

WSSDA Annual Conference 2009

## Valuing localism in educational leadership

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WSSDA Annual Conference 2009

## Local context



"In expecting systemic reform to proceed rationally, regardless of the particularities of local places, policy makers may have underestimated the power of local context."  
~ Kathy Budge

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## Underlying values

1. Every place, community and group of people have unique challenges and assets.
2. Respecting and appreciating the intrinsic and extrinsic value of a place could strengthen efforts in public education.

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### Session outcomes

1. Explore the rich array of benefits you, your district and your students bring to the process of public education.
2. Discover strategies to best use the strengths unique to your district.
3. Discuss ways to enhance student learning through memorable and meaningful experiences available within your district.
4. Consider specific challenges districts face in meeting the educational needs of today's students.

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### Outline

1. Globalism and globalization are real.
2. Local communities and schools are where we prepare children for reality.
3. The tension between centralized control and local efforts represents a delicate balance.
4. Locally is where we inspire ingenuity, acknowledge accomplishment, think critically and develop leadership.

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### Realities of globalism

- What are these realities and how do they affect public education?
- Why do these issues matter at a local (community/state/national) level?
- What is the correlation between global citizenship and local democracy?
- What is the role and responsibility of local public education for developing global citizenship?

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### "Think globally, act locally."

*"Think Globally, Act Locally" refers to the argument that global environmental problems can turn into action only by considering ecological, economic, and cultural differences of our local surroundings. This phrase was originated by Rene Dubos as an advisor to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972.*

*In 1979, Dubos suggested that ecological consciousness should begin at home ... In the 1980's, Dubos held to his thoughts on acting locally, and felt that issues involving the environment must be dealt with in their "unique physical, climatic, and cultural contexts." (Eblen & Eblen)*

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### Unique physical, climatic, and cultural contexts

- In the setting closest to the challenge lies the best opportunity for action.
- Localism is awareness of unique political (physical), economic (climatic), and cultural contexts.
- Localism is valuing the ideals, needs, resources, and strengths of a specific community.

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*The localism inherent to the democratic process has become usurped by a cadre of like-minded, well-rewarded, and self appointed representatives of the profession.*

*Perhaps this is to the benefit of the profession at large; however, it is not far-fetched to suggest that a critique of this movement should indeed be mounted—one that might suggest that these standards are simply a new narrative that has been developed and one that affects the democratic formulation of leadership in the profession.*

(continued ...)

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*Standards, then, can often be seen to have their origin in the drive to create school systems that produce effective workers who can compete ably in a global economy. Having productive workers is not a bad end in and of itself; however, when it drives out other valuable ends, it becomes much more problematic. And it does drive out other ends.*

*(Foster, W. (2004). The decline of the local: A challenge to educational leadership. Educational Administration Quarterly, 40(2).)*

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### Where children are prepared for global realities

- How do local communities develop a common understanding and agreement about global issues?
- What are the essential skills for addressing these global realities?
- Does the current global society require us to think differently about public education? If so, what are the implications?

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Castle Rock students lend a hand to fish habitat project  
October 21, 2009  
by Barbara LaBoe



Castle Rock High School students, right to left, A.J. Olson, Chris Johnson and A.J. Moore plant native trees and shrubs along Whittle Creek on Wednesday morning.  
Roger Werth / The Daily News

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## Your local place

1. What are the unique challenges and assets of your community and school district?
2. How are those challenges and assets different from others in the state and nation? How are they similar?
3. How can you and your district leverage your unique assets and challenges in order to offer the best possible education to the students in your district?

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## Where we inspire ingenuity, acknowledge accomplishment, think critically and develop leadership.

- Rigor, relevance, and relationships.
- Community sets and expects high standards and common goals.
- Local initiatives are relevant.
- Strong relationships develop social, ethical and leadership abilities.

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## Controlling tension

- How do the issues of accountability, local decision-making and taxation contribute to tension with local control?
- Is public education a local, state or national issue?
- Who should have the authority to determine the vision for the purpose and goals of public education at the local level?

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