Ensuring Student Achievement Through Collaboration:
The Challenges of Poverty and Transition
Beginning in 1992, Washington has been engaged in a major education reform process designed by a Governors Commission and approved by the legislature. The preamble to the education reform legislation states:

*The goal of the Basic Education Act for the schools of the state of Washington set forth in this chapter shall be to provide students with the opportunity to become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well-being and to that of their families and communities, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives.*

RCW 28A.150.210 Basic Education Act-Goal.

The establishment of meaningful and measurable performance standards is the result of a unique partnership between parents, community members, representatives of business and industry, and K-20 education teachers and faculty. The final component, a Certificate of Mastery, will become a high school graduation requirement in 2004.

As each phase of development has been completed and the assessment results known for students, schools, and districts, a new question has increased in significance. What factors other than curriculum and instruction are impacting our children's performance? The strengths of a family, the resources of a community, the leadership of school administrators, the compassion of a teacher or the resilience of a child, are increasingly recognized as key elements in supporting learning success.

Under the leadership of Superintendent Terry Bergeson, several strategic goals have been established by the state education agency. The first is focused on teaching and learning, the second states:

*Facilitate the development of the safe, nurturing, healthy, and civil learning environment that is essential for each student’s learning.*

Important and relevant research in being conducted throughout the country on various aspects of the learning environment and the relationship of parents, community and school. It appears, however, that very little comprehensive work is taking place that identifies the significant element of each aspect, links those elements in an efficient and effective planning continuum, and closely correlates the elements with improved student academic achievement.

The work on supportive learning environments will focus on the partnership between school, community and family environments that support the academic achievement of our children. The system design includes identifying standards, creating an implementation system, and using the accountability outcomes to improve student success. It is by design, an inter-agency and multi-disciplinary
task. This is a comprehensive project to be implemented over a two-year period and coincide with the final phase of the education reform process.

**Essential stages in the SLE system design**

1. Bring together a "think tank" of primary researchers in learning environments to explore integrated framework utilizing their work and that of others.
   - First gathering completed in April 2000
   - The work of these researchers is fundamental to the current SLE system:
     - Howard Adelman - UCLA
     - David Hawkins - University of Washington
     - Jeffery Fouts - Seattle Pacific University
     - Dale Blyth - Search Institute and University of Minnesota
     - Randy Sprick - Teaching Strategies, Inc.

2. Complete a search, ERIC and other sources, of current research on learning environments including topics that maybe related but tangential.
   - In progress but not complete

3. Develop a learning environment assessment and evaluation tool that includes physical, social, emotional and intellectual factors on a continuum and that is integrated with school district or local school plans for student improvement.
   - IBM is assisting in development of the prototypes.

4. Design an implementation process for the learning environment system that begins with prototypes, continues with pilot assessment in selected schools through 2000-2001 and allocation of resources through existing community, school and family collaborative programs.
   - Three to five prototypes will be reviewed by teachers, administrators and community members during four regional summer institutes. The prototypes use available data from counties, communities, and schools that are indicators of supportive learning environments.
   - Local schools will pilot the SLE assessment tool - based on prototype feedback. The framework would become the basis for targeting resource allocations toward verified learning environment factors (physical, social, emotional and intellectual) that are significantly correlated with student academic progress.

State Superintendent, Dr. Terry Bergeson, has been the key leader of Washington's education reform process and has articulated well the significance of a quality and supportive learning environment. Washington is ready to match progress in reshaping teaching and learning with a major effort to verify and clarify the essential elements of an environment as a prerequisite for improved student success.

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Purpose:
Discuss creation of supportive learning environments as an essential component of education reform

Strategic Goal 1
Facilitate the development of coordinated curriculum, instruction, and assessment systems that will maximize each student's learning and assist schools and districts in achieving their accountability goals.

Successful Students
The goal of the Basic Education Act ... shall be to provide students with the opportunity to ... become responsible citizens, to contribute to their own economic well-being and to that of their families and communities, and to enjoy productive and satisfying lives. To these ends, the goals of each school district, with the involvement of parents and community members, shall be to provide opportunities for all students to develop the required knowledge and skills... (ESHB 1209,7/25/93)

Strategic Goal 2
Facilitate the development of the safe, nurturing, healthy, and civil learning environment that is essential for each student's learning

Supportive Learning Environments:
A learning environment that is safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating where students are engaged in learning and are committed to acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors to succeed in the 21st century. Such an environment must be supported by weaving together the resources of students, families, communities, and school staff.

Youth Safety in an environmental component

Essential Academic Learning Requirement:
Involving Supportive Environment

Communication
• Communicate ideas clearly and effectively
• Use communication strategies and skills to work effectively with others
  - Interact effectively and responsibly with others
  - Work cooperatively as a member of a group
  - Seek agreement and solutions through discussion
Health and Fitness

- Identify ways that encourage healthy and unhealthy decisions, plan how to resist unhealthy message and create healthy messages
- Assess the impact of the environment on health in choosing where to live, work and play
- Use social skills to protect health and safety in a variety of situations
  - Express opinions and resolve conflicts constructively while maintaining safe and respectful relationships
  - Demonstrate social skills to encourage self and others to choose healthy behaviors
- Acquire skills to live safely
  - Anticipate abusive and risky situations and demonstrate safe behaviors to minimize risk and prevent injury to self and others at home, school and in the community
  - Identify sources to ask for help in an emergency

Civic Involvement

The student understands the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the principles of democratic civic involvement.

To meet this standard, the student will:
- 4.1 understand individual rights and their accompanying responsibilities
- 4.2 identify and demonstrate rights of U.S. citizenship
- 4.3 explain how citizen participation influences public policy

Social Studies

Analyze how the environment and environmental changes affect people
Examine cultural characteristics, transmission, diffusion and interaction
Safe, Civil, and Healthy Learning Environments
A School, Family, Community Partnership Continuum to Insure Student Achievement

Prevention
Communication, Boundaries, Norms, Support, and Skill Development

Intervention
Early Universal And Individual Attention for High Risk Behavior or Situations

Response
Reaction to Crisis Situations or Severe Behaviors

Recovery
Post Incident Review and Adjustment for Individual and Systems

Re-establishing “normal” functioning
Safe, Civil, and Healthy Learning Environments
A Continuum of Programs and Services

Prevention

Life Skills
- Norms of respect and tolerance for opinions, lifestyles, religions and cultures which vary from our own.
- Early Childhood Education
- Skills training, prevention curriculums
- Engage students and parents
- Multicultural Education
- Crisis response planning, training and exercising

Intervention

Addressing Risk Early On
- Student assistance programs
- School Security
- Academic Alternatives
- Student Involvement
- Policy/Procedures
- Implementation of plans

Response/Treatment

Reacting to the Crisis
- Counseling and treatment
- Coordination with state and local emergency services
- Implementation of plans

Recovery/Aftercare

Reducing the Impact of a Crisis
- Post incident counseling
- Post incident plan Adjustment
- Re-establish “normal” functioning
Program Design for Supportive Learning Environments

- **Entering Characteristics**
- **Needs Assessment**
  - Child
  - Family
  - School
  - Community
  - Criteria for recommendation to RTL
  - Review existing assessment tools for risk and protective factors
  - Develop common instruments

- **Services**
  - Systems Change
    - Structural, Operational, Cultural
  - School-oriented strategies
  - Systems Strategies
  - Community/Family Strategies
  - Identify specific strategies that have research basis for significant potential success in relation to outcomes

- **Key Components (Interrelated)**
  - Student
  - Adult
  - School
  - Community
  - Family
  - Specific key measurements
  - Evaluate local program implementation

- **Outcomes**
  - Improved Student Success (Academic and Behavioral)
  - Supportive Environments for Learning
  - Local and state program evaluation based upon the correlation between outcomes and services