

TGIF Taking Great Ideas Forward

Improving Northern Capital - Sustainable Development in the Northern Tier

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author and do not reflect positions of organizations with which he is affiliated.

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“Probably only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the universe.”

-Albert Einstein-

MEETINGS and EVENTS:

Links will provide additional information. Dates for recent additions are in **bold**.

<i>What</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Where</i>
Biodiesel Study Group	Mondays (all)	7:00-8:30 PM	Washburn Library
National Entrepreneurship Week Feb 23 – Mar 1			
Superior Days	Feb. 26-27	All Day	Madison
Great Lakes Day	Feb. 28 th	All Day	Washington DC
Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club	March 6 th	5:30	Casablanca Traders Coffeehouse (Hwy 2 & 63)
Fusion 2008	March 5-6	All Day	Madison, Fluno Center
BCEDC Board Meeting	March 10 th	10:00 -Noon	Washburn Library
Sustainable Business Conference	April 24-25	All Day	Ashland
Business Development Conference	May 7 & 8	All Day	Cable, Lakewoods
Digital Healthcare Conference	May 7 & 8	All Day	Madison
Manufacturing Advantage 2008	May 21	All Day	UW-Stout
Green By Design Conference	June 12-13	All Day	Washington DC area
Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference	June 19 & 20	All Day	Cable, Telemark

MEASURING SCHOOL QUALITY

Measuring educational quality is a huge challenge. Even when there is some reasonable agreement about what constitutes quality, establishing a standard for evaluation is daunting. The current debate over testing too little and testing too much coupled with controversy over renewal of **No Child Left Behind** certainly makes the point. The [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) has endorsed renewal of NCLB while a growing clamor from the political right and left says “ditch NCLB.” Testing is almost certainly not enough to measure quality.

After graduation rates, the number of students going on to college or other post-secondary education is a frequent metric cited to highlight the quality of a high school. Learning the skills for advanced college placement has become a key focus of specialized classes in the larger high schools. Programs such as [Advanced Placement](#) and [International Baccalaureate](#) may enable students to prepare for the rigor of college classes or may provide direct college credit for students while they remain in high school. For larger, often suburban, high schools these programs are provided and promoted for their top students. The South St. Paul, MN school district, however, has set a goal for all of its students to prepare for higher education through adoption of the International Baccalaureate program.

Where these advanced classes are either unavailable or insufficient, local colleges and universities may offer opportunity for high school students to take courses or even leave high school early to attend college full-time. Many states, including Wisconsin, encourage these opportunities by transfer of state education aids to the colleges.

Special and flexible classes are often not available in small, rural or impoverished schools. To fill this gap a modest industry has developed to provide these learning opportunities via distance education. For teens with special needs such as health situations, work requirements or a need to catch-up on credits, online high schools have been chartered in many states. Results are mixed. Some of these charter schools seem to thrive, but others are belly-up or battling criticism from accrediting agencies.

Online learning requires a fairly high level of independence; an ability to work and handle personal freedom. For a few very gifted students, the lectures and other learning opportunities provided by the [MIT Open Courseware](#) initiative may be a solution. Through this program the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** provides *free* course outlines or syllabuses, bibliographies, lecture notes, exams and, in some cases, audio and video recordings of lectures. More than 1800 courses have been drawn from the entire MIT curriculum. The commitment of MIT to advancing education beyond its campus is pretty amazing.

Ed Batton, Principal and CEO at **Bayfield Consulting**, and others have been pushing the notion that our four Bayfield County school districts should make a commitment to consolidating and to being “the finest public school system in the country.” Resources are always a challenge and Ed and I agree that consolidating administrative functions could free up resources. Starting with a consolidation of administration may, unfortunately, be a non-starter. Perhaps a county-wide adoption of a commitment to excellence could embrace the elements of a successful high school described by the Alliance for Excellent Education. We could call these bullets *Elements of Excellence*.

- Challenging Classes
- Personal Attention for All Students
- Extra Help for Those Who Need It

- Bringing the Real World to the Classroom
- Family and Community Involvement
- A Safe Learning Environment
- Skilled Teachers
- Strong Leaders
- Necessary Resources
- User-Friendly Information

A county-wide conversation could begin with questions putting each of these Elements of Excellence into a context and creating a platform for making better educational things happen in Bayfield County. The Hayward – Ashland – Maple triangle, the axis of education dominating our region, should not be ignored in this conversation, but if even any two Bayfield County school districts could start talking about the future of education, they may create opportunities for others to join in. This is not going to be a quick fix.

Unfortunately everyone is busy doing what they are already doing. Time for travel and conversation about excellence isn't included in the job description yet. Distance is a barrier but learning to deal effectively and efficiently with distance may be a critical key to a future filled with excellence. Using new Internet tools for collaboration could lead to a greater emphasis on effective uses of distance learning, which may well be essential if our region is to embrace global principles of excellence like those of the International Baccalaureate program.

Perhaps a starting point could be to take each of the Elements of Excellence and collaborate conversationally via the Internet to establish indicators measuring how our Bayfield County schools measure up.

LIGHTER SIDE:

As with most jokes the original author is unknown. Whoever you are; “Thanks!” Names, when added, are intended to tease the innocent.

Lost In A Frog

Last Spring a lonely northern Bayfield County frog, with secret ambitions of becoming a charming prince, telephoned the **Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility** and asked Manager **Greg Fischer** what his future holds.

Greg told him, "You are going to meet a beautiful young girl who will want to know everything about you."

The frog was thrilled. "That is great! Will I meet her at a party?" he croaked.

"No," said Greg, "in biology class."

Take care and enjoy a great weekend!

/BRUCE

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Bruce Lindgren is Principal of [B.Lindgren CONSULTING](#). The consulting practice serves small business, local government, school districts and non-profits providing support for research, grant development, technical writing, marketing support and project management. Bruce brings his background in biological sciences, education, small business and media technology to generate and implement ideas contributing solutions to mission critical challenges.

In addition Bruce maintains the following affiliations:

[Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation](#), (BCEDC) Director

[Inland Sea Society](#), (ISS) Director

[Lake Superior Binational Forum](#), (LSBF) US Delegation Chair

[Bayfield CountyLakes Forum](#), Board Secretary

[Raindrop Garden Gallery](#), (RGG) Co-owner

[IDEA Consortium LLC](#), Owner

[Chequamegon Institute, Inc.](#) Initial Registered Agent

[Coalition for Eco-Industrial Development](#), (CEID) Work Group Member

[Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board](#), (WIB) Member

The encircled fractal triangle represents an integrated cluster of seven ideas – economics, ecology, equity, ethics, experience, education and energy – that may be considered a core for sustainability studies. Bruce is available to present illustrated lectures and facilitate discussions about role of education in Industrial Ecology, Sustainable Development and the Sustainability Revolution.