

# *UNITY PROJECT*

Unifying Neighborhoods to Inspire and Teach Youth

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Higher Education, Certification, and Community Outreach  
Dr. Andrew H. Griffin, Assistant Superintendent

September 2001

# *VISION*

The purpose of the Unity Project is to assist the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to design and implement strategies that unite families, schools, and at-large communities into a high performance system that guarantees success for all students, particularly historically underachieving students.

# *MISSION*

Unifying  
Neighborhoods  
to  
Inspire  
and  
Teach  
Youth

# *GOALS*

- 90 percent of the 1999 Kindergartners will read at grade level by third grade
- All students will have an Academic Improvement Plan that is developed by students and families and supported by teachers

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Unity Schools**

Schools selected to participate in the demonstration project to meet the following criteria:

- Historically low reading scores on state wide tests
- high percentage of free and reduce lunches
- high percentage of ethnic groups
- willing principal
- willing to involve community to increase student achievement
- signed Memorandum of Understanding

### **Possibilities Sites (Possibilities Schools are now called Possibilities Sites)**

Schools selected to participate in the project that meet the following criteria:

- Unity schools selected to be pilot sites to receive focused attention on reading
- Signed memorandum of agreement with World Vision, PTA, IHE, Title II and other state wide organization
- Neighborhood Interaction Teams developed to implement strategies to focus on Community Involvement
- professional development for staff and community to work together
- specific roles and responsibilities for students, parents, community leaders and school staff
- community conducts at least 2 special activities per calendar year to demonstrate support improvement of reading
- signed Memorandum of Understanding with appropriate groups (Red Rock, West Hills, Meadows, Mark Twain, Edison, Concord, Tulalip)

### **Mirror Schools**

Schools selected to participate in the project that meet the following criteria:

- similar demographics
- agree to share information with demonstration schools
- consistent high reading scores for historically underachieving students on state wide tests (level 3 or above)
- willing to participate in evaluation
- promising practices for improving reading scores
- provided opportunity to participate in Unity schools activities when resources are available
- can participate in Unity activities if they underwrite own cost

### **Associate Schools**

Schools selected to participate in the project that meet the following criteria:

- similar demographics
- similar history in low reading scores on state wide test
- requested to participate in the program
- provided opportunity to participate in Unity school activities when resources are available
- participate in Unity activities if they underwrite own cost
- provided effective practices and information

## **Overview**

In Washington, as in other states, a disproportionate number of economically disadvantaged and minority students continue to perform poorly on essential indicators of success. This is also reflected in the under representation of the number of students selected to participate in talented and gifted programs and accelerated/advanced placement courses. Historically the disproportionate numbers are reflected on criterion and norm reference tests; placement in special education classes; high suspension rates; high retention rates; high expulsion rates; high drop out rates; high crime rates, etc.

It has been reported that eighty seven (87%) of student time is spent in the home and at large community. The level of family and community involvement is also a strong indicator of student success or failure. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of economically disadvantaged and minority students live in families and communities that are not actively involved in the educational lives of their children, at the level that makes a difference.

It is to this end the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction brought together four ethnic think tanks (African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic and Native American) and educators working in low socioeconomic communities. The groups were to develop strategies to improve the interaction with and among the family, community, and schools to help their students become productive and successful citizens in the 21st century. Unity Project is a project stemming from the above Ethnic Think Tanks.

## **Goals**

**Among the objectives of the Unity Project are:**

- **Prevention:** 90 percent of the 1999 Kindergartners will read at grade level by third grade.
- **Intervention:** All students will have an Academic Improvement Plan that is developed by students and families and supported by teachers.

## **Research**

The state of Washington citizens continue to rank public education as one of the most important items of concern or interest. However, many families and communities do not actively support public education as indicated by the number of repeated levy failures particularly in the communities that have economically disadvantaged and minority students. Families and communities that repeatedly fail levies do not see themselves connected to the school system or experience the schools as failing in its purpose or mission. In essence there is no family or community pride in the school.

There are several state and federal programs administered by OSPI that have heavy emphasis on family and community involvement. It is not the intention of Unity Project to usurp or undermine these programs. Unity Project is designed to bring together the existing human and financial resources within OSPI to demonstrate the principles of a high performance system.

## ***Research Continued***

Unity Project draws heavily from the work of Carkhuff's - "Human Resource Development I and II" and related works; Schlecty's - "Inventing Better Schools;" Payne's - "Poverty;" Temple University - Community for Learning program, Department of Education; National Parent Teacher Association - "A Compact for Learning;" and Office of Educational Research and Improvement - Family Involvement in Children's Education.

## ***Strands***

Two major strands run through out the project. Strand A -Nothing can be counted as progress in a community until the families and community play a significant role in helping its children become well served, show healthy development and steady, sustained advances in school achievement. Strand B - Families and communities must be empowered to expand their capacity to develop and implement strategies that enable schools to produce highly capable, successful and productive students.

### ***Principles guiding the Unity Project are:***

- Top administration must support change
- Training and staff development is an essential investment
- Training, assistance, and funding should be actively sought from various sources
- Flexibility and diversity are key
- Change takes time
- There is no "one size fits all" approach for each partnership
- Communication is the foundation of effective partnerships
- Use multiple indicators to assess the effectiveness of the partnership.

### ***Strategies:***

**Unity Project will rely on reported successful strategies and guidelines, such as:**

- Overcoming time and resource constraints
- Providing information and training to the partners
- Restructuring schools to support the family and community needs
- Bridging school-family-community differences
- Tapping external supports for partnerships.

# ***Unity Project Current Phase I Demonstration Sites***

## ***African American***

### ***John Pope, OSPI Contact***

*Edison Elementary	Tacoma School District
Lake City Elementary	Clover Park School District
McCarver Elementary	Tacoma School District
*Meadows Elementary	North Thurston School District
Southgate Elementary	Clover Park School District
<b>*Thurgood Marshall Elementary</b>	<b>Seattle School District</b>
<b>Whittier Elementary</b>	<b>Pasco School District</b>

## ***Asian/Pacific Islander American***

### ***John Pope and Roger Barron, OSPI Contacts***

*Mark Twain Elementary	Federal Way School District
Roosevelt Elementary	Tacoma School District
Salmon Creek Elementary	Highline School District

## ***Hispanic***

### ***Roger Barron, OSPI Contact***

Adams Elementary	Wapato School District
<b>Camas Elementary</b>	<b>Wapato School District</b>
<b>*Concord Elementary</b>	<b>Seattle School District</b>
Garfield Elementary	Toppenish School District
Kirkwood Elementary	Toppenish School District
Lincoln Elementary	Toppenish School District
<b>*Red Rock Elementary</b>	<b>Royal School District</b>
Satus Elementary	Wapato School District

## ***American Indian/Alaska Native***

### ***Denny Hurtado, OSPI Contact***

Chief Leschi Elementary	Private School, Puyallup Area
<b>Harrah Elementary</b>	<b>Mt. Adams School District</b>
<b>Hood Canal Elementary</b>	<b>Hood Canal School District</b>
Neah Bay Elementary	Cape Flattery School District
<b>Nespelem Elementary</b>	<b>Nespelem School District</b>
<b>Taholah School</b>	<b>Taholah School District</b>
<b>*Tulalip Elementary</b>	<b>Marysville School District</b>

## ***Project Achievement***

### ***John Pope, OSPI Contact***

David Wolfie Elementary	North Kitsap School District
<b>Naval Avenue Elementary</b>	<b>Bremerton School District</b>
<b>*West Hills Elementary</b>	<b>Bremerton School District</b> September 2001

\* World Vision

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