

**April 2009**

I just received my copy of Phil Schlechty's new book, Leading for Learning. I've learned a great deal from our association with the Schlechty Center for Leadership and School Reform. The lesson that most resonates is that I cannot look to compare Hereford ISD: the district, the staff, the students, the administration, or myself to other districts across the country. What I must focus on is the question...Are we transforming? - changing from what we were to what we want to be: moving closer toward becoming a learning organization?

In this new book, Phil writes about the New Images of Schools.

"What mental models would teachers and school leaders embrace if schools were organized on the principles of a learning organization? What beliefs would guide practices in the school?"

I would like to share an excerpt with you – **The Family-Like Qualities of Learning Organizations**

"Like those who would use the family or the small community as a model for schooling, I believe that bureaucratically organized schools cannot and do not deal adequately with the expressive ends of education. But some type of formal organization is called for if the intention of providing high-quality education to all children is to be realized and the values of democracy are to be preserved. Local communities cannot afford either socially or economically to have a system of schools. They must have a school system for the good of both children and the community at large."

"Because learning organizations are formal organizations, they differ from families in many ways, and thus have other functions. For example, learning organizations are purposeful and are established in part to achieve instrumental ends. Thus, they have in themselves the capacity to embrace universal values and pursue ends that transcend the peculiar interests of local constituencies – local interests that may or may not be congruent with larger social goals. Unlike bureaucracies, however and more like families, learning organizations embrace expressive ends, and they embrace expressive functions rather than endeavor to suppress or control them. Discussions of moral intentions and aesthetic values are considered at least as important as are discussions of technical norms and instrumental values. Human variability is prized and nurtured rather than suppressed and thwarted.

I envision Hereford ISD as just such a learning organization. We have the vision for a school system that supports both the mind and the heart of our children; children who will grow into successful caring adults that lift up our common values and contribute their developed knowledge and love into affirming our community and way of life.

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