

Towards a Preferred Future

for Learning and Education

An Accord prepared by a South Gloucestershire Leadership Enquiry Group

What will be the future if we do not change direction or make a new choice about the future?

This is the question about the **probable future**.

The probable future is the natural vision of the manager: it is a vision of the intellect. It does not engender inspiration or hope. People only change their behaviour because of two feelings: fear and hope and their more kindred spirits, desperation and inspiration. If a probable future scenario indicates that potential crisis or disaster is ahead it will generate fear which becomes the catalyst of change. Managers often utilise fear to drive change. The hope-creating manager is a rarity.

Therefore when they consider future possibilities many ask the questions: What should happen?

What is my (our) dream?

What is my (our) **preferred future**?

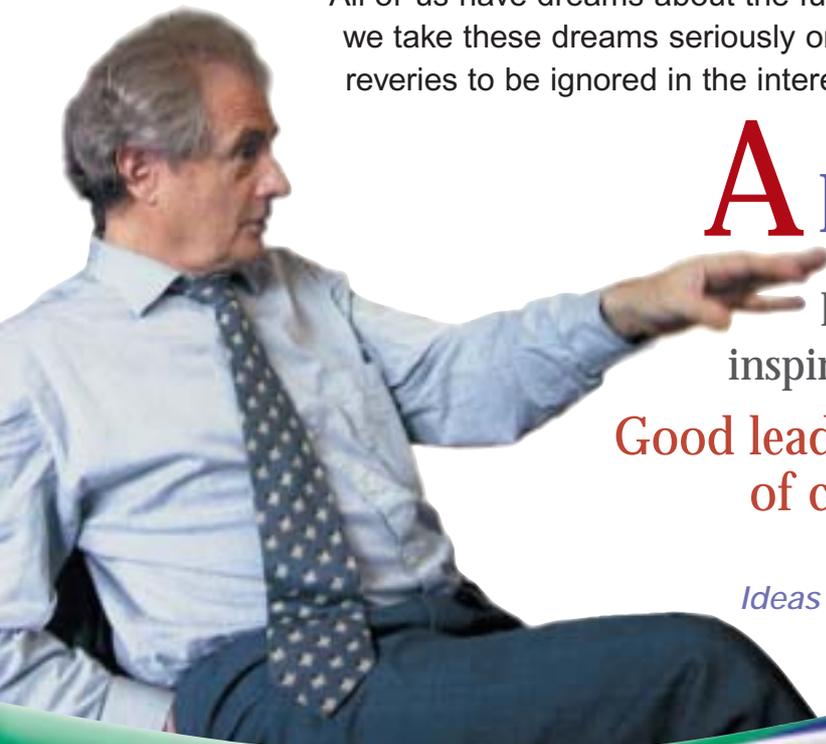
This recognises that in real life, people have aspirations and commitment. All of us have dreams about the future. The important issue is whether we take these dreams seriously or whether we regard them as blue sky reveries to be ignored in the interests of pragmatism and reality.

A preferred-future vision leads to hope;
hope leads to inspiration;
inspiration leads to commitment.

Good leadership is about the generation of climate of commitment.

Peter Ellyard

Ideas for the New Millennium



The purposes of this document are:

- to attempt to encapsulate in a written form some the ideas, values and experiences of a group of cross-phase Headteachers and to translate these into commitments and projects that constitute an agreed preferred future for learning.
- to construct a framework that makes sense of and gives coherence to local, national and global trends in educational thinking and provision.
- to provide a possible basis (or series of prompts), towards constructing a shared vision
- to provide theoretical and practical tools that support the (draft) National Standards for Headteachers, specifically "Knowledge of... local, national and global trends...ways to build, communicate and implement a shared vision..."

This document may

- be used as the basis for discussion about future thinking with staff, governors, clusters of schools, LEA officers or council members. Members of the Melbourne Enquiry group would be happy to play a role in this if requested (via Tom Whittingham)
- form the basis of an Accord that schools or groups of schools actually 'sign up to', outlining the beliefs, commitments and projects that underpin a shared vision of a preferred future.
- be adopted, adapted, revised, borrowed from or discarded

Beliefs

- Every person has unique talents and experiences that can be developed both for personal well being and in terms of making positive contributions to the group, school or community.
- Learning and teaching are at the heart of all our work
- Plans, targets, programmes and initiatives need to be located within a shared commitment to a wider understanding of a 'preferred future' for learning. Too many of the processes of strategic planning and leadership in schools are reactive and concerned with delivery of short term objectives
- This future is not a product of the insight of the leader but is a shared understanding continually reconstructed and renewed through a commitment to dialogue, discussion and exchange.
- Schools can and should play a central role in enabling communities to prepare for a future in which they can thrive through collective responsibility for all children.
- The first phase of public sector reform and accountability focused on individual institutions, leaders and teachers. New collaborative ways of working present challenges at many levels including the LEA, the mechanisms of accountability and the organisation of schools.

Commitments

- Future thinking is not about prediction but about actively striving towards a collectively articulated vision of what a preferred future for learning would be like.
- Global citizenship skills involve the ability to foster inter-dependence rather than parochialism; tolerance rather than intolerance; sustainability rather than unsustainability; gender equality rather than patriarchy; democracy rather than autocracy; and to see humanity as part of nature rather than separate from it.

“Success comes
to those
who get to
the future first”

Peter Ellyard

- To ensure that the quality of learning experiences of our children and their preparedness for adult life in the 21st century, can and will be better.
- Working in collaborations and partnerships to meet the challenges of ‘preparedness for learning’, personal health and well-being and recognising the importance of ‘the interior world of the learner’ (Guy Claxton).
- Applying individualised learning to both pupil learning and staff development.
- Sharing good practice, innovative approaches and research - local, national and international - as a key part of enabling education providers at all levels to develop as centres of learning.
- Being proactive in engaging with the wider processes of social change. Schools are increasingly taking on new (and shedding old), roles, functions and challenges beyond simply delivery high standards - measurable outputs.



Contexts

These beliefs, commitments and projects are not arbitrary, reactive or piecemeal but represent practical engagement with current thinking, research and policy initiatives involving change towards an informed future for learning.

There will be aspects to the future of education that are within the 'zone of concern' but are outside the 'zone of influence' (Stephen Covey). However, to some degree, each of following is (or could be) within the 'zone of influence' of schools and communities. If Brian Caldwell is right when he says, 'No innovation without abandonment' then the challenges are where and how to be innovative and what and when to abandon?

Re-modelling:

The re-modelling agenda was presented to schools in 2003 in terms of 'Standards and Workforce reform'. However underpinning this is the need to re-think and re-model learning opportunities in schools in the light of knowledge, understanding and research about all the elements that affect children's learning.

It is fortunate that the remodelling agenda gives schools the licence to work innovatively. Quite fundamental change is possible!

Inclusion:

Inclusion lies at the heart of current children's policy and practice. Effective inclusion involves providing a positive culture and opportunities and experiences so that all children enjoy health and well being, learn effectively and participate fully in society. Principles for developing an inclusive curriculum include setting suitable challenges, responding to diverse needs and overcoming potential barriers to learning. Inclusion of all pupils requires new forms of cross-phase and cross sector collaboration.

Transition:

When pupils experience radical changes in pedagogy, curriculum organisation and physical location, the results can be negative in terms of attitude/self-esteem and learning outcomes. Managing this in order to maximize all pupil's sense of academic and emotional, continuity, stability and progress, is a significant challenge that can only be met through sustained collaboration between schools, the LEA and support services.

Personalised Learning:

Personalised learning is currently being described as 'high-quality teaching based on sound knowledge of each child's needs'. Schools committed to personalised learning share the common principle of trying to do the best for every child. Understanding the whole child, including his/her social and emotional context, is key to personalised learning.

Learning beyond the Classroom:

Developments in ICT and technology, changes in what constitutes an 'educated workforce' for the 21st century, world wide reforms in public sector provision that focus on choice and diversity: these and other social trends have yet to fully impact on the organisation of schooling and the culture of schools.

Buildings and the Physical Environment of Learning:

Pupils respond best when provided with an environment that is attractive, stimulating and fit for purpose. The challenge for planners will be to design facilities that are 'future proof'. To achieve this schools will need to be sufficiently flexible and adaptable to meet changing needs and expectations regarding purpose, curricula, teaching methods and

styles of organisation. Such schools will need to be inspiring and uplifting in their design, designed to anticipate and embrace the needs and technologies of the future, mindful that however beautiful a school may look, it has to work in practice.

Future Citizens:

Education must look beyond a Government directed 'citizenship' course. Young people will need to be shown how to use insight, foresight, and hindsight to shape their lives; develop leadership of self and others; grow their capacity to innovate and care; be a continuing and effective learner. New learning cultures must exist for our future citizens.

Global Responsibilities:

We live in a global community, and with that we hold responsibility to educate for global citizenship; to develop our children as forces that civilise this globalisation, embracing ecological sustainability and humanitarianism. We also live in a local community, which has a balancing and countervailing effect. We hold a responsibility to educate our children to esteem our local community with its human scale, social constructs and rites of passage.

Leadership:

Stephen Covey's maxim 'If you keep doing what you have always done, you will keep getting what you have always got', has a particular relevance to Leadership. The need to nurture, support, retain and inspire education leaders has led to an explosion of theories, models, research, practices and opportunities, locally, nationally and internationally. Leadership is changing, and being part of that process of change can be both challenging and empowering.

“During the 1990s
UK education
ministers and
their advisors
appealed increasingly
to that supposed
British virtue,
common sense ...
dismissed theories of
teaching ... and advanced
'what works' ...
as defined by the
government
not by teachers ...
as the touchstone
classroom decisions

”

Robin Alexander *Culture and Pedagogy*

Pedagogy:

Recently however, the climate has changed and what Michael Barber calls 'informed professional judgement' is expected to be basis of what teachers do. Simply 'delivering' the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

**Pedagogy – the art
and science of teaching –
is back on the agenda**

Projects

Individual schools in the Accord have their own initiatives, projects priorities and targets. However there are some shared values and common practical projects that schools are (or are interested in) pursuing. It is these projects that will translate 'beliefs' and 'commitments' into an actual preferred future for learning and education.

Projects in this Accord focus on four areas:

Learning and teaching

Schools are committed to piloting, evaluating and disseminating innovative approaches to learning and teaching. Currently (2004) these include:

- *The 'Creativity' agenda – 'All Our Futures'*
- *ICT to support learning (e.g. South Glos' 'Learning through Innovation')*
- *Thinking Skills*
- *Emotional Intelligence & the interior world of the learner*
- *Learning to Learn (ELLI project @ Bristol University)*
- *Building Learning Power (Guy Claxton/TLO)*
- *Peer mentoring*
- *Learning and the outdoor*
- *Accelerated and 'Brain Based' approaches to Learning*
- *Assessment for Learning ('Inside the Black Box' and Shirley Clarke's work)*

- *Learning and teaching of foundation subjects (KS3 initiative)*
- *Work related learning*
- *Inclusive learning*
- *Learning and teaching the skills and attitudes of entrepreneurship*
- *Learning and teaching the skills and attitudes of leadership*
- *Continuity for learners between Key Stages and institutions -the 'Transition Gap'.*
- *International learning*
- *New schools/refurbishment and the physical environment environment for learning*

Leadership

The challenges facing educational leaders are enormous, exciting and diverse. The priorities of individual leaders and institutions vary and change. Within this diversity, schools in this Accord are committed to:

- making entitlement to opportunities for professional growth a reality for all staff. Schools in the accord will search for collaborative and networking opportunities to foster and support this, and to encourage wide participation in creating a preferred future.
- developing professional learning teams within and across individual institutions.
- investigating and using the connections between Emotional Intelligence and effective leadership



- seeking out innovative, and perhaps radical, examples of shared leadership by addressing questions like: Can the roles and functions of the single leader be effectively distributed within and between individual schools?

Could/should we change the culture of individual responsibility in terms of ideas like 'Not allowing neighbouring schools to fail'?

- developing thinking and practice about leadership within, between and beyond individual schools that reflects a global perspective. This might involve links (real and virtual), exchanges, comparisons and research.

Health & Well-being

The 'learning readiness' of pupils challenges schools to engage in increasing collaboration between school and home, families, communities and providers of health, social and other services. This may be achieved by:

- setting up or supporting collaborative/ network/ community/ local projects as alternatives to 'central' delivery of provision to meet pupil's health & welfare needs.
- providing increased opportunities for sport and physical recreation. Schools, working with other agencies and providers, can play a key part in delivering this both within and beyond the school curriculum.
- beyond the identified 'transition' problems of curriculum/teaching style continuity, the wider issues of pupils' experiences of change through the phase and sectors of school will be explored and addressed.

- using the ideas of emotional intelligence, building self esteem, building learning power etc. with parents and children as a basis for promoting a broader understanding of well-being and learning.

- meeting the challenge ('Every Child Matters') of genuine 'joined up' provision for all children not just those identified as 'at risk'

Building Inclusive Communities

Schools are exploring and developing different ways of community involvement in learning through:

- taking practical measures that reflect and meet the wide diversity of learners and opportunities for learning around school communities.
- developing opportunities for active participation by current and future stakeholders in developing the forms of education and schooling they believe will meet the diverse future needs of individual children and communities.
- the building of real stakeholder engagement and partnership involvement both within and between schools and other institutions, providers and interest groups e.g. Higher Education and initial teacher training, Industry, pre-school and the LEA.
- inclusive thinking and practice in relation to cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

Prepared by:

Paul Casson

New Siblands Special School

Clive Cooper

Redfield Edge Primary

Wendy Davey

Baileys Court Primary

Rob Gibson

Ridings High

Jan Isaac

Emerson Green Primary

Colin McArthur

Filton High

Don Sibley

Tynings High

Brenda Spenceley

Patchway High

Alex Wilkinson

Christ Church Juniors

With the encouragement and support of

Tom Whittingham

South Gloucestershire Council Education Service
Leadership Strategy Manager & International Learning

tom.Whittingham@southglos.gov.uk

Designed by South Gloucestershire Council
Graphics & Mapping Services 10175/08/04
Printed on recycled paper 75% post consumer waste

