

## Staying Connected

January 1999  
Volume 1 Issue 1

### School clients and services

An exciting year includes work with Binghamton City Schools, Broome-Tioga BOCES, Deposit, Newark Valley and Union Endicott Central Schools, as well as work with *The LA Times*, The National Institute for Health and a privileged trip to South Africa.

### A decision model for schools

The comprehensive district planning team at Newark Valley Central tackles the challenge of designing K-12 English Language Arts strategies to meet the New Standards.

### CoNexus® success

The Times Mirror Company uses CoNexus® to poll its top 125 executives on strategic issues at a three-day off-site.

### Optimal thinking

Do you get in thinking ruts? The battery's dead ... but you continue to turn the key. Check out these tips for recharging, starting the engine and moving down the idea highway—pedal to the metal.

## School clients and services

PRISM Decision Systems works for you by accelerating and improving organizational decision-making. We provide state-of-the-art CoNexus® facilitation services for

- Comprehensive district educational planning
  - Annual SDM building planning
  - Resource allocation decisions
- PRISM also offers SDM training in efficient team decision making.

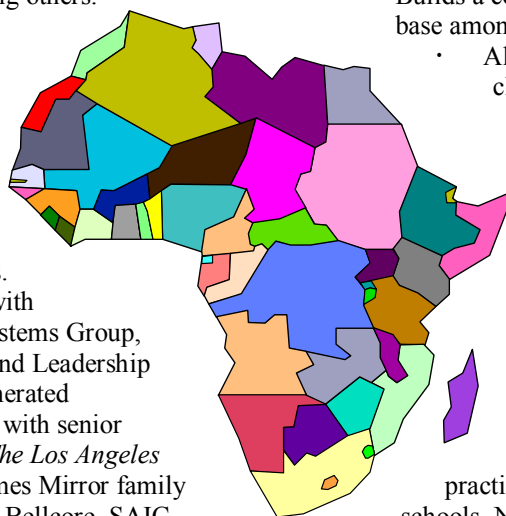
A growing regional client base includes SUNY Cortland, Binghamton City Schools, Broome-Tioga BOCES, Deposit, Newark Valley, and Union Endicott Central Schools, among others.

### Partnerships

Other clients include the health care and energy sectors. Partnerships with Innovation Systems Group, Litton-Tasc, and Leadership 2000 have generated exciting work with senior managers at *The Los Angeles Times*, the Times Mirror family of companies, Bellcore, SAIC, and the National Institute for Health.

### South Africa

A CoNexus® presentation and demonstration at the 44<sup>th</sup> Creative Problem Solving Institute led to an invitation to present at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual International Creativity Conference in Pretoria, South Africa. There I had the privilege to demonstrate planning and creativity techniques to South Africans of all races.



## A decision model for schools

Avoiding emotional debate when setting priorities and making resource allocation decisions is often difficult.

A recent comprehensive district educational planning event at Newark Valley Central School (NV) demonstrates that a few simple techniques can replace positional argument with rational, collegial decision-making. The NV team was charged with designing K-12 ELA strategies to meet the New Standards.

### Building a learning organization

Key to effective decision-making is a thorough information scan that

- Builds a common knowledge base among team members and
- Allows the team to clarify basic assumptions *before* they feel pressured to make a decision.

The twenty team members researched and made presentations on remedial models, school readiness, effective teaching practices, successful schools, NV's current ELA program and student performance, among others.

### Efficient decision-making

Armed with this shared knowledge, the team was primed for an efficient one-day planning meeting where they

- Generated 21 possible K-12 ELA program options
- Identified and weighted six criteria for selecting from among those options

(*Decision* continued on back)

## Decision con't

- Assessed the top nine options against those criteria using the CoNexus® decision matrix
- Unanimously agreed to assign district resources of time, people and budget to four of the nine options. (See graph and chart following.)

### CoNexus® decision matrix

The NV team used radio response keypads to weight criteria using a pairwise comparison analysis. The weighted criteria were then dropped across the top of a decision matrix with the nine program options listed down the side.

The team then assessed each option against each criterion in a 1 to 9 vote. CoNexus® displayed the results of each vote in a histogram. If there was disagreement, the group discussed the results and revoted.

After the group voted that last cell in the matrix, CoNexus® displayed the final raw and

weighted results. Because the group had resolved most issues during the information scan, the weighting of criteria and the matrix vote, they moved quickly and unanimously to agreement.

### Strong consensus

According to NV Assistant to the Superintendent Meg Grant, "CoNexus® provided an effective, efficient process that enabled a group with diverse backgrounds to reach consensus on prioritized strategies."

## Product news

Not a week goes by without new decision support products appearing in the marketplace. Many new tools are Internet capable for web-based surveys and work in "virtual decision rooms". Such capability allows

## Optimal thinking tips

### Stimulate your mind

When in a thinking rut, get a jump-start. Immerse yourself with information related and unrelated to the challenge. Explore reference books and journals, watch a movie or listen to music, walk in the woods, surf the Web, prepare a culinary delight.

### Allow time for incubation

Put it in neutral for a while. Let the information work. Remain idle, even sleep on it. But keep a notepad by the bed.

### Idea stream

Turn the key and step on it. Focus. Reconsider the challenge. Then let the ideas stream into a list, sketch, conversation, mindmap, memo—whatever's most comfortable.

teams to solve problems or develop strategic plans at the same time from different places around the country—even from around the world!

### Next generation CoNexus®

In the second quarter of 1999, Leadership 2000, Inc. will introduce the next generation of CoNexus®, a

more flexible tool that will also be Internet capable. PRISM will beta test this new product.

According to *The LA Times*' Downing, "CoNexus® polling contributed to the effectiveness of our off-site. We were able to know within minutes where a large and diverse group was in their thinking and receptivity to each topic. We could then address the issues raised by the polling. I am a great fan of CoNexus®, a very effective tool."

## Clients

Amot-Ogden Medical Center  
Educational Institutions:

Binghamton City Schools  
Broome-Tioga BOCES  
Chenango Forks Schools  
Deposit Schools  
Herkimer BOCES

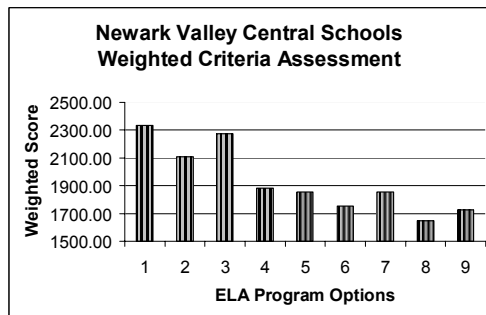
Newark Valley Schools  
SUNY Cortland

Susquehanna Valley Schools  
Union Endicott Schools

NYSEG

Times Mirror Company  
United Health Services

Chenango Memorial Hospital  
The Clinical Campus



## CoNexus® success

When Kathryn Downing and Mary Junck, presidents of *The Los Angeles Times* and *Times Mirror Eastern Papers*, called to ask if CoNexus® could be used to poll 125 senior managers for the Times Mirror Company at a three-day off-site, I said, "Absolutely." But I asked whether simple polling would provide much value. Kathryn and Mary assured me that it would.

### CoNexus®, "a very effective tool"

At the meeting, Times Mirror executives presented a series of strategic initiatives. The entire audience then responded to polling questions related to their confidence in the market and revenue assumptions underlying each initiative and its strategic fit.

### Newark Valley ELA Priorities

- 1 Align the K-12 ELA curriculum with the New Standards and assessments. Develop local K-12 assessments and benchmarks.
- 2 Implement a multi-faceted remedial instruction program.
- 3 Implement a comprehensive early readiness program birth to age seven.
- 4 Implement internal checks to ensure full implementation of aligned K-12 curriculum.