

# 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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*“The outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where only one grew before.”*

-Thorstein Veblen-

## 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>
<b>Biodiesel Study Group</b>	Mondays (all)	7:00-8:30 PM	Washburn Library
Inventors & Entrepreneurs Club	Jan 3 <sup>rd</sup>	5:30 PM	Iron River Community Center
<a href="#">Superior Days Planning</a>	Jan. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Noon	WITC - Superior
BCEDC Board Meeting	Jan. 14 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 AM -noon	Washburn Library
<a href="#">Conservation Lobby Day</a>	Jan. 30 <sup>th</sup>	9:00 am & On	Madison
<a href="#">Superior Days</a>	Feb. 26-27	All Day	Madison
<a href="#">Great Lakes Day</a>	Feb. 28 <sup>th</sup>	All Day	Washington DC
<a href="#">Fusion 2008</a>	March 5-6	All Day	Madison, Fluno Center
<a href="#">Sustainable Business Conference</a>	April 24-25	All Day	Ashland
<a href="#">Business Development Conference</a>	<b>May 7 &amp; 8</b>	All Day	Cable, Lakewoods
<a href="#">Green By Design Conference</a>	June 12-13	All Day	Washington DC area
<a href="#">Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference</a>	<b>June 19 &amp; 20</b>	All Day	Cable, Telemark

## SCHOOL'S NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

Our **Bayfield County** school districts should individually and collectively resume and regularize conversations about their administrative services. The result could well be improving support for learning by reducing expenditures for redundant, duplicated services. This will not address all challenges of educating our youth, but it should be a necessary start.

My hope is that a few folks – read: first school board members, but, then any other centers of influence in our northland communities – will call for monthly or bimonthly, open meetings with announced agendas and published minutes. The public deserves to know about the problems, possibilities and progress of achieving administrative efficiencies. None of this will happen if the public remains uninformed and school leaders do not insist that progress is essential.

Institutional inertia needs to be overcome. Proposals that threaten the chains of normalcy challenge incumbent comfort. Breaking into the routines of day-to-day school operations is difficult enough. Travel is always an issue. Another meeting at a distant location kills the comfort of routines. And nobody routinely champions a challenge to their own comfort. Any excuse can, and too often does, extinguish an uneasy quantity of double discomfort. A brief emergency can interfere with travel time. “Too late!” “Can't go!” A meeting may be deprived of a critically important participant. One or two events where pivotal participants are missing can throw a wet towel over a worthwhile initiative.

One way to deal with that is to make a rule: NO TRAVEL!

Use technology!

Restrict the use of face-to-face meetings to those circumstances where a face-to-face meetings are essential. That is not EVERY meeting! Phone and video conference technology can and should reduce the time and cost of travel.

Our schools should lead a northland revolution in doing their usual and customary business in an unusual way. Enlightened administrative procedures will not likely be a result of maintaining our current small, isolated school systems. Use of technology by administrators may – I believe should – lead to learning from using the technology that will ultimately begin building a foundation for expanding learning opportunities for our students. Open, on-line dialogs via Wiki and other social networking tools can become a foundation for local applications of *New World Learning*; a phrase urging dramatic rethinking of what education may become. Given the current state of digital technology (not to mention the promise of what is already in place in Japan and Finland) there is no good reason why our rural school age youth should be deprived of a full, robust access to learning opportunities; opportunities that are resource rich, life-long, constructed from individual experience in a collaborative environment, independent of time and place, based on contemporary cognitive science and, importantly, sustainability focused.

Collaboration, whether massively distributed or locally focused, is a stepping stone to engaging the global views and perspectives that an economically viable and sustainable future will demand. The northland may have greater motivation than others to lead the way or, at least, follow what is happening elsewhere. We can't get out of the way. The future is arriving much faster than predicted.

We need a crash course for adults to get with it and catch up with the younger generation's uses of digital technology. Fear of technology is unnecessary and unwarranted. Contemporary computer systems are becoming so transparently simple that only the most impaired should

worry about not being able to use the technology. I am reluctantly concluding that participation in decision-making is best restricted to those who embrace digital technology tools to process information. My reluctance comes from my empathy for good friends and colleagues who have so much to contribute but, as yet, don't use email or cell phones, word processors or spreadsheets and still send digital photos to be printed on expensive, non-recyclable paper. We take our dependence for automobiles and airplanes for granted. It is time we start learning to make our digital superhighways part of our routine.

Two school districts in Ohio, Orrville and Rittman, have reached agreement to share a single superintendent under a five-year plan. The two districts expect to save \$200,000 per year by the end of the contract period. \$200,000 could go a long way toward providing enriched educational services. The towns are only 16 miles apart but collectively have a population of 14,000; about the population of Bayfield County. Bayfield County drive times are much greater than the trek from Orrville to Rittman; but a digital drive is instantaneous in either case. Superintendent **Jon Ritchie** was quoted in the **Cleveland Plain Dealer**: "This is not a consolidation. We'll have two budgets, two boards of education, two distinct school districts. We're just trying to streamline services so we can save some money and give additional services to the kids."

That sounds like a goal, model or New Year resolution for our Bayfield County schools.

## **LIGHTER SIDE:**

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

When **Albert Einstein** died, he met three **World Bank** officials in the queue outside the Pearly Gates. To pass the time, he asked what were their IQs. The first replied 190. "Wonderful," exclaimed Einstein. "We can discuss the contribution made by Ernest Rutherford to atomic physics and my theory of general relativity". The second answered 150. "Good," said Einstein. "I look forward to discussing the role of the World Bank's policy on nuclear-free legislation in the quest for world peace". The third official mumbled 50. Einstein paused, and then asked, "So what is your forecast for the world's economic growth next year?"

Take care and Best Wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

/BRUCE

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*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 Co-Chair

[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.*