

Notes for Inside the Academy: John Goodlad, March 2012

**Nature of Relationship with John:**

Since 1984 I have worked closely with John in a variety of capacities. I was a senior associate in his Center for Educational Renewal (CER) at the University of Washington and still have that title at his Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI) where I also served briefly as the Executive Vice President. I was one of the early Regional Coordinators for the National Network for Educational Renewal which he created and later I was the first Executive Director of the network. I have written chapters in books he edited and prepared research monographs disseminated by the CER and IEI. I have been his “chief worrier” for a variety of his grant projects and studies including those having to do with such topics as general education for prospective teachers, relationships between journalists and educators, and development of partner schools (called Professional Development Schools by some).

**Details of One Funny Memory:**

John has a sense of humor. His speeches and remarks during social conversations frequently include self-deprecating stories. That said, in spite of regular contact with him during the past 28 years I really can't identify a “funny memory.” That may be due in part to his and my physical condition that suppresses our memories of such experiences. And it may be a product of our mutual frustration with what we see as inexcusable malpractice by policy makers and educators who are shaping today's schooling practice.

**Keywords Describing John:**

One of the most frequently repeated incidents involving John occurred in the late 1980's as he was advocating the development of school-university partnerships designed to simultaneously improve the quality of schools and the education of educators. School and university leaders from recently formed partnerships were present. One of the participants, a professor who had been John's doctoral student, interrupted the conversation and asked whether different views about such partnerships were really under consideration or did John simply have a concept he was trying to get them to adopt. At this John stood up, took off his jacket, and vigorously rolled up his sleeves asserting he really was hiding nothing. During discussions over the years, others remember the incident and laugh about the display – partially because it was done with such a flourish and partially because he clearly had some specific concepts in mind in spite of his denial. The *key words* would be “rolling up sleeves to show nothing is hidden” and only those who have worked closely with John over the years are familiar with the origin of the phrase in relation to his work.

He also frequently tells of listening to John Dewey end a lecture in a class by stopping, looking at the gathered students and saying “thank you, I am a little clearer about that now.” John uses this reference to establish his contact with Dewey but also to complete what may have been an extended, rambling answer to a question posed to him.

Another repeated story has to do with the decision to abandon the term *fellows* as the designator for members of the first cohort of participants in a leadership development program. Leaving the task of finding an acceptable name to others, John accepted their recommendation to adopt a less “sexist” term and call these school and university educators *Leadership Associates*. The members of this first group still take pride in their successful rebellion.

**John’s Most Significant Personal or Professional Accomplishment:**

He is best known for three things: his study and writing about ungraded schools, his massive study that led to the publication of *A Place Called School*, and his study of teacher education that was summarized in *Teachers for Our Nation’s Schools*. His overall leadership in educational research included a term as President of AERA and another year as the President of AACTE.

As a researcher and disciple of John Dewey and Ralph Tyler he has promoted active engagement with practitioners in the field by researchers. Much of this is reflected in his promotion of school-university partnerships.

**“How to Capture the Essence and Nature of John” (Picture with John)**

From his first days as a teacher in a one room school, John has been committed to the principle enunciated by John Dewey that “education is not preparation for life; education is life itself. “ He consistently reminds us that there is a difference between education and schooling as he thinks and writes and talks about the ubiquitous nature of education. He often translates this into descriptions of “educative communities.”

One of John’s strengths, and I suspect one of the characteristics of many who are outstanding contributors in their fields, is his persistence in pursuing fundamental ideas and goals. One example of this is his belief in the importance of education for the development of citizens for a social and political democracy. Another is his advocacy for a change in the structure of public schools to begin with 4 year olds and end with a completion certificate at age 16. Still another is his rejection of tracking practices that deny equitable access to knowledge for all students.

I attended a meeting in Chicago during the summer of 1984 during which John shared his thoughts about creating a network of school-university partnerships with a gathering of school district leaders and university faculty members. During the two days of the meeting, participants raised many concerns about matters such as the feasibility of such a network asserting that differences between the mission of schools and universities and complaining that college faculty members would have difficulty securing promotions based on working with schools. As I rode with John from the hotel to the airport following the meeting I was surprised to hear him speaking optimistically about the possibilities of the network he was about to launch. Over the years I have witnessed other such examples of his determined commitment to ideas that are not deterred by concerns from others who are quicker to see problems than they are to see potential.

Included below are some pictures with John as I interviewed him during a study session for leaders of teacher preparing schools.





