

SUMMARY

Roundtable Proceedings

September 29 - October-1, 1985

UCROSS FOUNDATION

"Education in Wyoming"

With Grateful Acknowledgement

To Martha Thomas
for the many hours volunteered
to record, review and assimilate
these Roundtable proceedings

Table of Contents of Proceedings

ROUNDTABLE

on

EDUCATION IN WYOMING

September 29 - October 1, 1985

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Page</u>
"What are the assets/advantages of Wyoming which enhance the role of education in the State?"	1
"Specific needs/plans/goals which, with creative and co-operative leadership might enhance education's role in Wyoming."	3
Plan: Develop a state-wide telecommunications system for educational delivery, public information and entertainment in Wyoming.	10
Plan: Train prospective and contemporary instructors in the integration of critical thinking skills across the curriculum on a state-wide basis.	16
Plan: Develop a mechanism to provide the opportunity for Wyoming citizens to pursue a baccalaureate degree away from the University of Wyoming campus.	25
Plan: Develop a public/private consortium to address the problems affecting children, their families and the children's learning.	30
List of participants	35

WHAT ARE THE ASSETS/ADVANTAGES OF WYOMING WHICH ENHANCE THE ROLE OF
EDUCATION IN THE STATE?

Some of the assets within the state of Wyoming which enhance the role of
education are

- * the affordable educational opportunities provided through mineral
wealth tax-based contributions

- * a limited populace which complements
the teacher/pupil ratio in the classroom,
face to face solution of problems,
state-wide acquaintance among educators,
accessibility to leaders, and
involvement and a sense of ownership at the local level.

- * a classless society
who lends strong public support to education through energy
and spirit, citizen participation and as taxpayers, and
who, historically, has a respect for education.

- * a legislative framework which
provides freedom to develop programs,
has a record for responsiveness to state needs and potentials,
and
is accessible for communication.

an educational system

whose faculty core is composed of well-qualified, caring
people,

whose graduates are respected,

whose community college system contains a full liberal arts
program, vocational training and retraining programs, and
that has an attractive K - 12 pay scale.

a quality of life and environment

that provides accessibility to natural :sources for teaching
enrichment, and

whose young peoples' socio-economic problems are at a minimum,
comparatively speaking.

- the need to clarify
 - the public's expectations of educational standards in grades K through 12;
 - the accountability of retention and remediation and the value of a high school diploma.

- the need
 - to study demographic problems relating to
 - single parent families
 - "latch-key" children
 - teenage pregnancies
 - suicide, and
 - to determine whose responsibility it is to meet these needs and/or how these needs can be met.

- the need to review funding of the gifted/talented vs. the emotionally/physically handicapped in order to maintain a balance at either end of this educational spectrum.

- the need to develop a long-range financial base for education which contains alternative sources of funding other than the mineral-based support system.

- the need for remediation education for the student who is not working up to his potential.

- the need for professional teacher training and enrichment opportunities for teachers who are already "par excellence".
- the need for the development of social and cultural opportunities within the educational community.
- the need to redefine the purposes, practices and implementation processes of the Co-operation Education Services.
- the need for more collaboration between education and industrial groups and/or community resources.
- the need to project education as a life-long process which includes education below the Kindergarten year and above the college years.

One expressed concern which emerged from every group within the Educational Roundtable was:

the development of a comprehensive, logical, cost-effective method through the co-operation of the University, community colleges, and other appropriate state agencies
to deliver upper division courses at Community College sites and remote areas within the state and
to administer bachelor's degree programs at Community Colleges and other designated sites.

(A necessary consideration would be the use of qualified faculty to ensure continued quality programs.)

Other plans of action that were presented which can make a positive constructive difference in the effectiveness of education for Wyoming were:

the development of a state-wide telecommunication system as a means to deliver education, broadened high school programs and/or provide in-service to teachers,
to communicate with the public, and
to provide public radio and television.

the availability of professional development grants for teacher enrichment and renewal.

the establishment of a Regional Study Institute which would not only provide a variety of information about various studies, but also assess and evaluate needs in varied subjects from adult education to tourism.

a re-evaluation by the Community College Commission of the role of the Community Colleges

in higher education and adult education,
in delivery of services offered to each college's surrounding area,
in continual up-dating and availability of new technological and vocational classes, and
in supplying specific courses needed by laborers for employment in area industries.

(Perhaps a demographic study to determine the public's willingness to participate and finance these programs would be helpful.)

the establishment of a Touring Professional Performing Arts Troupe which would become self-perpetuating.

the provision from the private sector of a Seed Endowment Fund to establish endowed chairs in appropriate areas of Wyoming. One example is a chair for Geological Studies.

- the establishment of a public/private consortium, other than the public school system, to deal with social problems. This would require the utilization and co-operation of such organizations as the YMCA, the YWCA, churches, Girl Scouts, 4-H Clubs, Women's Clubs and, perhaps, funding from private industry.
- to development of a plan for assessing and addressing the developmental and educational needs of Wyoming's children under six years of age.
- the sponsorship of a study to determine alternate sources for educational financing, sponsored by the Ucross Foundation.
- the development of a K - 12 program for integrating critical thinking skills across the curriculum and implementing state-wide over the next five years.
- to development of an Economic Futures Leadership Program composed of selected secondary and higher education students, and for both entry-level and mid-career people.
The objective is
to provide a program of experiences aimed at developing creative leaders and
to enhance the economic diversity and future of the state in a way consistent with Wyoming's cultural and quality of life heritage.

- the definition of the mission of each education segment's role in vocational education. This would include elementary, junior high schools, high schools, and community colleges.
- the articulation among different educational segments to determine the role of each in the vocational education process. This would include all levels: elementary, junior and senior high schools, community colleges, and the University.
- the stressing of performance standards, not course requirements.

FOLLOWING ARE FOUR BLUEPRINTS FOR ACTION.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

GOAL: To provide a state-wide telecommunications system for educational delivery, public information and entertainment.

COMMENTS: A telecommunications system is a tool which might satisfy the mandate to provide education to the state. This system, as it is envisioned, would be more than the PBS stations to which Wyoming now has access.

Its broad band system which could overcome distances would permit it to be a vehicle

to provide cultural out-reach,

to establish public awareness of education,

to enrich preschool and K - 12 educational processes, and

to provide access to community college and University courses.

The system would be community-based and a part of the state and national network.

The leaders in this effort should be:

the Legislature,

the State Superintendent of Schools,

the Governor,

the University of Wyoming,

the community colleges, and

local school districts.

The supporting systems for this idea would be:

the Arts Council,
the Humanities Council,
the state libraries,
the community colleges,
the University of Wyoming, and
the local school districts.

Possible opponents would be:

the vested interests within the state who fear the
encroachment of the public into the private sector;
people who develop local curriculum and would consider this
an attempt at centralized control;
people who are attached, through culture and tradition, to PBS
stations already in existence;
people concerned about the cost, such as legislators, and
people who lack understanding or have misconceptions about the
idea.

Possibly, these groups would be involved with no predictable bias:

Boards of Co-operative Educational Services,
business and industry, who are often on-site educators,
foundations,
federal agencies and grant providers, and
county and town governments.

The first step is

to research the existing data and the cost and
to provide articulation for all groups involved through a
Governor's Conference on Telecommunications and
Education.

The time to begin the process is now, by doing the research to
build the data, followed by a feasibility study in the Spring.

The public awareness of this project should coincide with the
release of the SRI Report and the Roundtable results at the Casper
Conference on October 19th.

The timetable and events leading to the goal are:

- Three to eight months for the research, feasibility study, and —
planning;
- The Governor's Conference and public information meeting
during the Spring, 1986;
- Enabling legislation in January, 1987;
- Private, state and federal fundraising and implementation by
March, 1988; and
- Initial evaluation in the Centennial year, 1990.

The main supporters would be:

- the Legislature who would determine the project's success
through its endorsement and allocation of public funds.

Other enhancers of the process would be:

the people who influence the legislators such as

community leaders	Chambers of Commerce
Board of Co-operative Educational Services	Wyoming Association of Municipalities
State Board of Education	Wyoming Education Association
the University and community colleges and their respective boards	Law Enforcement
	Libraries
	Federal grant agencies
	the media

Main money resources would be through grant writing and legislative action.

Other money sources might be:

private donations,
corporations' support from business and industry,
public schools, and
community college boards.

Positive support of this program can be gained by providing accurate information through

community meetings,

the media, and

speaking directly to such groups as WAM, WEA, Chambers and Law Enforcement groups.

The process might be obstructed by several perceptions:

Wyoming doesn't need it: PBS is enough.

Wyoming doesn't want it: because citizens want a personalized

education and telecommunications might permit the

University to justify its use for that purpose.

- Wyoming. can't afford it: accurate and specific facts must be available concerning costs.
- Wyoming couldn't do it: there is not this expertise or interest within the state to create the system.
- Fear of bureaucracy and loss of local control.

These objections can be addressed constructively by:

- collecting and distributing correct information about the limitations of technology and costs.
- educating various groups, as to the possibilities of use.
- communicating to the public the broad scope of the benefits for different entities.

This project may have to be implemented by increments. The level of technology and capabilities would be determined by funding in proportion to costs.

After public discussion and collection of information, the Governor could appoint representatives from the three public educational entities (public school system, the community colleges and the University) plus representatives from the public sector as an advisory council.

Perhaps these words best express the importance of a telecommunications system:

"We, the constituents, have to convince the Legislature to let go of some of the money reserved for the future because this is the future, and the future is now!!!"

QUESTION: Where does PBS now originate for Wyoming?

With Central Wyoming College's *experience* in telecommunications, would that *be* a logical place to begin this project?

What about the "rainy day" account?

Is this program flexible enough to accommodate the concept of privatization?

COMMENT: The original plan was to have a state-wide telecommunications system.

Re-allocation of funds by the Legislature is not an easy thing to do.

Enabling legislation is not required but is desirable for lending creditability to the effort in the public's eyes.

CRITICAL THINKING

GOAL: To develop a plan to include the training of prospective and contemporary teachers in the integration of critical thinking skills across the curriculum on a state-wide basis and for its implementation to be completed within five years.

COMMENTS: What is critical thinking? How does it fit into the classroom? Several examples were used to demonstrate the integration of critical thinking into an existing topic of study.

These topics included:

- The relationship between the grievances stated in the Declaration of Independence and the ultimate political action of revolution.
- The definition of tradition, how traditions form a background for reasoning processes, which equip people with a set of assumptions by which they operate in the world and how traditions can be challenged sympathetically, as illustrated in Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn.
- The process of learning languages which includes learning a set of symbols, moving to another set of symbols, and finding an accurate set of symbols for replacement.
- The scientific theory of Galileo, which replaced Ptolemaic perception, and an understanding of why that happened.

COMMENTS: Are schools going to teach the process of reasoning deliberately and in a way that makes students conscious users of that skill?

The most important skill that a student can possess in this expanding world is the ability to know how to learn.

The purpose of this proposal is to benefit every classroom teacher in the state of Wyoming by providing the content of critical thinking in the context of actual "nuts and bolts" plans of how to integrate it into existing subject matter courses.

The leaders in this effort should be:

- the University of Wyoming, especially the Philosophy Department and the College of Education,
- community colleges,
- public schools,
- the State Department of Education,
- professional education organizations (WSBA, WASSP, WATE, WCSS), and
- the State Board of Education.

The project called Wyoming's Critical Thinking Project, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, has the endorsement of the Secondary Principals' Association.

Those who should be involved and logically support the effort are:

- teachers and their
- administrators,
- training institutions,
- parental groups,
- professional organizations, and
- the State Department of Education.

Those opposed to the effort might be:

- certain teachers, who are skeptical or who are concerned about
an already crowded curriculum, and
- parents concerned about providing their children with a means
of questioning their traditions or values.

Those involved in the ultimate solution would be:

- students, to whom it is directed,
- teachers, who will have to make it work, and
- administrators, who have to facilitate it.

Several steps have already been taken to begin the process:

- A workshop was conducted for administrators in June, 1985, at
the Ucross Foundation;
- A summer institute was conducted in Laramie for 20 teachers
who now provide a highly trained, highly motivated
resource core, and
- A textbook has been written which evolved from an in-service
manual.

This Fall, several in-service workshops have been conducted across the state, and mid-December should bring published lesson plans and evaluations from all participants.

The steps needed beyond the present time are:

- the introduction of training courses at the front end of the system;
- the College of Education could cross-list with the College of Arts and Sciences a course entitled "Critical Thinking in the Classroom" for teachers;
- the introduction of such a course at the community college level;
- the introduction of extension courses to provide a deeper, wider range of experience for teachers who have had a brief in-service sampling;
- the continuation of summer workshops which provide continued intensive training and a broadening of core people;
- the determination of the cost of such a program which would include a director, advertising materials, office space, travel funds along with a summer institute in each of two years.

To continue the process, these events should happen in the following sequence:

- Spring, 1985: state-wide extension courses in place
- Summer, 1986: a summer institute

- Fall semester, 1986:
 - courses at various training institutions
 - further in-service programs
- By Spring, 1987: the program should be expanded from the humanities, social studies and foreign languages to include the sciences
- Fall, 1987, to Spring, 1988: expand the program to include the elementary grades.

These processes must take place

- at the local school districts,
- in the training institutions, and
- through the State Department of Education for certification standards.

A summary of the steps leading to the goal is to:

- establish the details of an initial and realistic time frame;
- identify and contact target audiences;
- develop a detailed proposal to explain the rationale of the program;
- establish a steering committee which would ensure that the process involves Wyoming people at all levels;
- explore funding avenues;
- further communication with affected populations, and
- expand materials and services.

What or who can enhance the process?

District staffs developing the programs:

boards of education

administrators

voters.

A funding program:

grant funding

matching fund program between the local districts and

community college

State Department of Education

Legislature.

This is an opportunity for Wyoming to lead the nation in this project. Nowhere else in the states in anything like this in place.

To assure that persons, money, and resources are committed to the project, all affected parties must be convinced that the program is necessary and viable.

Other than what has already been mentioned, obstruction to the process could be the loss of momentum if the necessary steps are not taken to insure continued progress.

A patient, persistent show of success through documentation of results should convince those who would oppose the idea that it is a worthy program.

Realistically, the opportunity to participate can be made state-wide. Every teacher's approach to teaching will not be changed; however, if many or most are changed, that's a wonderful compromise.

QUESTIONS How do your colleagues in the School of Education respond to this?
and The faculty who teach the teachers?

COMMENTS:

The project is primarily a Wyoming project in terms of teachers in the field, planning and delivery.

One way to hurt the effectiveness of this program is to mandate another required course. The people sent out to teach don't know anything to teach because they have too many courses that are about methods and they don't have enough knowledge of the content they should be teaching.

How one imparts that knowledge is a skill that is important. It can be taught and can be learned, and the beauty of this proposal is that it provides the content in a professionally responsible way from a philosophic, inductive logic, and it provides the teaching in the context of the materials that are used in the classroom by teachers.

There seems to be a little slippage between those things because all of the examples suggest that what you are imbuing the teachers with is a technique. A question any teacher would have to answer

for himself is whether, in fact, he should abstract that process and teach that abstract process or whether he should, in fact, use inversion instead.

Are you providing a set of lesson plans? When you draw up the textbook, for whom is the textbook? Is it for the students? or for the teachers?

It is, in its present form, for the teachers, to provide examples they can adopt, reject, or take as guides.

So it contains model lesson plans that may be adaptable to different circumstances. Then, that is teaching technique. There is nothing wrong with that. In that case, then it ought to be focused on teacher training. From that standpoint, one doesn't need an "office of critical thinking" or a "director of critical thinking".

Someone needs to co-ordinate, the projects, if the state is to be covered.

If there's a value in covering the state. But what has been described is a set of possible, adaptable lesson plans that teachers ought to be more or less familiar with.

Those lesson plans serve to illustrate the logic that's being taught and the entry of that logic into the classes.

Now that goes back to deductive logic as taught by the Philosophy Department. That's an example of the slippage spoken of earlier.

Teachers have to have something to teach and a way to teach if they are going to teach critical thinking. It cannot be added as a new class in any school system. If it's to be-in the classroom, teachers must be taught what it is and how to integrate it into the classroom. Why isn't it already there in the method courses as they are taught?

OFF CAMPUS DEGREE

GOAL: To develop an imaginative mechanism which can provide the opportunities necessary for acquiring a baccalaureate degree in off-campus locations within the state under the sponsorship of the University of Wyoming in collaboration with the community colleges and appropriate local institutions.

Specific enrollment goals and timetables need to be established.

This goal includes the concept of a "circuit rider" approach in keeping with the best of a Western tradition.

This goal cannot become a reality without
the support, the consensus, and the enthusiastic endorsement
of
the University Board,
the Community College Board,
the Governor, and
the Legislature.

The participants in this effort should be:
the chief executive officers of the University and community
colleges, and
the Industry Association. Directors.

Opposition might arise from:

- some legislators,
- some community college and University faculty members who would be concerned about financing and protection of their own turf,
- some taxpayers groups and public school officials who fear financial loss of state dollars, and
- traditionalists who resist change.

The neutral participants might include:

- consultants, perhaps from the Education Commission of States, and
- accrediting agencies.

The first step in the process is to establish a Steering Committee selected by the policy makers (Boards of the Community Colleges and the University).

Much homework would need to be completed before the 1987 Legislative Session; therefore, the appointment of a Steering Committee by April 1, 1986, is suggested.

This process began, technically, at Ucross in September, 1985, but will more officially begin when the Trustees of the Boards or their representatives release this to the press.

A necessary preliminary step is the advocacy or lobbying process involving the Legislature. Members of this particular Roundtable group have committed themselves to communicate with people who would be interested in this concept.

Other steps in the process include:

- establishing a Steering Committee to develop a plan;
- endorsement of the plan by the Boards of the University and
Community Colleges;
- implementation of that plan, and
- evaluation and assessment of the goal.

The time frame would be:

- to complete the planning by the end of 1986 in time for the
1987 Legislative Session,
- to implement the plan by the Fall of 1987, and
- to evaluate and assess it by 1992.

(This last step demands a longer time period because the program caters to part-time students who, in any given community, would be taking only 15 - 25 credits per semester.)

Those who could enhance the process or provide necessary monies are:

- the Legislature,
- various local community resources, including those who serve
as personnel,
- county commissioners,

- industry and business,
- the respective Boards and Trustees, and
- the students.

To assure the positive presence of these entities, there is a need:

- to maintain a positive constructive commitment on the part of the "movers and shakers" at the academic institutions.
- to maintain a positive image through the media.
- to appeal to industries to encourage their employees to participate.
- to promote an atmosphere of equal partnership and shared responsibility between the University and the community colleges.
- to encourage support from private industries, foundations, and individuals.

Hindrances to the process might include:

- some legislators,
- mishandling by the media of information, and
- institutional "in-fighting".

To address these hindrances positively, the need is for:

- continued advocacy.
- open dialogue by the involved parties.
- keeping the ultimate goal in mind and its purpose.
- strong leadership and vision.

A possible compromise to this "circuit rider" approach would be short-term pilot programs. When beginning the planning process, one must keep in mind reasonable expectations. Any movement in this direction could be considered part of the success.

To "kick" this program off, this group is already drafting a letter to the appropriate people.

To the people who have read the SRI Report and who are interested in the economic well-being of the state and in strengthening and improving the quality of life, it would appear that there is no choice but to GO FOR THIS IDEA!

PUBLIC/PRIVATE CONSORTIUM

GOAL: To develop a public/private consortium to address the problems affecting children, their families and the children's learning.

COMMENT: This idea is based upon two assets of Wyoming. Small is Beautiful! There is less division of power in Wyoming than there would be in, say, New York. In other words, the specialty and professional groups in Wyoming have not institutionalized or polarized beyond the point of control.

This program addresses the accountability-side of such things as

- the effect of unemployment on the family,
- the domestic affairs,
- the child,
- teen-age pregnancies, and
- the "latch key" child.

This program is based upon the philosophy that it is not just the school's problem simply because the problem manifests itself within the school in the student's attitude. It is the whole community's problem.

If the school tries to address the problems, for instance through sex education, there are those groups of people who believe the school shouldn't be involved at all. Therefore, a dichotomy develops.

This group envisioned a Steering Committee composed of people from

- the educational community (K - 12),
the medical field, generally,
- courts and law enforcement system,
- social services, and
leadership from the business community.

Groups who would be involved are:

- All social service groups, such as

YMCA	YWCA
PTA	Scouts
Crisis centers	Churches
the courts, law enforcement probation officers	Service organizations such as Rotary and Kiwanis
Chambers of Commerce	Mental health organizations
League of American Voters	American Association of University Women
Medical field	elected officials
the Media	

Opposition might arise from:

- extremists on either side of a position
- the rugged individualist who wants no interference
- denominational problems
- parochialism
- "turfdom protectors."

A way to disperse the opposition is to involve them in the process.

Neutral participants would be:

- counselors
- the business community

- the medical profession
- some elected officials
- students.

The steps to be taken and the time frame for reaching the goal would be:

- October 19, 1985
to ask the Ucross Foundation, as a neutral participant, to be involved in the research and selection process of the steering committee composed of four to five outstanding people from the fields mentioned before.
- September 1, 1986
to develop a data base, under the direction of the University, to make a public presentation of the program, and
to being any fundraising that was necessary.
- January 1, 1987
to begin, perhaps, as many as three pilot programs around the state which deal with the least sensitive problem areas.

In a year or two, progress would be measurable. If the pilot programs are successful, then the replication process would begin.

The natural follow-up would be to continue monitoring and Evaluating the project.

Those groups mentioned earlier as supporters who are in any given community would be the supporters.

The gatekeepers would be

- the media
- the local power centers who selected any local coalition
- the Legislature
- the "Seven Sisters of Ucross" (the seven Roundtable groups)
- the Ucross Foundation.

The time frame calls for the announcement of the program and the steering committee at the October 19 meeting in Casper.

The need to solve the problems is a way to get people together.

This project deals with public solutions and not public issues which people prefer to deal with.

The financing of this project would be through an endowment fund.

Organizational peer pressure can insure success because no-one wants to be left out of a successful coalition.

Hindrances might include high expectations, disappointments, turfdom, sensitivity of the issues and the need for a creditable evaluation.

Moving slowly, involving potential opponents, having local in-put and a good base for action will help dissolve the hindrances.

The anticipated results would be a demonstrable, dramatic, statistically significant program

This is a desirable program because it is not being addressed at the present time.

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September 29 - October 1, 1985

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September 29-October 1, 1985
Page 2

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