

**Thought Reform in the Education Milieu**  
**A paper linking Eight Themes of Thought Reform with**  
**Education Reform in Washington State**

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*This author embarked on a mission to address injustices promoted against her child who has a severe disability. It was never her intent, nor did she expect to uncover the documented findings below. It is not the goal of the author that the reader reach the same conclusions that she has, but it is the hope of the author that the reader will examine this paper and its documenting evidence critically and in an objective manner to draw his or her own conclusions. She challenges those who care about the direction of Washington State's educational system to examine the research documented below, which is the result of 36 months of intensive work. It is the belief of this author that education reform in Washington State is not what it is purported to be.*

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Thought reform is a process used by various groups intending to manipulate individuals in order to change their beliefs and values. This ideological totalism (a condition of total control) ignites psychological momentums that separate people into categories of "good" and "bad." This separation determines the human worth of an individual. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has developed the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and is using it as its monitoring tool to implement what it calls the "transformation of learning and teaching." In order to force educators and students to conform or adopt the doctrine put forth, the OSPI is controlling the educational environment with its monitoring tool, the WASL. This alone does not prove the OSPI is using thought reform to "brainwash" educators and students; rather, there are eight psychological themes that are predominant in any thought reform milieu. An analysis of these eight themes and their correlation to OSPI's policies and practices to transform the educational system will support this author's view that the State of Washington is using thought reform techniques in the transformation of our public schools.

Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology Robert J. Lifton has defined eight themes of totalism. He warns that "where totalism exists, a religion, a political movement, or even a scientific organization becomes little more than an exclusive cult."<sup>1</sup> When all eight themes are present individual rights are systematically abridged.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 419.

Lifton lists his eight psychological themes as follows:

1. Milieu Control
2. Mystical Manipulation
3. The Demand for Purity
4. The Cult of Confession
5. Sacred Science
6. Loading of the Language
7. Doctrine over Person
8. Dispensing of Existence<sup>2</sup>

Each theme represents a stage in the thought reform process. In order to demonstrate the process used by the OSPI, each theme will be defined and the correlation to OSPI policies and practices will be presented to provide a general overview of the totalistic movement taking place within Washington State's public education system.

### **Milieu Control**

Milieu Control is the first criteria of ideological totalism. The control of human communication is the basic feature of a totalist movement. The engineers of thought reform must gain complete control of the environment in order to manipulate the input and keep the recruits unaware that there is an agenda to influence or change their beliefs and values.<sup>3</sup> Clinical Psychologist Margaret Thaler Singer explains the following, in her book, *Cults In Our Midst*:

The process of keeping people unaware is key to a cult's double agenda: the leader slowly takes you through a series of events that on the surface look like one agenda, while on another level, the real agenda is to get you, the recruit or member, to obey and to give up your autonomy, your past affiliations, and your belief systems. The existence of the double agenda makes this process one of *non-informed consent*.<sup>4</sup>

Singer's idea of double agenda can be associated with the practices and policies adopted by the State of Washington in its effort to reform education. **Is it possible that the OSPI is deceiving the public by promoting the WASL as an assessment designed to evaluate a student's academic skills?**

The OSPI asserts that "Washington's standards are high...we ask students to develop the core skills and knowledge they need for the future."<sup>5</sup> The OSPI

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 419-437.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Thaler Singer, *Cults In Our Midst: The Continuing Fight Against their Hidden Menace*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 64.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>5</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, "Aiming High: Helping All Students Achieve High Levels," (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2005).

continues to advance the notion that they are “prepar[ing] each student to live, learn, and work as a productive citizen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>6</sup> However, there is a misconception on the part of the public that “core skills” and “basic skills” are synonymous, while OSPI uses the term “core skills” to promote the idea that students must acquire “higher-order thinking skills” as a new basic for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In promoting these false assertions the OSPI is able to deceive the public into believing that the traditional requirements of academic skills are being taught, under the guise of higher-order thinking skills. This deceives parents and educators into believing that by mastering higher-order thinking skills students are acquiring the foundational skills needed in order to live, learn and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Higher-order thinking has become the core curriculum and is the newly adopted meaning of “academic skills.” This creates a psychological momentum that allows the thought reform engineers to slowly implement their doctrine. In order to promote the WASL and encourage educators, students and parents to adopt WASL’s standards of higher order learning, the OSPI publishes studies demonstrating how selected schools improved their WASL scores. The OSPI sends out information pamphlets promoting the WASL, creates colorful promotional advertisements in support of the WASL, and hosts workshops, trainings and conferences that provide skill trainings and seminars on WASL structure and content. The OSPI has developed classroom-based materials and assessment tools that align with the WASL standards and has developed a School Improvement Process to be used by schools not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in WASL scores. This process is designed around the eight psychological themes of thought reform.

The recent OSPI publication intended for parents titled, “Aiming High: Helping All Students Achieve at High Levels”, informs parents that “[e]ven ‘A’ and ‘B’ students may struggle with questions on state tests...WASL and WAAS results tell you whether your child meets state standards. Some, ‘C’ students will meet state learning goals. Some, ‘A’ students will not.”<sup>7</sup> This document could be interpreted to imply that the grading scale adopted by school districts is irrelevant and that a student’s classroom performance, as graded by the teacher, is of limited value. It further stresses that a teacher is not the qualified individual able to determine whether a student is performing at the level expected. In other words, teachers are no longer qualified to assess a student’s academic progress. The WASL has become the determining factor—the milieu control.

In September 2001, OSPI published *Middle Level Strategies for School Improvement*. The publication is a study of twelve middle schools, which cites the “improvements” that yielded increased WASL scores over a three year period

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<sup>6</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, “Preparing Washington Students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” (State of Washington, 2003), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, “Aiming High: Helping All Students Achieve At High Levels,” (State of Washington, 2005), available online <http://www.k12.wa.us>, accessed 15 March 2005.

(1998-2000). The improvements discussed pertain to instructional practices supporting the structure and content of the WASL. It is noted in the Executive Summary that “[t]eachers provide instruction and curriculum that support student success on the WASL, including instruction in WASL vocabulary relative to the subject areas, use of scoring rubrics and attention to the development of higher order thinking skills.”<sup>8</sup> These instructional practices are commonly noted throughout the publication as reasons for WASL score improvement, below are some examples:

- Exemplars, a series of thought-provoking, WASL-like exercises in math and writing, have been used to support classroom instruction.
- Staff [meets] in groups to develop schoolwide instructional goals. These include a focus on WASL achievement through a testing plan, training plan, curriculum alignment, and the use of ‘powerful learning’ as well as specific instructional practices to raise achievement.
- Ingenious use of coordinated budgets from multiple sources links resources...to provide students with more time to learn the content that will enable them to meet WASL standards.
- To prepare students for the WASL, teachers take the approach that these intentional learning activities are a part of everyday life. As a result, students don’t view WASL as an event that is much different from their regular classroom assessments.
- Students are taught the language and vocabulary of the WASL in each content area.
- Teachers attend district training on expository and persuasive writing as measured by the WASL.
- Benchmarks [are] developed using the EALRS and classroom-based assessments and end-of-course assessments of district benchmarks are similar to the WASL in format and performance demands.
- Teachers now create lessons that require higher-level thinking, and students are expected to show that they can apply the reasoning skills demanded by the accelerated curriculum.
- Seventh grade teachers give WASL-like assessments throughout the year.<sup>9</sup>

The publication is designed to encourage educators to abandon traditional instructional practices and adopt methods that align with “WASL standards.” The publication lists the so-called “researched based” curriculum adoptions, intending to encourage other schools to make similar adoptions. The curricula adopted are designed to teach predominantly higher-order thinking, to align with WASL questions. This is because an extensive portion of the WASL is higher-order thinking questions. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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<sup>8</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Middle Level Strategies for School Improvement, (State of Washington, 2001), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 55, 59,34,29,51,53,59,63.

determined and acknowledged that these questions are especially challenging for students with disabilities and for students from low-income families.<sup>10</sup>

The study presented in the *Middle Level Strategies for School Improvement* does not represent a diverse population. The average percentage of White students in ten of the schools is 86.7%. The other two schools average 63.3% White/Asian. The average percentage of African American, Hispanic and American Indian students involved in the study are as follows:

- African American 4.7%
- Hispanic 7.7%
- American Indian 1.5%

Students with disabilities were not included in the study. The percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch for all twelve schools is 32%. Therefore, this study does not provide evidence to support a claim that minority students can benefit from the instructional practices and curricula adopted by the schools involved in the study. The publication is an example of propaganda serving to deceive the public into believing that certain practices and curriculum adoptions that align with WASL standards will benefit schools and improve the achievement of all students.

There is clear evidence that all communication within State and Local educational conferences, workshops, trainings, publications, and promotional seminars of educational products are driven by WASL goals, making the WASL the ultimate Milieu Control.

### **Mystical Manipulation**

In order to create an environment that deceives individuals into believing that the events are occurring spontaneously, the engineers of thought reform craft a manipulative environment. Lifton asserts that this "...provoke[s] specific patterns of behavior and emotion in such a way that these will appear to have arisen spontaneously from within the environment."<sup>11</sup> The thought reform engineers pursue this "near-mystical quality" to gain power, but also because they see themselves as having a "...sense of 'higher purpose,' of having 'directly perceived some imminent law of social development,' and of being themselves the vanguard of this development."<sup>12</sup> Believing they are the "chosen ones" by God or another supernatural force, the leaders are able to zealously move forward with their messianic mission to save humanity. In order to manage the transformation of recruits, the leaders must create an environment that allows for

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<sup>10</sup> Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, "Spanaway Elementary School: A Team Approach to School Improvement," (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism*, (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 422.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

continued observation and monitoring.<sup>13</sup> This can be done by regulating the organizational structure by applying the basic concepts of system theory.

In his book, *Cults: Faith, Healing and Coercion*, Marc Galanter, Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Division of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse at the New York University School of Medicine, identifies the four functions characteristic of systems theory. Applying the basic concepts of systems theory serves to advance a social system that adopts the doctrine of a “totalistic” movement. Galanter’s characteristics are as follows: transformation, monitoring, feedback, and boundary control.<sup>14</sup>

- Transformation: [This consists of] input from the outside, which can be raw material, energy, or information, and process it into output, a product... In a given system, the most important transformation—the one that typically defines its identity—is its *primary task*... The primary task of most cults is to prepare for the messianic end they envision.<sup>15</sup>
- Monitoring: To operate effectively, a system must transform input from the environment into a form that meets its needs, but must also observe and regulate the actions of its component parts, thereby assuring that their respective activities are properly carried out and coordinated. This constitutes its monitoring function. Such monitoring is essential to any system to assure the effective implementation of its primary task, whether that system is a living organism, social organization, or a factory. The system must have an apparatus for monitoring its components. In the living organism, its nervous system serves this function...<sup>16</sup>
- Feedback: [This] is one way for a system to obtain information on how well it is carrying out its primary task. A portion of output is fed back into the system and this provides information for planning future operations. If a cult is trying to recruit, information on the relative response of potential members can be fed back to the cult leaders and guide them in improving the group’s recruitment techniques.<sup>17</sup>
- Boundary Control: [This] protects social systems against dangerous outsiders. It includes not only the screening of people but also of information, since information is a potent determinant of behavior...<sup>18</sup>

**Is it possible that these four functions of systems theory are evident in the design of Washington State’s public school reform efforts?**

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>14</sup> Marc Galanter, *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 92.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 92-3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 96-7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 105.

Careful examination of the reform system designed by OSPI reveals a close correlation with the above cited four functions. In designing its system, OSPI contracted with Carkhuff Thinking Systems, beginning in 1998. In a publication dated March 1999, the State Superintendent, Teresa Bergeson, endorsed the adoption of the system theory design for Washington State’s public schools (See Appendix A). The publication describes the system approach with the following functions: Inputs, Processes, Outputs and Feedback. The diagram is similar to the diagram Galanter titles, “The Charismatic Large Group as an Open System” (See Appendix B). Galanter describes his diagram with the following functions: Input, Transformation, Output-(Feedback)-Monitoring and Boundary Control. The “Boundary Control” function is labeled “Community Context” in the OSPI diagram, but in subsequent documents OSPI changed the terminology to “Organizational Conditions.” The OSPI has continually presented the system theory at OSPI sponsored conferences, trainings and workshops; this can be seen by viewing OSPI PowerPoint presentations (See Appendix C). The diagram below is a graphic illustration from the OSPI March 1999 publication, which describes “a 21<sup>st</sup> Century educational system.”<sup>19</sup> To view the original see Appendix A.

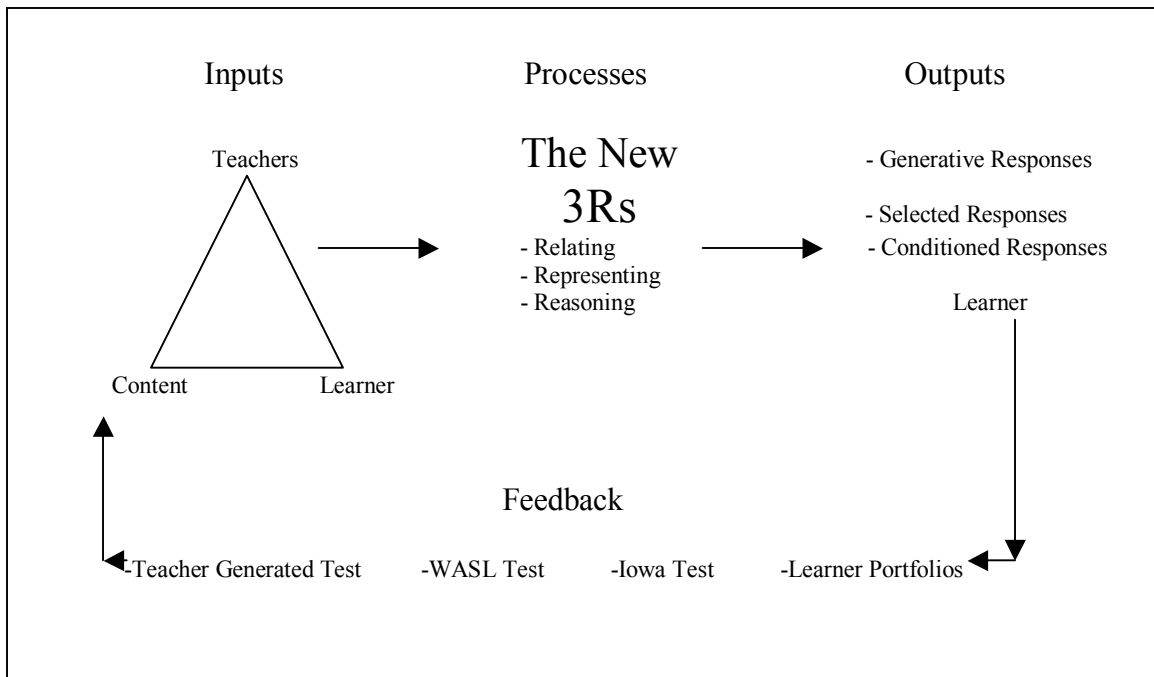


Figure 1: The New 3Rs: Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Carkhuff Thinking Systems, The New 3RS: Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 1999), 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 18.

In late 1998, OSPI contracted with Robert Carkhuff to design the Possibilities Schools. The design team consisted of Carkhuff Thinking Systems and three OSPI staff: Dr. Teresa Bergeson, Dr. Shirley McCune, and Dr. Andrew Griffin.<sup>21</sup> Utilizing Federal grant dollars, OSPI wrote the book *The Possibilities Schools*,<sup>22</sup> co-authored by Carkhuff and McCune. Several other books were written and co-authored by Carkhuff, McCune, Griffin and Bergeson. An account of the grant funds and contractual agreements with Carkhuff can be reviewed by reading a document entitled, “The Unveiling of the Bergeson Administration’s Vision: The Iniquity Exposed.”<sup>23</sup>

*The Possibilities Schools* is a blueprint of “The Possibilities Schools’ Systems Operations,” which details the systems approach to transforming learning and teaching. The above diagram is an early depiction of the process. Versions of this diagram are presented throughout *The Possibilities Schools* and supporting materials. Viewing the table below will enable the reader to compare the terminologies utilized in OSPI’s systems process with those Galanter has used in his description of the cult as a social system. The columns labeled “Washington OSPI” and “Grade Level Expectations booklet: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade” detail the further delineation of the system being utilized by OSPI.

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Carkhuff, Bernard Berenson, *The New Science of Possibilities: Volume I The Processing Science*, (Amherst, MA: Possibilities Publishing, 2000), 232.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Carkhuff and Shirley McCune, *Possibilities Schools*, (Amherst, MA: Possibilities Publishing, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Nancy Vernon, “The Unveiling of the Bergeson Administration’s Vision: The Iniquity Exposed,” (available at <http://www.thefactsaboutwaedreform.org>, 2004).

**The Cult as a Social System—Washington State Educational System**

<u><b>Galanter</b></u>	<u><b>The New 3Rs March 1999</b></u>	<u><b>Possibilities Schools</b></u>	<u><b>Washington OSPI</b></u>	<u><b>Grade Level Expectations booklet: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b></u>
<u><b>Monitoring/ Feedback</b></u>	Feedback: WASL/Standards (Step 1)	Performance Standards/WASL (Step 1)	State Goals: Read, Know, Think and Understand (Step 1)	Read with comprehension (Step 1)
<u><b>Boundary Control</b></u>	Community Context (Step 5)	Organizational Conditions (Step 5)	Evidence of Learning: bulleted list of student demonstrations that provide educators with common illustrations of the learning. (Step 5)	Evidence of Learning: Cite passages from text to confirm or defend prediction and inferences. (Step 5)
<u><b>Transformation</b></u>	Processes: The New 3Rs (Step 4)	Instructional Processes: The New 3Rs (Step 4)	Grade Level Expectations: a statement of cognitive demand, and the essential content or process to be learned. (Step 4)	GLE 2.1.5: Apply comprehension monitoring strategies before, during and after reading: predict and infer (Step 4)
<u><b>Input</b></u>	Input: Students, Teachers, Content (Step 3)	Information Components (Step 3)	Components: a K-10 statement that further defines the EALR. (Step 3)	Component 2.1: Demonstrates evidence of reading comprehension (Step 3)
<u><b>Output</b></u>	Output: Student Responses (Step 2)	Learner Functions (Step 2)	EALRs: a broad statement of learning that applies to grades K-10. (Step 2)	EALR 2: The Student Understands the meaning of what is read (Step 2)

Figure 2

Bergeson, McCune, Griffin and Carkhuff promote the key elements of the Possibilities School, “The New 3Rs.” The OSPI refers to its education reform efforts as the “transformation of learning and teaching,” and focuses on The New 3Rs: Relating, Representing and Reasoning as the design to fulfill the transformation process (see figure 1).<sup>24</sup> The OSPI’s use of the term “processes” is synonymous with the term “transformation,” as used by Galanter (see figure 2).

It should be noted: Galanter warns that the transformation process may result in “psychiatric symptoms in people with no history of mental disorder or psychological instability.”<sup>25</sup> Galanter lists several illnesses to be considered: dissociative disorders, pathologic adjustment reactions, major depressive disorders, brief reactive psychoses, and paranoid disorders.<sup>26</sup>

**Could it be that high staff turnover rate at OSPI is a sign of stress,<sup>27</sup> and that this stress and the discomfort and even illness on the part of students, teachers and parents result from the “transformation of learning and teaching,” taking place at the direction of Bergeson, McCune, Griffin and Carkhuff?**

The columns labeled “Washington OSPI” and “Grade Level Expectations...” in Figure 2, above, list specific activities or materials that are the manipulation elements used to implement the thought reform milieu. The sequence of these activities and materials leading up to full implementation of Washington State’s education accountability system (WASL) are as follows:

- Step 1: Standards were developed and put into law by the Legislature; these are the State Goals/Standards (Monitoring/Feedback) criteria. Bergeson and McCune played a significant role in developing the state goals. Bergeson served as the Executive Director of the Commission on Student Learning during the final development phase of the state goals. McCune’s company, Learning Trends, was a contractor with the State of Washington during the drafting of the standards. Public documents obtained from the OSPI support these assertions, i.e. archived Commission on Student Learning Documents.
- Step 2: The Legislative adoption of the State Goals/Standards led to the development of the EALRs (Functions/Output). Bergeson, McCune, and Carkhuff were and continue to be the engineers of the EALRS. Both Carkhuff and McCune contracted with the State of Washington during the drafting of the EALRS. Though all “stakeholders” supposedly had the

<sup>24</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, “2001 Summer Institutes: Transforming the learning, Teaching, and Leadership Environment,” (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2001), slide 1,6-9, 11, 14,19,21.

<sup>25</sup> Marc Galanter, Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 93.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-4

<sup>27</sup> McKinsey & Company, “Achieving the OSPI’s Priorities,” (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2001).

opportunity to help develop learning goals as well as EALRS... The EALRs were broadly written to ensure a political buy-in by the business community; once the business community gave its seal of approval, it assured that the process would go forward.

- Step 3: Components (Components/Inputs), which further defined the EALRs, were developed. The components gained the approval and buy-in from leading educational administrators. This assured the success of step four.
- Step 4 (current): Grade Level Expectations (Processes/Transformation) are being developed. Teachers will be expected to design their instruction in accordance with the Grade Level Expectations.
- Step 5 (concurrent with step 4): The OSPI is developing specific behaviors and actions a student must demonstrate to prove they have achieved the standards. These actions and behaviors are defined in the Evidence of Learning (Conditions/Boundary Control). This is the final step of the implementation process and assures the conformation of students and teachers.

The final products of the activities mentioned in Step 1 through 5 are OSPI publications entitled *K-10 Grade Level Expectations: A New Level of Specificity: Reading, Mathematics and Science*. The OSPI has plans to publish four more subjects: Writing/Communication, Social Studies, Arts, and Health and Fitness. These booklets contain all five phases of the systems operation: standards, conditions, processes, components and functions (See Figure 2, column 5). Upon completion of all booklets, the OSPI will be in complete control of the Inputs/Components—the students, teachers and content.

Returning to the characteristics of a system, Galanter discusses the monitoring system as "...essential to assure the effective implementation of its primary task...the system must have an apparatus for monitoring its components. In the living organism, its nervous system serves this function."<sup>28</sup> In other words, the WASL is the tool monitoring the components' (Students/Learners) achievement of the standards. This is done by assessing student responses (Output/Functions), which, in this situation, a students' nervous system apparatus is being evaluated. Reading a report entitled "Theosophy and Its Effects on Washington State Educational Reform" will provide the evidence and background research supporting this assertion.<sup>29</sup> The general public has been led to believe that the WASL is assessing the academic skills of students—this deception is critical if WASL engineers expect to accomplish their goals.

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<sup>28</sup> Marc Galanter, *Cults: Faith, Healing, and Coercion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 96-7.

<sup>29</sup> Nancy Vernon, "Theosophy and its Effects on Washington State Education Reform," (available from <http://www.thefactsaboutwaedreform.org>, 2005).

Note: The WASL assessment test serves as the main monitoring tool. Figure 1 lists other diagnostic tools: Teacher Generated Tests, Iowa Tests and Learner Portfolios. The OSPI has developed Classroom Based Assessments designed in accordance with the WASL, and the Superintendent has requested that the legislature eliminate the norm-referenced test, see HB 1068 (2005 legislation).

The State Superintendent also chose to use the WASL as the assessment to fulfill the accountability requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB annually requires schools to establish and achieve academic gains for its students. If a school fails to meet AYP, which is determined by the percentage of students passing the WASL, the school must submit to a School Improvement Process. In order to assist schools in this process, OSPI developed a *School Improvement Planning Process Guide* (2003) and, in collaboration with the Washington Association of School Administrators, developed the *School System Improvement Resource Guide* (SSIRG, 2004). These are two separate publications; however, they are the same in content. Both planning guides are designed around the “Eight Stages of School Improvement.” **Is it possible that this author is correct in asserting that the eight stages align with and have the same intent as the “Eight Psychological Themes of Thought Reform?”**

The school improvement process mandates that schools and districts adopt policies and implement instructional practices that align with WASL standards. As previously mentioned, the school improvement process guides, developed by OSPI, are designed to further refine the thought reform milieu. Controlling the public education system allows the leaders of the milieu to target internal impurities, such as failing schools, teachers and students. The school improvement process becomes the key device to force conformity.

A recent annual audit of statewide agencies, published by the Washington State Auditor, found that “The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction did not comply with state and federal requirements when contracting for services paid with federal Title I funds.”<sup>30</sup> The contracting services were for school improvement facilitators. The findings disclose that the OSPI paid 49 Facilitators in the fiscal year 2004 for a total of \$2,128,600. A total contract dollar amount of \$3,199,600 was awarded fiscal year 2002 (\$761,000), fiscal year 2003 (\$1,117,500) and to date in fiscal year 2005 (\$2,006,000). The OSPI contracted with these individuals without initiating a formal bidding process. This violation of state and federal contractual procedures allowed OSPI to hand pick facilitators who might best ensure that the school improvement process advanced in a manner that would yield their desired outcomes.

The OSPI 2005-07 budget requests for School Improvement Assistance includes a requirement that the grant recipients must use the SSIRG.

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<sup>30</sup> Washington State Auditor, “2004 Statewide Accountability Report,” (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2005), 67.

Specifically, it is noted, “District adoption of the existing School System Improvement Resource Guide will be required.”<sup>31</sup> It is further discussed in a footnote that “[t]he SSIRG differs from the School Improvement Planning Process Guide in that it focuses on the unique role of the school district in initiating and supporting individual school improvement through an examination of district policies and practices.”<sup>32</sup> The process required for examination of district policies and practices is explained in the SSIRG in the following way:

*SSIRG Guiding Questions (C-40-53)* provide a way for districts to gain further information through focus groups regarding the effectiveness of present policies, procedures and practices on supporting school improvement efforts, classroom practice and student achievement. Following each guiding question are italicized statements that indicate research-based practices that the interviewer may use as “look fors” as respondents answer the questions. The “look fors” were designed for use by focus group facilitators and should not be widely distributed. In general, the *SSIRG Guiding Questions* and “look fors” should be considered confidential until after administration to all focus groups.

The guiding questions are aligned to the SSIRG Rubrics (C-30-39) ...and provide further analysis of district perceptions.<sup>33</sup>

There are 24 pages (C-30 through C-53) missing from the SSIRG. An insert is placed between pages C-29 and C-54 of the SSIRG, stating that, “The measurement instruments (rubrics and guiding questions)...are available to the district superintendent through [Washington Association of School Administrators] or the OSPI Office of School Improvement.”<sup>34</sup> These rubrics and guided questions are not available to the public.

**Considering the SSIRG has been developed by the leaders of education reform, could the removal of questions and rubrics further reinforce this author’s assertions of a connection between OSPI and a totalist milieu control?**

The goal of the totalist milieu is to change beliefs and values (policies and practices), so it is reasonable to believe that the hidden questions and rubrics are an intentional act with the purpose to manipulate educators (teachers, principals and local administrators). This allows the thought reform engineers to observe the current policies and practices. Those not conforming to the totalist ideology

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<sup>31</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, “2005-07 Budget Request,” (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, available from <http://www.k12.wa.us>, accessed on 21 September 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, School System Improvement Resource Guide, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2004), C-27.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., insert.

are targeted by those controlling the thought reform milieu and required to change.

Once a school or district is targeted for school improvement, the Milieu Control becomes not only the WASL but a more defined assessment of school climate that identifies the specific needs of the “failing” school or district. The first stage of the school improvement process is “Assess Readiness to Benefit,” which aligns with Lifton’s “Milieu Control.” In stage one, the school targeted for school improvement reviews the process and assesses general readiness for change.<sup>35</sup> The outcome of stage one is a plan that will be used to monitor and control the process of each stage thereafter. When a school is identified for school improvement, manipulation is also brought to a school and district level through the portfolio process. This second stage of school improvement, “Collect, Sort and Select Data,” is the same as Lifton’s “Mystical Manipulation.” The three steps of stage two align with the system’s theory discussed by Galanter: Collect (Input), Sort (Process) and Select Data (Output). The “Assess Readiness” plan identifies data to collect and the procedure for its data collection.

The table below aligns Lifton’s Themes with OSPI’s Stages, and is explained in the following sections, beginning with the “Demand for Purity.”

<b>Lifton’s Eight Psychological Themes of Thought Reform</b>	<b>OSPI’s Eight Stages of School Improvement Planning</b>
1. Milieu Control	1. Assess Readiness to Benefit
2. Mystical Manipulation	2. Collect, Sort, and Select Data
3. The Demand for Purity	3. Build & Analyze the School Portfolio
4. The Cult of Confession	4. Set and Prioritize Goals
5. Sacred Science	5. Research and Select Effective Practices
6. Loading of the Language	6. Craft Action Plan
7. Doctrine Over Person	7. Monitor Implementation of the Plan
8. Dispensing of Existence	8. Evaluate Impact on Student Achievement

Figure 3

### The Demand for Purity

The third stage of the school improvement process, “Build and Analyze the School Portfolio” aligns with Lifton’s “The Demand for Purity.” In stage three, the school improvement team puts together a statement of strengths and challenges (weaknesses) in a required narrative form; this is similar to defining what is “good” and “bad,” or “pure” and “impure.” The data that was selected in stage

<sup>35</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, School System Improvement Resource Guide, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2004), A-2

two is used in stage three to determine strengths (good) and weaknesses (bad), which will define priorities and goals of the school improvement plan.

According to Lifton, the “Demand for Purity” is the stage that begins the purification process—finding out who is “good” and “bad,” and shaming those who have not conformed. He adds, “...[within] the thought reform milieu...the experiential world is sharply divided into the pure and the impure, into the absolutely good and the absolutely evil...All ‘taints’ and ‘poisons’ which contribute to the existing state of impurity must be searched out and eliminated.”<sup>36</sup> The process of finding the “good” and “bad” can be controlled by the monitoring/feedback.

The WASL scores are used by OSPI to shame communities and institutions as well as individuals. WASL results expose “passing” and “failing” school districts and buildings (communities), district administrators, principals, teachers, support staff and students. A clear division between the “good” and the “bad” is recognized, which creates a “guilty milieu” and a “shaming milieu.”<sup>37</sup> Students become distressed over failing an assessment believed to be an evaluation of their academic skills; they label themselves failures, which results in shame and leads to depression. Educators are shamed and humiliated within their profession and, in turn, viewed as incompetent by the press, the government and the general public.

Lifton goes on to explain the psychological effects of the demand for purity in the following way:

Since each [person’s] impurities are deemed sinful and potentially harmful to himself and to others, he is, so to speak, expected to expect punishment—which results in a relationship of guilt with his environment...People vary greatly in their susceptibilities to guilt and shame, depending upon patterns developed early in life. But since guilt and shame are basic to human existence, this variation can be no more than a matter of degree. Each person is made vulnerable through his profound inner sensitivities to his own limitations and to his unfulfilled potential; in other words each one is made vulnerable through his existential guilt.<sup>38</sup>

Lifton’s explanation of the psychological effects associated with the demand for purity can be seen as a result of the abuse and neglect being propagated throughout Washington’s education system.

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<sup>36</sup> Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 420.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 424.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 424.

Students with disabilities are ostracized and their needs ignored. In a recent published newspaper article, it was reported that the state of Washington has an “annual shortfall for special education funding total[ing] nearly \$102 million.”<sup>39</sup> Students are subjected to emotional abuse because of failing the WASL. Minority students are being oppressed and humiliated, as a result of disproportionately low results. Aside from the psychological effects of being labeled a failure, students are punished further when policies and practices are changed in order to extend instructional time.

Many elementary schools have cancelled morning and afternoon recess to add more instructional time; students who struggle on WASL-like practice tests in middle school are denied PE and Health so that more “WASL standard” instructional time can be added to their daily schedules; students who fail the WASL or appear to be struggling on the WASL-like classroom-based assessments are directed into after-school tutoring, which denies them the time for sports or other after school activities. Students in fourth, seventh and tenth grade are drilled for months on WASL-like material, denying them days of instruction in foundational skills and interesting class content.

Lifton’s next psychological theme of a thought reform milieu is the “Cult of Confession,” and the next stage of the school improvement process is “Set and Prioritize Improvement Goals.” Lifton makes note that theme three, “Demand for Purity,” and theme four, “Cult of Confession” are similar and concurrent. The SSIRG suggests that stage three be concurrent with stage four. Lifton explains that a cult’s obsession with personal confession is “closely related to the demand for absolute purity.”<sup>40</sup> Stage three of the school improvement process, “Build and Analyze the School Portfolio,” calls for the school improvement team to create a narrative that defines strengths and challenges. This is similar to the “Demand for Purity” because the school team members are required to discuss their weaknesses and strengths. This recognition of weaknesses then leads to a confession of current practices and policies that do not align with the thought reform milieu.

### **The Cult of Confession**

The “Cult of Confession” is a continuation of the purification process. Rather than concentrating on the pure and impure, it is now time to individualize the impurities, and confess to individual sins or behaviors that are not supportive of the milieu. Lifton explains, “...this is done within a confession process that has its own structure. Sessions in which one confesses to one’s sins are accompanied by patterns of criticism and self-criticism, generally transpiring

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<sup>39</sup> Martha Modeen, “Rooms of reams to head to state,” (Tacoma, WA: The News Tribune, 2005).

<sup>40</sup> Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 425.

within small groups and with an active and dynamic thrust toward personal change.”<sup>41</sup>

Individual and small group self-assessment strategies, which are a key element of the school improvement process, are also taking place throughout the educational system as a whole. The educational system as a whole is manipulated into believing that the traditional structure of the public school system is not preparing students for the “unknown” requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The OSPI continually propagates its “21<sup>st</sup> century” jargon to ignite a sense of panic and self doubt, with no real proof to support its assertions. The net effect is that legislators, business leaders, educators, parents and other community members have been cooped into believing that “higher-order thinking” skills is the 21<sup>st</sup> century requirement and that the future of a sustainable society is dependent on students of all ages mastering “higher-order thinking.”

The leaders of education reform imply that those who embrace, teach and achieve “superior thinking skills” are those who are “pure” and worthy of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Conversely, those who fail to embrace, teach and achieve “superior thinking skills” are “impure” and unworthy. This manipulation creates an atmosphere of tension, which sets up the leaders of the milieu as the judge and jury of “right” and “wrong,” “pure” and “impure” or “good” and “evil.” The leaders of the thought reform milieu are “...then able to use these universal tendencies toward guilt and shame as emotional levers for their controlling and manipulative influences.”<sup>42</sup>

The “Cult of Confession” and stage four of the school improvement process demand admission of actions not committed, such as parents believing they have not provided adequate assistance for their children to achieve academic success. Parents feel shame and guilt, causing them to accept the milieu ideology. The propaganda put forth by OSPI has caused a trust in policies and practices that parents would ordinarily reject. Educators are required to assess themselves and confess to shortcomings in their professional practices. Again, absent OSPI propaganda, these would not be considered shortcomings.

The OSPI has designed Professional Growth Tools for teachers to assess themselves based on the behaviors of their students and their students’ parents, using guided questions and rubrics also developed by OSPI. Some of the OSPI designated “below standard behaviors” are as follows and pertain to all content areas, all ages, and all abilities:

- Students believe there are right and wrong answers to questions and work to determine what those are.

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<sup>41</sup> Robert J. Lifton, The Future of Immortality and Other Essays for a Nuclear Age, (New York: Basic Books, Inc, Publishers, 1987), 214.

<sup>42</sup> Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 424.

- Students participate in the planned learning activities because they are asked to do so.
- Students' source of information about their learning is primarily teacher feedback.
- Students rely on their teachers to track and record their progress.
- Students have limited knowledge of how to monitor the effectiveness of their learning strategies.
- Students bring home newsletters, test results, grades, and invitation to parent conferences.
- Student's work is primarily assessed by the teacher.<sup>43</sup>

What OSPI now labels “below standard behaviors” are student outcomes which, pre-education reform, were acceptable and widely embraced as commonsense by both parents and teachers. In spite of this, the leaders of the thought reform milieu find these student outcomes and professional practices associated with them “below standard” and demand change in order to uphold their “21<sup>st</sup> century” policies and practices and to further their “higher purpose.” By attacking long-accepted professional practices and student outcomes, this reform effort has created feelings of ambivalence, disbelief and dissatisfaction on the part of educators, causing them to deny their own convictions and submit to those in control or leave the profession.

The following items demonstrate the clear parallels between Lifton's “Cult of Confession” and OSPI's self-evaluation for educators.

In stage four of the school improvement process, team members identify and prioritize their challenges (weaknesses) “...by how severe, how crucial and how responsive they are, and whether they are within the power of the district to change.”<sup>44</sup> According to Lifton, it is at this point that “...this totalist confession takes on a number of special meanings. It is first a vehicle for the kind of personal purification...a means of maintaining a perpetual inner emptying or psychological purge of impurity...[s]econd, it is an act of self-surrender, the expression of the merging of individual and environment...[t]hird, it is a means of maintaining an ethos of total exposure—a policy of making public.”<sup>45</sup> These psychological effects are seen in the school improvement process, as team members and school staff feel a sense of relief now that there is a public recognition of their failures and a conscience acknowledgement and group ownership of the challenges. As Lifton points out, this feeling is temporary because when goals are not achieved or “purification” is not accomplished, each individual will become “...concerned with the effectiveness of his [or her]

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<sup>43</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Professional Development Growth Tool, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, available online at <http://www.k12.wa.us/> accessed on 27 February 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, School System Improvement Resource Guide, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2004), D-19.

<sup>45</sup> Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, (Chapel Hill, NC: the University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 425-6.

personal performance...In this sense, the cult of confession has effects quite the reverse of its ideal of total exposure: rather than eliminating personal secrets, it increases them and intensifies them.”<sup>46</sup> Staff members soon begin to pocket themselves in small groups, fearing criticism from superiors and others. Students are shamed into lying about their failure, hiding the truth because they are humiliated. Regardless, writes Lifton, the milieu commands perfection, a “pursuit of which...supersede[s] all considerations of decency or of immediate human welfare.”<sup>47</sup> This is because the “Sacred Science,” the doctrine defining the “higher purpose” of the thought reform milieu, has achieved a level of such importance that it is now considered the universal law of morality.

### **Sacred Science**

Stage five of the school improvement process, “Research and Select Effective Practices,” aligns with Lifton’s fifth psychological theme, “Sacred Science.” “Sacred Science” is the backbone of the thought reform milieu; it is the dogma (conditions) that characterize the leaders’ “higher purpose.” Lifton identifies the sacred science as “...the totalist milieu maintain[ing] an aura of sacredness around its basic dogma, holding it out as an ultimate moral vision for the ordering of human existence.”<sup>48</sup> The laws of man as established by government are inferior to the laws of morality defined in the dogma of the thought reform milieu. Hence, according to Lifton, allowing the totalist milieu to “...create a mystical aura around the manipulating institutions—the Party, the Government, the Organization...[therefore] any thought or action which questions the higher purpose is considered to be stimulated by a lower purpose, to be backward, selfish, and petty in the face of the great, overriding mission.”<sup>49</sup> This zealous attitude of one’s mission places the targeted individuals in grave danger, and in the case of Washington State’s education reform, the individuals are our children.

The Washington State reform efforts are driven by the “Sacred Science” of the totalist milieu. In studying the works of Bergeson, McCune, Carkhuff and Griffin one can trace the connections between Washington reform dogmas to the Theosophical teachings of Annie Besant. By reading a report entitled “Theosophy and Its Effects on Washington State Educational Reform” one will be provided the evidence and background research supporting these connections.<sup>50</sup> The basic principles of Theosophy teach that the ability to higher-order think is the process necessary to achieve a more evolved state of consciousness, which defines existence.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 426.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 422.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 422.

<sup>50</sup> Nancy Vernon, “Theosophy and Its Effects on Washington State Education Reform,” (available from <http://www.thefactsaboutwaedreform.org>, 2005).

**Could it be that the leaders of Washington’s education reform have allowed their own belief in Theosophy to influence their work for the State of Washington? Could it also be that the creators of the WASL are using this test as a tool to advance their Theosophical beliefs?**

Students are extensively and intensively trained to think subjectively, and then continually assessed on how well they are able to express this thinking in writing. It is the strong belief of this author that OSPI is operating under the influence of Theosophical teachings, as evidenced in the use of WASL as an assessment of the level of thinking a student has mastered rather than a measurement to test foundational academic skills. This new science of assessing a student’s higher-order thinking by evaluating their WASL responses was developed by Carkhuff and can be studied in more depth by reading his book *The New Science of Possibilities*.

Note: In his book, *The Genocidal Mentality*, Lifton discusses the advancement of a religious movement that associates itself to science and looks “...to find in science and technology not just objects of worship but an immortalizing principle to replace the threatened and waning religious sources of eternal life.”<sup>51</sup> McCune stated in Carkhuff’s book *The New Science of Possibilities Volume II* that “science is a spiritual quest.”<sup>52</sup> The communal educational belief system of Bergeson, McCune, Griffin and Carkhuff, which has been transferred into the Washington Education System through their professional involvement, is further documented in McCune’s book *The Light Shall Set You Free*<sup>53</sup> and Bergeson’s doctoral dissertation.<sup>54</sup>

The use of the WASL as the Milieu Control has two purposes; it monitors the progress of the thought reform milieu and ensures that the transformation of curriculum and instructional practices is in alignment with the ideology of the thought reform engineers, Bergeson, McCune, Griffin and Carkhuff. It is important for the reader to clearly understand that this second purpose is carried out through the school improvement process.

The fifth stage of the school improvement process requires the team to “[d]iscuss [the] process for investigating best practices related to the goals...Engage team leadership in studying and selecting effective practices.”<sup>55</sup> The OSPI provides an appendix listing best practice research-based resources. The team is encouraged to “...track down the research and bring it back to the leadership team to reflect upon...This takes less time commitment on behalf of leadership team members but makes ‘buy-in’ more difficult.”<sup>56</sup> The guide warns

<sup>51</sup> Robert J. Lifton and Eric Markusen, *The Genocidal Mentality*, (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 78.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Carkhuff and Bernard Berenson, *The New Science of Possibilities Volume II*, (Amherst, MA: Possibilities Publishing, 2000), xvii.

<sup>53</sup> Shirley McCune and Norma Milanovich, *The Light Shall Set you Free*, (Albuquerque, NM: Athena Publishing, 1996).

<sup>54</sup> Teresa Bergeson, *A Comparison of Two Methods of Improving Math Attitudes In Intermediate Teachers and Counselors*, Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 1982).

<sup>55</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, *School System Improvement Resource Guide*, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2004), D-28.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

that "...if your district is tackling persistently low gains, this strategy may not be the best way to build support for change."<sup>57</sup> This caution implies that the "research-based" material should be presented in a particular way that limits its full exposure and impact. **Is the suggested restriction called for in order to control and manipulate educators who are knowledgeable in appropriate curriculum and instructional methods?**

The best practices being adopted by schools statewide are in alignment with the WASL standards. In order to demonstrate this in its full scope a separate discussion on that topic alone is necessary. However, it can be shown in the previously discussed publication *Middle Level Strategies for School Improvement* that the mathematics curriculum adoptions have dramatically changed, going from a direct fundamental approach to an indirect and less effective, obscure approach.<sup>58</sup> This change in mathematics instruction aligns with WASL standards.

In general, it is safe to make a broad statement that the curriculum has predominately been transformed to teach higher-order thinking. The skills being taught concentrate on experiential and observational learning. This is in line with the Theosophist's belief system that all learning must be experiential. Foundational skills in math, spelling, writing and grammar are limited. Memorization of mathematical facts is discouraged and the teaching of algorithms in elementary and middle school years has been nearly abandoned. Science is based on scenario investigations with little presentation of factual knowledge. The subject of History is changing to become more limited to teaching of races, cultures and religions, rather than historical people and events. Middle and high school literature is spiritually inclined. Ancient myths teaching Karma and Reincarnation are introduced in the seventh grade. Student assignments involve writing hymns, sermons, letters to God, etc... Death is the predominate theme throughout literature. Theosophy teaches that society must be integrated and diverse in order to become interdependent, and the basic understanding of Reincarnation and Karma is required.

The OSPI is the governmental agency responsible for enforcing the laws that govern our public schools. These laws include ensuring that students receive a free and appropriate public education free from religious influences and manipulations. In trusting the education of their children to Washington State's public school system, parents expect their children to be protected from exposure to religious teachings. **Has OSPI betrayed the trust of parents through the apparent thread of Theosophy that manifest itself in the WASL and its supporting EALRs and curriculum?**

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Middle Level Strategies for School Improvement*, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2001), 93-4.

All OSPI recommended instructional practices are in accordance with the teachings of Annie Besant. Theosophists believe learning facts are not necessary because all remembrance will be retrieved once a learner reaches higher-consciousness; therefore the core curriculum must be higher-order thinking. Those interested in furthering their understanding of Theosophical beliefs are encouraged to study the writings of Besant and others.

In order for OSPI to continue the manipulation process without giving away its true intentions, the engineers of the thought reform milieu must establish a basic language that is abstract and constrictive.

### **Loading the Language**

The school improvement process stage six, “Craft/Create Action Plans,” aligns with Lifton’s “Loading the Language” theme. According to Lifton, “Loading the Language” is the deification of words and images in order to create a totalist language. Even though the language “...may seem cliché-ridden [it] can have enormous appeal and psychological power in its very simplification.”<sup>59</sup> In the totalist milieu “...this language serves the purpose of constricting members’ thinking and shutting down critical thinking abilities...forc[ing] members to censor, edit, and slow down spontaneous bursts of criticism or oppositional ideas.”<sup>60</sup> The totalist milieu establishes its own vocabulary among its members; soon this vocabulary becomes “cult jargon.”<sup>61</sup> Lifton is quick to recognize that all cultures and organizational groups to some degree have this kind of language. However, he states that the “...loading is much more extreme in ideological totalism...the jargon expresses the claimed certitudes of the sacred science.”<sup>62</sup> A continued expression of the same pattern of words soon becomes accepted as the norm, without a real understanding of the true meaning; only the engineers of the thought reform milieu are privileged with the true meaning of the “Loaded Language.”

Washington State’s educational system has its own language and vocabulary. The true meaning of these terms can, again, be readily understood after reviewing books and documents authored by Bergeson, McCune, Griffin, Carkhuff and Besant. Some examples are listed in the table below.

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<sup>59</sup> Robert J. Lifton, The Future of Immortality and Other Essays for Nuclear Age, (New York: Basic Book Inc., Publishers, 1987), 215.

<sup>60</sup> Margaret T. Singer, Cults in Our Midst, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 70.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 430.

Totalist Milieu (OSPI) Language	Literal Meaning
1. 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Requirements	1. Superior Intelligence
2. Higher-Order Thinking	2. Higher Consciousness
3. Education Reform	3. Thought Reform
4. Freedom	4. Evolved
5. Explore, Understand, Act	5. Karmic Rope
6. Learning Process	6. Purification Process
7. Human Processing System	7. Nervous System
8. Unity	8. Universal Oneness
9. Interdependent	9. Divine
10. Physical, Emotional, Intellect	10. Seven Bodies of Human Evolution
11. WASL	11. Assessment of the Human Soul

Figure 4

The WASL commands its own language and vocabulary. Some of the educational practices being adopted as outlined in the *Middle Level Strategies for School Improvement* publication was previously noted on page three of this paper. One of those instructional practices advised that students are taught the language and vocabulary of the WASL in each content area. **Is the fact that this state mandated test is designed with its own language and vocabulary further proof that the WASL itself is the Milieu Control?**

The “Loaded Language” of the school improvement “Action Plans,” epitomizes Lifton’s thought that this stage is when the “...most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed.”<sup>63</sup> This can be shown by reviewing school improvement plans that have been submitted to OSPI. Below are some examples of these phrases:

Willard Elementary

- All teachers K-6 will use the Apprentice Model of Teaching and Learning.
- Multi-age and looping will provide for personalized learning.
- Parent involvement activities will focus on how to support student use of the strategies.
- Extended day activities will be designed to support Willard’s common focus.<sup>64</sup>

Grant Elementary

- Improve student learning in writing.
- Improve student reading achievement.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 429.

<sup>64</sup> Willard Elementary School, “School Plan,” (Spokane, WA: Willard Elementary, 2003-2003, available from <http://www.spokaneschools.org>, accessed on 9 March 2005.)

- Increase student achievement in math.
- Improve student technology achievement.
- Develop a learning environment that establishes relationships and values diversity.<sup>65</sup>

The goals presented are broad, limited in explanation, and most likely will not produce the level of achievement required by the totalist milieu. The school improvement/action plan, which has adopted the accepted language of the milieu, now becomes the “Doctrine” to which the school submits itself.

### **Doctrine over Person**

The school improvement process stage seven, “Monitor Implementation of the Plan,” aligns with Lifton’s “Doctrine over Person.” The doctrine established by the totalist milieu requires the disassociation with one’s own attitudes, beliefs and values. The doctrine of the milieu is now what one is expected to experience. Lifton writes that the “...experience of contradiction, or the admission of that experience, can be immediately associated with guilt; or else (in order to hold one to the doctrine) condemned by others in a way that leads quickly to that guilty association.”<sup>66</sup> Failure to follow through with the requirements or to adopt the practices associated with the doctrine leads to conflicts, and those who are unable to conform to the doctrine are dismissed, pushed out or, if they remain are ostracized.<sup>67</sup>

In this stage of the school improvement process, the team is required to plan meetings that will monitor the implementation of the plan. The SSIRG directs the leadership team to plan meetings with the goal to “ensure activities and tasks in the plan are moving forward on specified timelines.”<sup>68</sup> It is also noted that part of the monitoring and implementation is to “make a plan for acknowledging and celebrating successes in progress toward goals.”<sup>69</sup> Some of the reinforcements suggested are as follows:

- Newsletter articles honoring school and district efforts.
- District recognition through district liaison and superintendent visits (with treats).
- Displaying information for community to see.
- Lapel buttons that say “We’re getting there.”
- Bulletin board with individual acknowledgment for student work and highlighting school/district collaborations.

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<sup>65</sup> Grant Elementary, “Student Learning Improvement Plan,” (Spokane, WA: Grant Elementary, available from <http://www.spokaneschools.org>, accessed on 9 March 2005.)

<sup>66</sup> Robert J. Lifton, *The Future of Immortality*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 215.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, *School System Improvement Resource Guide*, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2004), E-1.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

- Board presentations.<sup>70</sup>

These reinforcements serve to publicly expose failing students, teachers and schools. The success of the school improvement plan is predicted on ongoing WASL scores. If the school continues to fail, fault is attributed to individuals, not the plan itself. The plan, which is in alignment with the WASL standards, has become the doctrine.

In this WASL driven milieu, if a student fails the test, the student is forced to work harder. If the majority of the classroom fails, the blame is placed on the teacher who is forced to undergo additional training and attend workshops and conferences to learn new innovative methods that will ensure instructional alignment with WASL. If the school fails as a whole, the staff and administration are forced to assess their current policies and practices and develop a school improvement plan. If the District fails as a whole, it is forced to undergo the process of curriculum and instructional review, to determine whether there is a need to adopt more WASL-like curriculum and instructional methods.

If the majority of the students statewide are failing, the controllers of the milieu contend that this statewide failure is due to a lack of sufficient financial support and pressure is exerted on the legislature to appropriate additional funding to the statewide education budget. The controllers of the milieu also blame NCLB requirements for increasing the demand for improved test scores for all students, including students with disabilities. Never is failure attributed to the doctrine—the WASL and its supporting EALRs, curriculum and instructional practices.

The impact of “Doctrine over Person” leads to the categorization of students, i.e. those who “pass” and those who “fail,” or the “pure” and “impure.” The WASL itself is designed to divide students and create a caste system. The thought reform milieu has adopted its own caste system based on Robert Carkhuff’s Human Capital Development. Carkhuff defines the levels of functioning as Leader, Contributor, Participant, Observer, and Detractor.<sup>71</sup> This allows for the thought reform milieu to implement the final psychological theme, “Dispensing of Existence.”

### **Dispensing of Existence**

The final stage in the school improvement process, and perhaps the most disturbing, “Evaluate Plan’s Impact on Student Achievement,” aligns with Lifton’s “Dispensing of Existence.” In this final stage, those who fail to “see the light” and embrace the truth—truth being the dogma of the milieu, are regulated to a status of nonexistence. These people become what Lifton calls “non-people.” Lifton suggests that the leaders of the thought reform milieu believe their doctrine is the “...absolute or totalist vision of the truth...those who have not seen the light—

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Carkhuff, Human Possibilities, (Amherst, MA: Possibilities Publishing, 2000), 36.

have not embraced that truth, are in the shadows—are bound up with evil, tainted, and do not have a right to exist.”<sup>72</sup> In some cases this extremist attitude leads to atrocities that are all too familiar. When individuals who believe they are judge and jury over man’s existence or worth come into power and implement their “Sacred Science,” the outcome is ultimately destructive.

The first goal of stage eight of the school improvement process is to “determine if goals and activities have increased academic achievement.”<sup>73</sup> Based on the WASL results, the SSIRG encourages team members to “celebrate and recognize efforts: have a party, publicize results [and] recognize heroes (the administrators, the teachers, the kids, the parents).”<sup>74</sup> The very absence of recognition of students, teachers and administrators who fail reduces them to a status of nonexistence.

**By endorsing Carkhuff’s teachings, is OSPI sanctioning his descriptions of certain individuals as “laggards or attenuators [who]...can be described as: physically sick and under-resourced; emotionally unmotivated, even by the incentive system; interpersonally unrelated, even to their families [they have]...unhealthy personalities...cannot think [and have]...no soul?”<sup>75</sup>**

## Conclusion

After extensive research this author has reached the following conclusions.

- The milieu of Washington State’s K-12 education system is being controlled by a single test—the WASL.
- The engineers of education reform have established a manipulative system in order to control educators, parents and students.
- It is not the goal of the leaders of education reform to improve the academic skills of all students. Promoting higher order thinking as the new basic skills, OSPI is promoting an atmosphere that condemns traditional and widely accepted educational policies and practices, and those who embrace them, as impure.
- A shaming process is being utilized by OSPI to force students and teachers to conform and submit to WASL standards and OSPI supported “best practices.”
- The school reform process is based on the work and writings of Bergeson, McCune, Griffin and Carkhuff, can be linked to the Theosophical teachings of Annie Besant and is best labeled “Sacred Science.”

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<sup>72</sup> Robert J. Lifton, *The Future of Immortality*, (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 216.

<sup>73</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, *School System Improvement Resource Guide*, (Olympia, WA: State of Washington, 2004), E-7.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, E-8

<sup>75</sup> Robert Carkhuff and Bernard Berenson, *The New Science of Possibilities Volume I*, (Amherst, MA: Possibilities Publishing, 2000), 165-6.

- The engineers of education reform have created an educational nomenclature in order to deceive educators, parents, students and the general public.
- The OSPI has established a system that is defining students as human capital, to be segregated and labeled by worth. Included in OSPI supported training materials are such labels as “laggards,” “attenuators” and “detractors.”
- Educators are shamed and humiliated within their profession and, in turn, viewed as incompetent by the press, the government and the general public. This vicious cycle is destroying the spirit of learning and the hearts and minds of children and their dedicated teachers.

Finally, the reader is reminded, by Lifton, that ideological totalism is violent to the human potential, evoking “...destructive emotions...intellectual and psychological constrictions, and deprive[ing] men of all that is most subtle and imaginative—under the false promise of eliminating those very imperfections and ambivalences which help to define the human condition.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Robert J. Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 436.