

## Staying Connected

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### School services

PRISM's school services now include professional development and capital project planning for technology, athletic and educational facilities.

### The power of focus

CoNexus® helps Union-Endicott Central School's planning team speed through comprehensive district educational planning (CDEP) with powerful effect.

### Ideal learning

Binghamton City School students use CoNexus® to define the ideal learning experience.

### Group genius

PRISM was a member of the "knowledge worker crew" for The Foresight Institute's "Group Genius" weekend in Palo Alto, California.

### 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 services

PRISM Decision Systems helps you accelerate and improve school district planning with

- Efficient group decision processes
- CoNexus®, a state-of-the-art group decision system.

### CDEP with quality and speed

Remember when writing a mission statement took months—if not years? Working with PRISM for three to five sessions, a comprehensive district educational planning (CDEP) team delivers

- Student performance targets
- Comprehensive five-year strategies
- Three to four immediate priorities.

These priorities then drive implementation planning: budgeting, staff and curriculum development, shared decision planning, and communication.

### Referendums

PRISM can lower the risk of multi-million dollar facilities or technology referendums. Our stakeholder involvement process ensures that capital projects are designed with constituent interests in mind. The CoNexus® decision matrix helps the capital team make sound decisions by assessing many options against weighted criteria.

### Professional development planning

PRISM can help you create a staff development plan that aligns with the district CDEP and maximizes the return on each dollar invested.

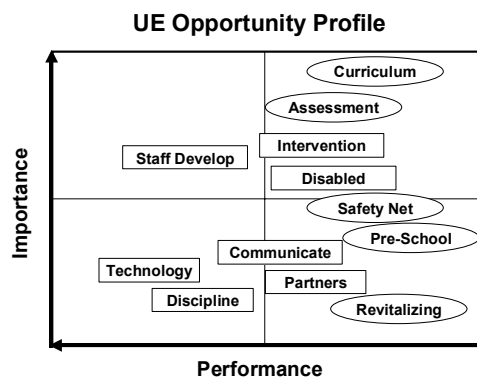
## The power of focus

Perhaps the greatest challenge for a CDEP team is to identify where a district's limited resources can have maximum impact on student performance. And with so many stakeholders, reaching agreement seems nearly impossible. Or is it?

### Discovering leverage

At Union Endicott Central School (UE), Superintendent Dennis Sweeney believes "we now have a comprehensive plan with high-level agreement on key priorities. This is exactly what we sought in the CDEP process." UE reached this strong agreement using a gap analysis technique called "profiling".

Profiling allows a CDEP team to find the key "leverage points" in the system where change can lead to lasting improvement in student performance.



### CoNexus®

After agreeing to five-year strategies for improving student performance, the UE team used CoNexus® radio response keypads to vote on

- The relative importance of each strategy to great success
- Current district performance on each strategy.

CoNexus® immediately displayed vote results in the "opportunity profile" above. Behind each key word is a richly written strategy. The four strategies in the upper right hand quadrant were voted very important (*Focus continued on back*)

## Focus continued

(on the vertical axis) and under performing (on the horizontal axis.)

After discussing the profile, the team unanimously agreed that UE must focus on these four very important and under performing priorities:

- *Curriculum*: Align the K-12 curriculum with the New York State standards and assessments.
- *Assessment*: Create local K-12 benchmarks to measure student performance annually.
- *Intervention*: Design intervention systems at multiple points for at-risk students.
- *Disabled*: Improve performance of students with disabilities.

These four priorities are now the focus of UE's budgeting, staff and curriculum development, and communications. "I am very satisfied with our results," Dr. Sweeney said.

## Ideal learning

As part of the information-gathering phase of Binghamton City School District's professional development planning, PRISM did focus groups with fifth graders and middle school students. Each group was asked to identify characteristics of the ideal learning experience. Below are those that were common to both groups.

### The teacher, hands-on and fun

Most important in each case was the quality and character of the teacher, who was described as clear, fair, friendly to and respectful of students. Each group identified "hands-on" as a key attribute citing science experiments, demonstrations, use of manipulatives, and educational games that make learning fun.

### Collaboration and pace

Learning in teams allows sharing with others, learning from other perspectives, helping and being helped by peers, combining for better answers, and learning in terms other than the teacher's. The pace of learning was also important. Both groups preferred going "in depth" to trying to "squeeze everything in".

## Optimal thinking tips

You're in a dynamic, collegial planning session. Suddenly the great excitement and creative energy deflate as the group moves to select a set of options. Participants retreat to their parochial interests. Negotiation supplants invention. Turf rules. What to do?

### Redefine the pie

Identify key unmet interests by asking *why* the solution set is inadequate. Then innovate—design new options, enlarge the solution set, and address each key unmet interest.

### A parable

A camel driver willed half his estate to his oldest son, a third to his middle son and a ninth to his youngest son. Unfortunately, his estate consisted of seventeen camels—a real problem for the boys! As they argued vehemently, a stranger with a single camel passed by and inquired what was the matter. Upon hearing of their difficulty, he gave them his camel. After thanking the stranger and accepting his camel, the sons immediately agreed that the oldest should have nine of the eighteen camels; the middle son, six; and the youngest, two. They then returned the remaining camel to the stranger, who went on his way.

- Thanks for the parable to Angel Sanchez, my good friend from Mexico City

The students' CoNexus<sup>®</sup> votes revealed that these key attributes have not been adequately satisfied in their school careers. Have these kids been reading Howard Gardener?

## Group genius

Imagine manufacturing at the atomic level with atomic precision. Building one atom at a time at a scale 1000 times smaller than done today.

Recently in California's Silicon Valley, The Foresight Institute hosted its "Group Genius" weekend to map a thirty-year future for nanotechnology. As a "knowledge worker" at the event, PRISM had a unique glimpse into the future.

### Way beyond the Jettsons

Nanotechnology will involve atomic-sized computers called "nano-disassemblers" that create "atom streams" from any raw material. "Nano-assemblers" then use the stream of individual atoms to manufacture anything the laws of physics allow.

The implications of such a breakthrough are staggering and include possibilities for radical life extension, creation of "designer" people, and machine intelligence. And what of social systems? Since all manufacturing will be done by

nano-computers, there would be little need for human labor. Further, what we now consider the source of a nation's wealth—coal, oil, uranium, etc.—will have little value, since they could be manufactured. We're talking way beyond the Jettsons.

## Engagements

Arnot Medical Services  
Broome-Tioga Workforce Development System  
Educational Institutions:  
Binghamton City Schools  
Broome-Tioga BOCES  
Chenango Forks Schools  
Deposit Schools  
Herkimer BOCES  
Newark Valley Schools  
Susquehanna Valley Schools  
Union-Endicott Schools  
Vestal Central Schools  
Innovation Systems Group for work with *The Los Angeles Times*  
Irma S. Mann Strategic Marketing for work with the Greater Boston Visitor and Convention Bureau  
Leadership 2000 for work with Bellcore and SAIC  
Litton-Tasc for work with The National Institute for Health  
McDonald-Bradley for work with the Wash. DC Metro Transit Authority  
New York State Electric & Gas  
Times Mirror Company  
United Health Services