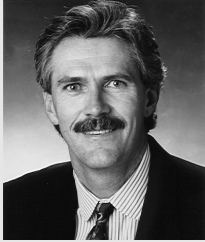


"Nothing is so well learned as that which is discovered." - Socrates

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Article by Quinn Dalton



By any standard, 2001 was a memorable year. At Discovery Learning, some of the events of 2001 are exciting and gratifying. But like all of you some of the events have been sad and

frightening. All of this has given us pause to reflect on what we are doing and why we are doing it.

At Discovery Learning, we have introduced two new simulations, *EdgeWork*® and *Press-Time*. Our new on-line software for scoring Change Style Indicator and Decision Style Profile was implemented in December. Also in December we moved from our cozy, though cramped, offices in the Fisher Park Historical District to a roomier but very different environment—a newly renovated warehouse in a downtown area that is being revitalized. Our new location fulfills one of our goals: to provide an inviting and open space that we can share with the work community of which we are a part. This includes having training space for our train-the-trainers and other events.

The expanded capacity afforded by our successes in 2001 coupled with the events of 9/11 and the economic recession have demanded that we reflect on Discovery Learning's mission, just as many of you have taken time to ask why and how you are doing what you are doing. Our mission statement, "Collaborating to build healthy and sustainable organizations through experiential learning and individual, team and organizational assessment," has provided us direction as we faced the successes and perils brought by 2001.

Our prayer is that all of you are finding the rudder you need to steer through these times of upheaval, uncertainty and new beginnings.

Chris Musselwhite, President

How Many Principals Does It Take To Make a Paper Plane?

Accountability Takes Off

For better or worse, school accountability has become a top priority for teachers, administrators and politicians across the country. One result of this trend is that twenty-nine states now allow parents to shop among public schools across a state or within districts.

Florida is one of those states and like several others, it ties teacher salary increases to school improvement. But most of the accountability rests squarely on the shoulders of Florida's 3,200 principals—in public perception as much as policy.

No longer a classroom annoyance, paper planes are team building tools for principals who want their schools to fly high.

To gain insight into their effectiveness as leaders and to facilitate their school's success with the new accountability legislation, some Florida principals are using a simulation called Paper Planes, Inc. Designed by Discovery Learning, Inc., the simulation has been used in widely varying corporate and educational environments, from pharmaceutical sales teams at Merck to NASA test pilots to teachers, principals and superintendents in school systems in other areas of the country.

Rising to the Challenge

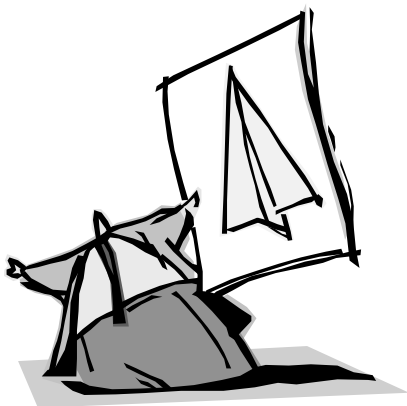
Principals occupy a difficult position in the school system. They aren't on the front lines with the students, like teachers are, and they aren't on the top line of management, like superintendents. In spite of the fact that they're not the ultimate decision-makers nor implementers, principals are often considered responsible for both sides of the equation.

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Responding to that unique need, Florida has launched an innovative state-wide initiative designed to help school principals develop "CEO-style" leadership strategies. The goal is to help Florida principals ensure that their schools meet or exceed the new state-wide standards set by the 1999 A+ Education Reform for High Quality Schools legislation..

The new two-year program, Principal Executive Leadership Development, seeks to give principals the tools to successfully address the high-stakes requirements of Florida's accountability legislation--not just in quantitative terms, such as test scores, but also in qualitative terms, as in rethinking who they are as leaders and how they can facilitate success throughout their entire organization. Funded through the Florida Department of Education and administered by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS), the program is open to principals who are nominated by their superintendents. It spans four three-day sessions over the course of several months. The first two sessions offer a mix of state-specific technical training and leadership development, while the third and fourth sessions consist almost entirely of leadership development.

Drawing from training methodologies used with for-profit corporations, principals are thought of as CEO's and are given business-



Paper Planes, Inc. is an award-winning simulation about doing things better. It helps participants experience the powerful payoff from systems reengineering and process improvement. The simulation helps them gain first-hand knowledge about the cost and waste inherent in a dysfunctional system. It helps participants focus on creating systems that respond to changing conditions and meet customer needs. It's about total quality, waste reduction, high performance and customer satisfaction coming from people who now realize they are in control of making it happen.

Supply Kit and Tool Box provide everything needed for a simulation with up to 30 people.



oriented strategies for encouraging school improvement. Group activities called simulations, which allow participants to experience the success or failure of their decisions under controlled circumstances, give principals the added benefit of self- and peer evaluation. Principals leave with a plan for their ongoing professional growth and for continually improving teacher development and student achievement. They develop a better feel for how to facilitate the success of others.

"Most principal training is canned--a speaker comes for a day and that's supposed to make a difference," says FADSS associate executive officer David Mosrie, Ed.D. "But we had to provide both state-specific training and meaningful leadership development that principals could apply in practical

ways to improve student achievement in their schools."

Think Like a CEO.

Larry Coble, Ed.D., Director of The Collegium for the Advancement of Schools, Schooling and Education at the University of North Carolina Greensboro, designed much of the program's leadership development component. Recognizing the fact that principals can't improve schools by themselves, he chose to use Paper Planes so principals could get quick feedback on their effectiveness in teams and apply new ideas immediately.

"Being able to work well in teams is crucial to achieving high performance in organizations," says Dr. Coble. "Although Paper Planes simulates a production process, it helps people

experience the improvement in quality that results in any organization when people are truly united in their goals."

In Paper Planes, Inc., participants fill various roles such as airfoil technician, wing cutter and test pilot for a day. The simulation replicates a regular production facility—except the planes are made of paper, and success is measured in terms of participants' ability to reengineer processes in order to work more effectively with others. The goal is to "sell" as many planes as possible to a "customer"—usually one of the simulation facilitators. Planes must meet high quality standards; usually nearly all the planes are rejected during the first round of production.

In later cycles, workers can redesign the production process to their requirements. They then compare their process to the original in terms of cost, quality and delivery time, as well as worker satisfaction. "In this phase they begin to resolve problems and to experience the real improvements that result from working within a more flexible, communicative team," says Dr. Chris Musselwhite, the simulation's designer..

In corporate scenarios, the focus is often on reducing cost while improving efficiency among teams. In the education setting, Paper Planes, Inc. can be particularly effective in helping people understand and manage the gaps between their job descriptions and their day-to-day responsibilities.

Debbie Iseman, principal of Floresta Elementary in Port St. Lucie, Florida, credits Paper Planes, Inc. with helping her to see beyond her school's role in the many steps required to support high student achievement over the course of an entire student career. "In the Paper Planes exercise I was the test pilot, and it was my job to make sure the plane met certain standards before it could be 'sold'," recalls Iseman. "When people delivered a shoddy product, I

was frustrated. But then our team found ways to better communicate with each other about what we needed to accomplish in each step of the process, and our performance improved."

How has this translated into changes in her school? "We use a reading diagnostic at the beginning, middle and end of the school year," says Iseman. "In the past, if a student didn't show improvement, we'd look to the teacher for an explanation, but we didn't always look for further data. Now I ask for more data so we can get to the specific reasons why a student isn't advancing. That way we can get to possible sources of problems."



they need to get the job done instead of making assumptions and harboring resentment, according to Dr. Musselwhite. "After the first production and sales cycle, the workers are frustrated, because the simulation forces them to face conflicts from their real-life workplace," says Musselwhite. "They try to focus on the product rather than the process—and process is crucial when you're working with others to achieve great results."

The entire three-day program gave Iseman a view of the bigger picture of student performance. "If you can't think about the final product--what are these students going to need in middle school, in high school--then you'll never have an effective process for supporting them," says Iseman. "We have started talking with kindergarten teachers about the

competencies students must have for fifth grade. I'm visiting middle schools and high schools so I can anticipate those needs. It's been a big 'a-ha' for me."

A proven solution.

"Principals often find themselves operating in a reactionary mode, with little opportunity for reflection," says Dr. Coble. "As part of accountability, they face practical issues, such as how to improve student performance and support teachers, who have little policy-making power and yet must implement policies in the classroom. The Paper Planes simulation allows principals to reflect on their experiences so they can successfully apply their new knowledge in leading high-performance schools. "

Dr. Coble has used Paper Planes, Inc. extensively in educational settings, most recently in a two-year program called Ohio's Appalachian Initiative for teachers, principals and superintendents in Ohio's twenty-nine Appalachian counties. Specific program requirements were different than Florida's but the overall goal was the same: support high achievement among students. "Just as in Florida, we've used Paper Planes to help participants rely on objectivity in decision-making, rather than intuition, and to improve their management and leadership skills," says Coble.

In Florida, preliminary findings are positive. Participants have rated the sessions highly in terms of usefulness and applicability to the challenges facing them. FADSS has also contracted with a government "watchdog" group, to evaluate the pilot sessions against the proposed outcomes in an effort to measure long-term success. "We'll know more about what the participants got out of the process after the final session," says Dr. Mosrie. "It will take some time to see if this process positively affects student and school performance. But we're optimistic."

What's happening at DLI?

We are excited about our new business space.

Discovery Learning, Inc. has relocated its offices from the cozy house we occupied in Greensboro's historical district to a spacious

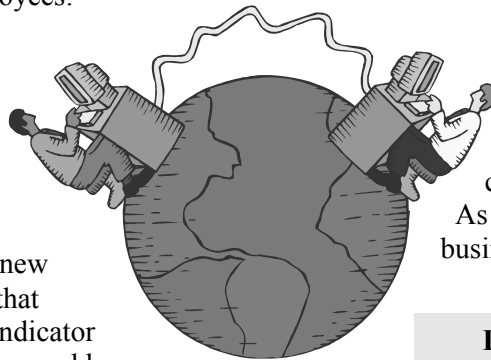
building we remodeled just to meet our needs. We are now located at 431 Spring Garden St., Greensboro, NC 27401. That's near both UNC-Greensboro and the downtown business district. Our telephone and fax numbers remain the same. Along with the space, we have added three new part-time employees: Josh Sides, Lucy Austin and Nash Musselwhite. They will be working primarily in the customer service and shipping areas. All of us welcome you to visit us in our new offices.

Discovery Learning has launched its new **Online Survey Assessment Center** that currently includes the Change Style Indicator and Decision Style Profile. We will soon add GoalGetter. Through this internet-based capability, trainers can now have their clients complete selected DLI assessment tools online. Each trainer manages and controls his or her own projects. To use the online system, trainers must first receive a user name and



password to access the DLI webservice. After entering the system, the trainer can set up and manage any number of assessments. Participants receive an e-mail from the trainer with the web address, program code and PIN needed to take the surveys. Reminder e-mails can be sent easily to those participants who have not yet responded. Individual and Group reports are automatically generated by the system and are available to the trainer as needed. The system will also have a hand-score tool to replace DLI's current hand-scoring software. This new platform is highly flexible and DLI plans to add future assessments and further develop its capability and applications.

Please call us to learn more about the new **Online Survey Assessment Center**. We think this new capability greatly enhances the services Discovery Learning provides its clients. We want you to experience it for yourself. If you would like to use the new system on a project or if you would like to sample one of the online assessments, please call. We'll be glad to help you understand how it can help you better serve your clients. As always, we are in business to improve business.



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