

TGIF

Taking Great Ideas Forward

Improving Northern Capital - a Sustainable Economy 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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“Idealism increases in direct proportion to one's distance from the problem.”

-John Galsworthy-

MEETINGS and EVENTS:

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

<i>What</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Where</i>
Sustainable Forestry Conference	Feb. 27 th	All Day	Keshena WI
Staying Competitive in Today's Markets (Wood Products)	Feb. 28 th	All Day	Oshkosh WI
Superior Days	Feb. 27-28 th	All Day	Madison WI
Fusion 2007 CEI-CIO Symposium	Feb. 27-28 th	All Day	Fluno Center, Madison WI
Inventors & Entrepreneur's Club	Mar. 1 st	5:30 PM	Iron River Community Center
Great Lakes Day	Mar. 7 th	All Day	Washington DC
Renewable Energy Conference	Mar. 8 th & 9 th	All Day	Milwaukee
Bio-Energy Opportunities for Northwest Wisconsin	March 9 th	All Day	WITD, Rice Lake
BCEDC Board Meeting	March 12 th	10 AM – noon	TBA
BCEDC Board Meeting	April 9 th	10 AM – noon	TBA
WIB Business Development Conference	May 3 & 4	All Day	Lakewoods Resort, Cable
Future of Farming Statewide Conference	May 14 & 15	All Day	Madison, Monona Terrace
2007 Entrepreneur's Conference	June. 12-13	All day	Milwaukee
Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference & Workshops	June 21 & 22	All Day	Telemark Lodge, Cable

The Nation's Report Card

Yesterday a report was released by the **US Department of Education** that conveyed some interestingly mixed results and should stimulate discussion about Education. The **National Assessment of Educational Progress** (NAEP) provided insight about High School seniors regarding their reading and mathematics skills.

Dr. **Mark Schneider**, Commissioner, [National Center for Educational Statistics](#), acted as spokesperson on a [roll-out aired on C-SPAN](#). Commentary was provided by **David Driscoll**, Massachusetts Commissioner of Education; **Dave Gordon**, Superintendent of Sacramento CA schools; and **John Engler**, President of the **National Association of Manufacturers** and former Governor of Michigan. The commentary was richly colorful but mostly seemed to play to prescribed positions.

The links above will provide access to virtually any aspect of this you may want to see. There is enough stimulation to generate a good discussion. Given concerns frequently expressed about the impact of our schools' quality on maintaining an effective workforce, a vigorous and ongoing discussion is certainly needed.

I'm joining the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board's [Workforce Development and Education Committee](#). This committee is charged with attending to the educational resources for workforce development. Although the committee has a mixed record of meeting its meeting obligations, my hope is that an infusion of new people and ideas will create a forum for productive discussion and identification of actions to move forward.

BCEDC should also, I believe, provide leadership for such discussions. Our Education Committee started with a good session just before the end of the year, but our potential momentum has been mired in a viscous soup of too many commitments, mixed agendas, and too little solid information.

Challenging continued discussion is the scope and leadership. Leading the discussion is not a compensated function of anyone I've met and volunteer efforts eventually lose steam unless there is a strong and specific vested interest. An important and worthwhile scope could be to improve our local understanding about the meanings of assessment. Although the studies cited above are not designed to provide school-to-school or even State-to-State comparisons, there are local measures that can be helpful. I tend to agree with John Engler who stated that in industry "that which is measured can be improved." Educational assessments should not, and probably cannot, reduce to a *widgits per hour* dimension; but, there is little hope of improving assessments if assessments are neglected.

David Driscoll commented about the need for "relentless striving to improve" teaching and learning. Our local challenge, which is not different from State and National challenges for Education, may be to focus limited resources on the most important problems. Perhaps a good next step would be recruiting an outside agent to help put local measurements into an actionable perspective.

Engler astonished and admonished: with a quip "test, report and react."

MEDIA MOMENTS

Brent Lindgren, my son, who is a school library specialist in Las Vegas, sent along this interesting link; [DidYouKnow](#). The download is huge, discriminating against all who lack something quicker than a phone modem link. You will also need *Windows Media Player*. But if your cyber-speed is decent, and you have WMP, you will find some jarring numbers describing our contemporary world.

The piece is a heating element for a futurist's thought incubator.

Nintendo, as one example from [DidYouKnow](#), spent \$140 million on research and development in 2002. Our **US Department of Education** spent less than half that amount on research and innovation in education.

Go figure!

MAKING MOMENTS

Study Circles are great and have served the [Alliance For Sustainability](#) well in promoting **The Natural Step** and development of the **Sustainable Chequamegon Initiative**. But, here is a new twist to promote sustainability and thinking about sustainable development. [Green Drinks](#) provides a networking space for members of the Sustainable Development community, affectionately known to some as Green Monsters (to distinguish them from the trademarked Green Giant).

I discovered Green Drinks while trying to find former **Northland College** student and **Inland Sea Society** Web master, **Jon Baier** in Madison. Google is just amazing. It found Jon mentioned in an article about Green Drinks.

Jay Moynihan would, and perhaps still should, have been a charter member of Green Drinks NW Chapter. With headquarters at the round table by the window on the port side of the bar's entry door at Ashland's famous **Deep Water Grille**, Jay frequently made it a point to introduce me and others to all comers at Deep Water. Discussion was always interesting. Jay was clearly fulfilling the spirit of Green Drinks. The non-alcoholic version in Ashland, of course, is the "Cat", more formally the **Black Cat**.

Take care and have 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](#), *Director*

[Lake Superior Binational Forum](#), *US Delegation Co-Chair*

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

[IDEA Consortium LLC](#), *Owner*

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

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

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