings over the past two years, Anderson and Skillings realized that the opportunity to create a scholarly journal that would speak inside and outside the NNER, representing viewpoints from the tripartite and from fledgling voices in the wider community – key to the renewal of teaching and schooling in the 21st century – could happen if the journal worked to represent the many voices within the network and the wider community of scholars, interested citizens, educational practitioners, politicians, and policy workers attempting to renew themselves, their institutions, their work, our polity, and society. What started as an attempt to at least ideally push for offering opportunities for certain voices inside the network to have more voice became an inclusive, very real project meant to reflect the entire network, its mission, and its many voices.

Therefore, the solid idea for a representative journal, with an editorial board, an institutional home with support at Miami University for a trial period of three years, and representative cases and scholarship about the work from across the settings and from outside, when and if appropriate, took shape. And, while there are many education journals out there, many of them of high quality and some not so high, we believe that having a place to express our ideas, concerns, studies, research, and voices that are accessible, representative, and illuminative of the AED make for an even more solid foundation for the work ahead. We owe the movement in the direction from the idea for a journal to the reality of a journal to the entire organization and its movement, but also, and primarily,

to John Anderson and John Skillings. Throughout the process they have remained trusted, outstanding colleagues as Co-Editors. It is my pleasure to congratulate them for a job well done, along with the editorial board members who joined in the work as it formalized during 2008-2009: Caren Town, Georgia Southern University; Laura Nicosia, Montclair State University; Jim Tomlin, Wright State University; Jean Eagle, Talawanda Schools. It is also important to note the support of the NNER's Governing Council, which formally approved the project at its Fall meeting in 2008.

### **Broad Conceptual/Practical Commitments of the NNER**

Second, anyone new to the NNER, just reading this journal, and/or fresh to experiencing the NNER's supportive mechanisms for renewal such as the annual meetings, the many publications from sites around the network, and conceptually and financially supported projects emanating from the Institute for Educational Inquiry (John Goodlad's thinktank generating ideas and revenue for NNER site projects) and the new Goodlad Institute housed at The University of Washington-Bothell under the leadership of Tom Bellamy, should know at least the following things starting out.

Key, of course – as they are reflected in the journal's title and the work of the NNER broadly – were early and strong commitments to framing the journal around the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) and its four straightforward but broad, moral dimensions:

- To foster in the nation's young the skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary for effective participation in a social and political democracy;
- To ensure that the young have access to those understandings and skills required for satisfying and responsible lives;
- To develop educators who nurture the well-being of every student; and

- To ensure educators' competence in and commitment to serving as stewards of schools.

As Goodlad (2003) notes, the moral dimensions are supported by “twenty propositions referred to as postulates that identify about sixty conditions aligned with this mission, and a strategy of implementation and stewardship in the renewal of schools and the education of educators” (p. 1). Here are several key sources for background reading, tracing the development of the Network from 1986 though today, and through the conceptual terrain under-girding the work of the network:

- \* John Goodlad's (1984) *A Place Called School*
- \* John Goodlad's (1990) *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools*
- \* John Goodlad's (1994) *Educational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools*
- \* Ken Sirotnik's (2001) *Renewing Schools and Teacher Education*

The NNER houses a quality website at <http://www.nnerpartnerships.org/>. You can visit there and learn more about the NNER. The new journal will be accessible from the NNER website and paper copies of the journal will be produced each year and made available to those who attend the national conference. You can learn more about the journal and its focus at the NNER website, and also about how to submit a manuscript for review.

John Goodlad and Associates founded the National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) as a fledgling national movement in 1986. Several groups of institutions and their constituents have joined over the years. Contact information for key network representatives at each site are listed at the NNER website. The current 25 institutional members of the network are:

California State University  
Colorado Partnership for Educational Renewal (CoPER)  
Colorado State University Partnership  
University of Connecticut  
Georgia Center for Educational Renewal at Georgia Southern  
Hawaii Institute for Educational Partnerships  
Illinois State University Partnership  
University of Southern Maine Partnership  
The Brandon School/University Partnership (Manitoba)  
St. Cloud Network for Educational Renewal  
Metropolitan St. Louis Consortium for Educational Renewal  
University of Missouri Partnership for Educational Renewal  
Nebraska Network for Educational Renewal  
Montclair St./New Jersey Network for Educational Renewal  
Albuquerque Public Schools/University of New Mexico  
CUNY and the New York City Public Schools Partnership  
Miami University Partnership  
Wright State University Partnership  
South Carolina Network for Educational Renewal  
Arlington University-School Network for Educational Renewal  
University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) Partnership  
Brigham Young University-Public School Partnership  
University of Washington Partnership  
Benedum Collaborative/West Virginia University  
Wyoming School-University Partnership

For many years, the Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI) worked in close association with the NNER to win grants and begin programs to push an understanding and an implementation of the AED in network sites. The IEI – still in existence but playing a lesser role – has yielded most of its agenda formally to the new Goodlad Institute housed at the University of Washington-Bothel under the direction of Tom Bellamy and to the NNER under the direction of Ann Foster, NNER's Executive Director. Both the Goodlad Institute and the NNER are separate and independent entities working

together to advance the AED on the shoulders of Goodlad's lifetime commitment to advancing the organizations through the IEI. One of the key commitments of the organization is to cultivating connections among school and community based partners with colleagues across teacher education and the wider university community: that is, what the NNER refers to as the "tripartite" – three parts of the enterprise focused on the work of generating the next wave of excellent teachers and educators – which stands as a fundamental aspect of partnership work. In process is a network-wide movement to consider a fourth key leg of the work, that is the wider community, constituted by significant community members and groups that have a stake in renewal and represent a powerful, unvoiced majority for advancing the agenda.

All the while, members keep in mind the process and the goal of the "simultaneous renewal" of schooling and the education of educators. The renewal of settings such as schools and universities, like that of individuals, requires the "necessary interplay between human adaptation and contingencies in a social setting designed to advance human well being" (Goodlad, 1994, p. 17). In a given setting, renewal involves the process of inquiry, and requires of the "setting's stewards not just dialogue but reflection, reading, inventing, and rethinking" (p. 17). We intend for this journal to reflect a commitment to the educational renewal of individuals and settings engaged in work that reflects an inquiry-oriented approach to renewal.

It is also important to know that the NNER is a democratic body, with a polity possessing many layers of decision-making groups. Representatives across the network constitute the Tripartite Council, which meets each year at the annual meeting to engage issues and policies at hand across the network. The Tripartite Council advises the Governing Council, which guides and councils the executive committee. The Executive Director and the Chair of the Governing Council, along with representatives from the tripartite across the network, make decisions together through the executive committee with input from all. Each year the NNER hosts an annual meeting,

Leadership Associates Programming in Seattle and across network sites, and sponsors new and ongoing projects related to the AED.

It is our hope that reading this journal will inform your work. We also hope that you will consider sharing your scholarship through this journal in ways that will advance the work of individuals and the body pushing ever forward toward educational renewal. On behalf of the network, the co-editors, and the editorial board, thank you for helping us launch this project.

### References

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