

International Association for Learning Alternatives (IALA)
Leadership Summit
June 19-20, 2007
Villanova University

Present: Dan Daly, Ray Morley, Terry Lydell, Wayne Jennings, Leo Fahey, Rick Pforter, George McCollough, Ron Miller, Jon Schroeder, John Loflin, David Bly, Irv Zisselman, Jerry Mintz, Mark Wolhart, John Burns, Bill, Scalise, Steve Craig, Nancy Avolese, Sam Seidel.

1. Daly called the meeting to order at 1:05. Participants introduced themselves.
2. Daly presented the purpose of grassroots influence toward “voice for choice” and our 3 initiatives of: multiple assessments, program autonomy, licensure flexibility.
3. Daly described IALA mission and coalition of organizations intent.
4. Jennings and Daly reviewed the history and present condition of IALA.
5. Daly offered the challenge: The future of IALA is now open for discussion and this meeting can offer directions.
6. Bly, legislator in MN, discussed his role as candidate and representative. Ran into people saying, “There’s something wrong with our schools” including many fellow legislators. However, they didn’t know what to do and often had misperceptions about teaching and schools. Also true for other sectors of social systems. Worked with MN alternative association for what to change: multiple measures was the first item discussed. The standards movement is pressuring alternatives toward traditional methods of teaching. Conservatives are often allies in wanting alternatives. Importance of the political process of understanding how legislation is passed. Importance of a learner-centered viewpoint as the focus of our work.
7. Schroeder distributed an Education Evolving handout about charter schools. His past roles have been in politics, journalism and charter school policy leader. Families want learner-centered programs yet politicians are not aware of this and mostly hear from traditional education organizations. Most were successful in school and don’t have a feeling for needing change. Polls support choice, especially among young, poor, and people of color. Choice is at a point of great interest but risks being labeled anti-union. Requires careful work to cultivate understanding and hearing the public interest in choice. Democratic leaders can help overcome the union issue and develop bipartisan support. Have to have this. Need to, at state levels, recover state control of education instead of national control. Need a constitutional mandate to provide that states are laboratories for innovation. National control doesn’t work. How to do this? Possibilities from charter school network: **1.** National voice needed for public awareness and politics; **2.** Strengthen state organizations. However, current state alternative organizations are somewhat in disarray. Morley stated the purpose of IALA that

fits accomplishing various tasks: repository of info, strengthen state organizations, fulfill specific tasks and goals.

8. Broke into small groups for discussion to work on the three potential IALA initiatives: multiple measures, flexible licensing and program autonomy. Groups reported:

9. Multiple measures:

Definition: measuring success for all students using more than one measure. Measuring success with other than with standardized tests. Showing progress over time. Measuring student **and** program success.

Examples: See handout list plus performance measures, credits acquired, listing knowledge and skills acquired, “soft skills,” life skills measures. Some states now require multiple measures, e.g. CA.

Rationale: NCLB narrows the curriculum and outcomes; doesn’t work for education for all; protect learner centered model; encourage students to do their personal best in various dimensions; assure fairness and equity; all students can succeed in school; life and workforce (1/3 dropout) needs; government accountability measures conflict with alternative programming.

How? Legislative and congressional action to recognize additional measures of success beyond standardized tests and to eliminate single measures for advancement or graduation.

10. Flexible licensure:

Definition: Could be an interdisciplinary license or generalist license for non-course based programs. Elementary teachers are an example of a generalist license.

Examples: programs using competence based rather than subject based approaches; project-based schools. Using a journalist for teaching writing or a nurse for health or science. Special education uses “cooperative” teacher model to reduce over-specialization.

Rationale: increases the pool of teachers with a greater range of competencies. Supports innovation. Increases likelihood of fresh approaches. An approach to the federal HOUSSE requirements.

How? Colleges of education need to provide training for alternative schools and therefore appropriate licensure. Charter schools sometimes have the flexibility to modify licensure requirements. Use the teacher of record or a collaborative model. A teacher teaching out of their license field could “collaborate” with a teacher with the proper license who vouches for the other teacher.

11. Autonomy:

Definition: school site decision making about the curriculum, budget and staffing means self-determination and freedom.

Examples: Charter schools, private schools, school districts. The ability to control the entire budget and spend it differently than the traditional model. A school configures the staff differently or uses differentiated staffing. Edmonton, Canada often cited as a district-wide example. School governance determined by its stakeholders including students and parents. (Not just the student council model!) Organized Youth for Educational Alternatives (OYEA) and Success, Teamwork, Achievement, Recognition, Self-esteem. (STARS)

Rationale: People feel ownership and thus have greater commitment, energy and creativity. Promotes innovation. A more humane approach as it recognizes people's interests, strengths and energies. Accountability can only be assigned if people made the decisions. "No accountability without empowerment." Autonomy increases ownership.

How? Cite research. Establish pilot programs. Some states provide program autonomy with charter schools. Districts have the authority to empower sites. May require legislation. For example, legislation could allow a school to become more independent with decisions if 60% of staff voted for it. Successful programs should be given more autonomy. Use "jury of peers" to establish school empowerment.

12. Discussion then turned to the action phase of what next for IALA. There was agreement about holding annual leadership summits. Attempt to revitalize existing state organizations and establish new ones. Link with other national and state organizations with common interests. Do this through personal contacts and discussions with their respective boards. Establish clear and documented needs and interest for alternatives. Approach funders for staffing IALA. Continue the website. Add members to the mailing list, such as legislators and congress members and/or their education aides. Make the entire IALA website searchable. Prepare position papers for clear statements about the three initiatives. Provide a professionally designed brochure. Reshape the board as a working group.
13. Continue an annual leadership summit and consider more often electronically.
14. The meeting adjourned with thanks for everyone's fine contributions.