Teaching Deliberatively:

_Thinking differently about things that matter_

A Report to the Iowa Writing Project, the Iowa State Education and the Iowa Partners in Learning

About the Workshop at UNI, June 28 – July 2 2010

Compiled by Gerald Ott
The Iowa Partners in Learning began as a committee of the New Iowa Schools Development Corporation (NISDC). The committee’s charge was to identify engagement strategies that might assist communities and schools to better connect (reconnect) one with another. In the mid-'90s Grant Wood AEA consultant/Iowa Writing Project director Jim Davis had success using materials and engagement strategies the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) had developed. The National Issues Forums Institute is a program of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation located in Dayton OH. At Jim’s suggestion, NISDC organized a cadre of staff from the Department of Education, the Iowa School Boards Association, the Iowa State Education Association and NISDC to attend a “Public Policy Institute” (PPI) at CAL Davis University where the university’s extension services hosts the National Issues Forums work in northern California. The cadre came back to Iowa having learned something about convening, moderating and recording forums and something of the deliberative process including naming and framing issues. The Davis PPI provided the cadre with considerable motivation to start an Iowa group similarly associated with the National Issues Forums Institute.

The members of the NISDC “community engagement” committee became the founding members of the Iowa Partners in Learning, which continued operations even after New Iowa Schools lost is core funding and its board of directors dissolved. Using resources from various sources, the Partners organized and convened numerous PPIs (for learning about the practice of public deliberation), hosted in concert with the Department of Education, other education associations, Drake University, Iowa State Extension, one or more to the AEAs, the League of Women Voters, and others. Other workshops focused on naming and framing public issues of importance to localities wanting to convene forums. Issues included healthcare, immigration, school leadership, equity, and the “achievement gap” in schools, among others. The Partners group is fortunate that the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) has provided a place, staffing, and financial accounting for Partners members to continue meeting and planning its initiatives.

One initiative that has been on the Partners’ agenda for sometime, but not acted upon until now, has been the thought that convening a workshop for teachers who might attend and learn something about public deliberation and take the practices
back to their schools, engage their students who might, in turn, convene forums with their peers or within the larger community. That thought found legs in 2010 when Jim Davis suggested that a workshop jointly conducted by the Partners and the Iowa Writing Project might provide the resources, incentives, staffing and location for a workshop meeting our aspirations, including student learning, community-based civil life, school-community integration, and/or sustainable change. That week-long workshop occurred on June 28 - July 2, and this report summarizes the workshop, its objectives and prospects for future work.

Our primary goal is that high school students under the guidance of their teachers will research local problems and issues and frame an issue in class or as part of a co-curricular activity; and convene, moderate, record and report on a forum about the issue.

About the workshop

Many people would like a stronger hand in shaping their collective future, which requires making choices about what they want that future to be. This workshop is designed for teachers interested in joining with others in order to do something about critical issues facing them, their schools and students. Standing in the way of progress are inevitable disagreements over what should be done. People may recognize that what is happening to them isn’t good, yet may not agree about what would be better. They may even disagree about the nature of the issue or problem that is confronting them. And they may or may not make sound decisions about what is in their best interest.

If people are going to master these challenges and act together wisely, they need to be able to make sound decisions together. This workshop is not a “how-to” guide, but it does provide insight into the kind of decision making that leads to effective collective action and helps turn first impressions and hasty conclusions into a more shared and reflective public (classroom-wide, school-wide, community-wide) voice.* *Paraphrased from “Working Through Difficult Decisions,” a Kettering publication.
I believe that the key to democracy is based on sound education for all. I feel fortunate to have had many teachers in the seventies who were trained to make me think. I felt that at key points in my education I had at least one teacher who knew how to make me work to make me a better speaker, thinker and writer. One thing I did not have was one who was able to make that work outside the classroom. I think that is what excites me most about all this, is that it “could” lead to something. Kids need to see a connection to what they are learning and their world and this could be a key component to stimulate that in my class, our new group or in the building as a whole. We will see. Ken

In order to address these tasks the twenty-three teachers and community members who participated in this workshop first joined with the workshop faculty to conduct a forum, in this instance based on the NIFI discussion guide “America’s Role in the World: What does national security mean in the 21st century”? Dave Wilkinson of the Iowa State Education Association moderated the forum and Gerry Ott (Butler Consulting LLC) and Cal Halliburton (Halliburton & Associates) recorded, attempting to create a history of the forum.

Jim Davis asked participants to prepare written reflections on the forum, which are included in the text of this report.

On Tuesday Jim facilitated a de-briefing of the forum using the written reflections as a guide. Participants were guided into a discussion of the roles and processes of public deliberation, as used in National Issues Forums.

- Convening
- Moderating
- Recording
- Reporting
- Researching
- Framing issues
- Naming problems

On Wednesday, Virginia Varce from Des Moines, a member of the Iowa Partners, facilitated a process called “Quick Framing” meant to introduce participants to the essential elements of framing an issue for public deliberation.

On Thursday, participants volunteered for roles in conducting a forum using the NIF discussion guide “Too Many Children Left Behind: Closing the Achievement Gap.”
Participants chose roles as introducer, moderator, observer, recorder and citizen deliberator. Dave facilitated a “fishbowl” process to unpack the roles after the forum. Jim introduced a worksheet entitled “Layers of Implementation,” which asked participants and school-based teams to plan forward their respective uses of the deliberative process as individuals, in work with one/two other teachers, at the building level with students as moderators, across districts to include the extended school stakeholders, in outreach to the community, and finally as student-moderators of community-based forums.

On Friday, faculty met with school-based teams for team planning and reporting. As we began, Jim led us in a review of the IPL/IWP rationale for this class, including aspirations for student learning, community-based civic-life, school-community integration, and, most importantly, sustainable change. The highest aspiration may be to have “leader-full communities” with a cadre of citizens invested in this democratic decision-making process. How a decision in a community is made may be ultimately more important than what decision was made. Dave shared an example of a deliberative community forum process happening at McKinley Middle School in Cedar Rapids. Several other resources were also reviewed. Tentatively scheduled a follow-up session the first Saturday in November. Jim also asked for a one page reflection (sent as email) giving feedback on the week as we’ve experienced it, the benefits received, etc. Afterwards, the teams were given time to add some authorizing rationale to their plans.

**Ankeny**—Use of forums in an integrated English-Social Studies 10th grade class, focusing on considering six factors of history (technology, ideology, random events, personalities, economics, natural disasters).
Cedar Falls—Three of our team members are English instructors at Cedar Falls High School, and one is a community member and “probable” teacher at Price Lab School. We all plan to implement some layer(s) of the deliberative forum in our classes. The tentative plan for the Cedar Falls teachers is as follows:

To begin, we will use the forum to help as a base structure/beginning layer for research papers that focus on controversial issues in society. The two classes involved would be Composition and Perception and Composition and Rhetoric. Both classes require that students research and share information and opinions regarding chosen aspects of issues that continue to cause debate and remain, to varying extents, unsettled within our society and around the world.

Teachers will gather background information and frame a controversial issue to present to students in an effort to prepare them for an actual forum and to help them understand the value of deliberation, rather than just choosing a side of a controversial issue. Ultimately, we want students to learn the importance of understanding or at least listening to others’ views when making decisions and when problem solving. Students will learn about the various roles, experience a forum, and reflect about the impacts of deliberation, with special attention given to the ideas of positives, negatives, and trade offs when it comes to controversial issues. Eventually, we hope to have them frame their own issues to help them with their research.

Because of time constraints, we plan to hold mini-forums over each of three approaches, so this will most likely take 3 to 5 class days after the initial readings of background info and approaches we have framed. Some of us

Personally, I am so excited to share this thought-provoking and critical-thinking process with my young adults! The deliberative forum will add some depth to the units we teach that deal with controversial issues in society. I envision using the forum within a variety of units beyond Composition and Rhetoric. Learning that listening is as important as speaking is just one aspect of deliberation that I know all of us need to experience and embrace. My students and I will be better citizens because of even that one aspect, but really the whole process is amazing! It fosters community, respect, and the sharing of vital information regarding targeted issues. Teresa
envision inviting various members of staff and the community to our forums in order to offer students views and voices beyond their student fellowship. All students will be writing reflectively about the forums and applying some of the strategies to their research. All in all, we are excited about the value of deliberative forum for our students!

**Jesup**—Use of forums in Speech, including use of *Etherpad* to include conversation and comments of those who are on the outside of the fishbowl. In English and Comp classes, start students with research that leads to framing an issue in something like a placemat format.

**Mount Vernon**—In Psychology Class, use of forum on how we treat the mentally ill (or an existing frame). In spring Problems in Modern Society class will use forums as basis for the class format. In Film as Literature class, use of forum in one of the units on “Why do we have a love/hate relationship with the ugly Americans?”(Citizen Kane, Bonnie and Clyde, Easy Rider) In College Writing Class, have a selection of students in fishbowl defend/explain why they wrote/approached the topic as they did. Contemporary Lit and Honors Comp class design forums surrounding terrorism issues before and after reading *A Thousand Splendid Suns* and *The Kite Runner.*
North Tama—Convene a student group (and later a teacher group) to rework a mission statement that has buy-in for all stakeholders. (Jim referenced the book *Fires in the Mind: What Kids Can Tell Us About Motivation and Mastery* by Kathleen Cushman.)

Oelwein—Using the forum to structure conversations in upper level Spanish classes, initial instruction on the forum process would occur in English. (Referenced the movie “Under the Same Moon”)

Turkey Valley—Waiting to find out what they’ll be teaching so they can incorporate the forum format in classes. Environmental Education class will include the forum to frame issues during the units of human population, land use, and waste management. Community leaders will be included in the discussions.

Wapsie Valley—Two year plan: Begin next year with use of forum in some classes, Honor Society, student council, etc. In the following year, as part of biannual Career Fair, include a forum on what the school district should be prioritizing for educational outcomes, led by students who have used forum the previously.
Waverly/Shell Rock—Junior Leadership Club to explore/frame issues within the school and community. In taking this course I was not sure what to expect however, the idea of public deliberation and intentional use of such has been an interest of mine, in school. I have always tried to initiate democratic classroom meetings in the schools I work in. Sometimes this has been a success and sometimes not, depending on teacher receptivity. I personally will be much better at that, and will be adding to our student’s experiences because of this class. I thank you for that.

One of the major reasons I will have support for these efforts are the following excerpts from our new Iowa Core Curriculum. These concepts and skills fall right in line with the teachings that I had this last week.

Middle (6 – 8) Iowa Core Skills and Concepts:

Essential Concept and/or Skill: Understand the rights and responsibilities of each citizen and demonstrate the value of lifelong civic action.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: Understand how the government established by the Constitution embodies the principles of democracy.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: Understand the purpose and function of each of the three branches of government established by the Constitution.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: Understand the similarities and differences among the complex levels of local, state and national government.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: Understand strategies for effective political action that
impacts local, state and national governance.

In short, deliberative work is more time consuming but well worth that time. This reminds me of the consensus decision-making trend we went through years ago in education. The meetings tended to go on a long time and pressure to get test scores up seemed to push that process out. Now, attempts are made but you know what the higher ups want and you just do it. Also, we have people wearing multiple hats and administrators with less time in buildings etc and they are overwhelmed.

I think in working with my charges the key will be to get them to learn how to frame an issue first. Then to review roles, practice skill sets and hopefully hold a forum on a subject that sixth graders can relate too. This could be as simple as addressing obesity, bullying, making our school and community greener or “how to make the classroom more deliberative.” Now, that last one would be interesting.

The importance of handouts and pre-reading is helpful to this process. I liked that fact that we had so many different things to look at. It gave me ideas. Differing perspectives on issues helps with the framing process, it would seem. It is kind of like looking at the research when we do a project. Our kids are somewhat isolated from diverse thought being in a small midwestern town of mostly white children, who have their basic needs met.

The biggest challenge I learned was to understand that behind each choice is a range of concerns. The concerns related to our beliefs and values. All need to work through these tensions and deal with trade offs until we have a shared sense of direction. This fact is important to the kid as my level because they will have to learn to listen, speak assertively, and not be defensive or judgmental if they are to be successful in addressing an emerging problem.

This will be facilitated by keeping the focus on the issues and not opinions, not making judgments as moderator, using words of others to guide discussions and avoid either/or language. Nels Highberg noted this in the article. I found it very helpful.

So, in summary my major learning is that I have just begun to understand what the concepts and skills are. I think if I pay attention to the students and keep reflecting that I may have some success with the project. Regardless of all that, this course will make me a better teacher, counselor and person because of what I have learned about myself. Maybe that is one thing that children will learn too, that will make them better citizens. Ken

Of the twenty-three attending, 18 were women, 5 men. Twenty were high/middle schoolteachers, one was a middle school counselor, one a community member who also teaches in the UNI Lab School, and one a pastor of a local church in the community represented. With the exception of Ankeny participants, all others commuted to the workshop, indicating that the proximity to the UNI Campus in Cedar Falls may have been a factor in choosing to attend. Several had attended a prior IWP workshop, which helped promote this workshop. Through arrangements with the UNI Department of English and the Iowa Writing Project, participants were offered two hours of graduate credit for the 30-hour week and a third hour of credit for successful completion of the back home activities. The IWP developed a brochure promoting the workshop and Gerry Ott developed an e-mail promotion sent to all high school principals in the state. Dave Wilkinson promoted the workshop through his ISEA
contacts.

I’ve shared a lot of what we’ve learned with my husband. He is the leader of our church council at present, and we as a congregation are experiencing some tension because of controversial issues within our larger denomination. We have meetings scheduled for sharing of opinions and concerns, but a deliberative forum is what we need to help us listen and understand everyone’s views. Thank you for all the wonderful experiences, the materials, and for your wisdom. It’s easy to say we need to be leader full, but you showed us how to do it if we only make the effort. Teresa

Reflections on the forum

• This was a good exercise in listening, thinking, speaking and respect. I loved the topic but more so I appreciated the homogeneous group showing itself to be an entity of many colors.

• After having come off a very difficult teaching year, I really didn’t want anything to do with education. But after today’s class I feel that desire to go back at it.

• The order of discussions - positives and trade-offs - helped us think about the "other side" if we had a firm position. I appreciate being asked to think "in the round" like that.

• The guidelines are clear and concise and fair. I love the approach of a forum rather than a debate because the ideas may lead to real problem solving.

• I found the role of moderator and recorders to be essential for the guided engagement of all stakeholders.

• Jig-sawing the article worked well because the chart was available for a quick break down and the video was helpful, so I had enough information to sustain me without having read everything.

• Having it all recorded "CIS a huge benefit when looking at common ground & connections. My students can really benefit from becoming more active stakeholders in this process.

• It was stressful for me for several reasons. The first is that 15 minutes was not enough time for me to read and process information on this topic.
First of all, the comfort zone is established when the circle is created, but more importantly, the individual has control of when he/she speaks and how much. I'm a listener/thinker...

An intimidating afternoon for me! Although my area of expertise is geared toward a much younger student, as an educated, informed adult one would think I could have contributed something to the discussion ... fear played a role in my silence.

I think I learned that these rules are so important to have and review. Though I knew them, I felt myself getting a bit passionate...

The process allows persons to become informed in a nonthreatening manner, yet also allows them to express their opinions to an audience.

I think the forum process at first had me nervous. I didn’t want to have to share if I did not feel like sharing. But by having the freedom to share when I wanted, I was more able to loosen up and indeed express my opinion.

As I looked around the room and listened, I know we made some assumptions about other cultures. We talked about "those" radical Muslims and the terrorists. Ideally, it would be beneficial to hear from "those" people...

I know that my voice was missing. I tend to be the listener who absorbs slowly. I am someone who doesn’t feel I add much to the whole group ... I need to break the mold with myself as I try to do with my students.

We needed an actual decision maker sitting in one of the chairs ... a politician or officeholder who can affect change based on what we discussed.

Today’s activity didn’t seem all that different from having my students read a common passage and share their ideas in a large group discussion.

I learned at the end of the process that although we say propaganda and the media have shaped us, we are quite different. We have our own life experiences to shape our own thoughts.

As adults, I expected the quiet, respectful atmosphere, but will struggle with replicating in a HS setting. It will take some practice and diligence...

One thing I truly appreciated was the writing preceding the forum. Without that the discussion, I believe, would have been much different - less focused, lacking depth, etc.

As I watched the group, I couldn’t help but imagine this process with HS students ... having reading material with several sides to an issue seems very important.
• I did feel that not everyone felt comfortable participating, so I would like to
discuss a means of getting everyone involved.

• I liked the forum we did on the first day. It helped me see how the process
worked. I noted that it seems rather simple however, after being involved in
the process as moderator I noted that it was not that simple and it is not
counseling, which is my specialty. I also felt that I learned something about
myself in this process. I can be impatient with others who I perceive to be
less informed and that shuts down the process. Since I work with younger
children I guess I have tended to be more directive. So, that was an “aha”
moment for me too.

Questions asked . . .

• Are the distinctions between “debate” and “deliberation” merely semantics?

• What skills might students learn from forum work?

• Do these skills intersect with skills identified in the Iowa Core?

• How does “prior knowledge” come into play? How does “expertise” come into
play?

• Could forum work expand knowledge about issues/subjects otherwise taught in
school?

• Is an attitude of “civility” a desirable outcome of forum work?

• What are ways that forum work contributes to decision making and action?

• Are moderator skills and style unique? Or, can one use his/her regular teaching
style to moderate a forum?

• Why is a “third approach” important to a deliberative forum?
• Is there a difference between a “public” issue and a local issue or personal/family issue? Is deliberation appropriate to local concerns such as deciding what piano to purchase for the church?

• Is technical knowledge about the issue necessary before a person can participate in a public forum?

• Is there such a thing as a “deliberative ethic”?

Further research . . .

The following are indicators of success for this course. In the course of the next year, we will be gathering information to answer these questions for the final report.
1. Were workshop activities, methods and materials of sufficient quality to engage the participants at the desired level?

2. Did participants acquire personal learning sufficient to use deliberative understandings and forum techniques back home?

3. Is there evidence of collaborative implementation among participants back home?

4. Is there evidence of desired effects on students' knowledge, actions and dispositions in and out of school?

5. Is there evidence of desired effects in the community? (For example, is there evidence among students of tolerance for ambiguity and differences? Do citizens see a deliberative forum as a productive way to contribute to democracy in their community?)

Teaching Deliberatively Follow-up Session: Notes
November 6 2010

With some “flashback” insertions, these notes reflect the session as it unfolded, first through responses to the invitation to state briefly any implementation and add “I hope we talk about…”

Jesup
Serena: Grading? How do we document and evaluate this kind of student work? Guidelines are important, but do they control those attempting to dominate? Are they “self-correcting”…
Mark: With a forum just ahead, what are the pitfalls? What are the unanticipated things? [Later, the need for flexibility in the moment, room arrangements and “safe space” seemed important.]

Oelwein
Frank: Has been substituting heavily. No forum as yet?
Cathy: Before and after moderating a forum, is nervous about protecting expression, especially by kids who are hesitant due to life outside the classroom. Concerned about how to achieve deliberation and prevent argument/debate. [Found useful pages in notebook LATER!]

Ankeny
Kelcy: Gathering resources to help show why we need deliberation (forums), especially evident in the deterioration of contemplation in society (see election campaign). Recommends Tannen’s The Argument Culture: Stopping America’s War of Words and The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement. [was asked to post an article or two she uses?]
Jen: Has recognized the importance of personal stake – the need to be intentional about it. [Raised the question of personal stake in all aspects of schooling/learning – not that it is present, but should be?]
Katy: Did a forum early; is using it soon to replace the panel discussion in her speech class.

Waverly
Ken: Has formed an extra-curricular club of Civic Problem Solvers. Framing an issue on sibling rivalry. Rewrote forum role descriptions in kid friendly terms. Has/had to resist the temptation to support the moderator directly – to intervene when the moderator struggled.

IPL
Dave: Has been processing insights from the recent/current political season. Wondering how turnover in state and federal government will affect education. Moderated a forum at the DM Public Library for older citizens, who took it in their own direction in spite of Dave’s moderating! Forums will become the group’s activity. Gerry: IPL interim facilitator with Dave retiring. Working on KF/NIFI report on this project – implementation & effects. Very optimistic.

Cedar Falls
Abby: Now at Peet JH in 9th grade for the 1st time. Planning but has yet to do a forum; sees it as likely to go okay in 2 sections, suspect in 2 sections. Concerned about students playing to their self image.
Teresa: Participated in a HS forum handled by students. Stake in the issue is very important. Is seeking frames and topics of interest and appropriate to students at different levels.
Judy: Has had 1 pseudo and 1 public forum. Wonders how to prepare student
moderator better.
Julie: Back at PLS. Wondering about places to infuse deliberative approach and issues into curriculum. What are appropriate issues/frames for younger students?

**Wapsi Valley**
Gina: Last minute forum (note posted night before session) with a group of juniors. Framed issue herself with research support- 3 approaches to students concerning late work. Students were tougher than are their teachers policies. [Later considered possibility of a student issue framing team and approach.]
Angie: Moderated, to model, a forum on childhood drinking (from materials in packet last summer). Found it hard to moderate and reserve her own opinion. Students, in written reflection, were positive about and supportive of the process. Are writing a piece, without the frame/book, to synthesize their sense of the issue. Moving toward them framing issues.
Vicki: Held and moderated an 8th grade forum, in advance of reading *Touching Spirit Bear*, on “What should society do with repeat juvenile offenders?” Initially group conclusions were affected by opinionated, popular students; 2-3 days later, students seemed to have their own opinions and make their own decisions (evident in a private vote). Found it hardest to achieve deliberation and not debate, and to avoid the “pack” mentality.

**Mt. Vernon**
Sarah: Did one forum (sort of, I think). In a film unit on Manners, Moral sand Society, did a fish bowl activity after students wrote to a prompt involving moral stances in cultures. Inner circle of students who focused on a particular character, with Sarah moderating; outer circle generated challenging questions for the inner circle. Also raised the “Who is missing” question. Sarah is turning all classes into student centered learning classes. Did not grade the forum – learning & improving are reward enough. [Sarah’s “I believe I conduct a forum daily” led to discussion of differences between enlightened, open ended discussion leadership and a forum over a prepared issue frame?]

*[What would we do differently, how would we teach differently, if we could act/work with impunity?]* “I’m so close to retirement, what can they do to me!” Sarah.

**UNI**
JSD: Did session on deliberative democracy and teaching English at ICTE conference. Did community session in Keokuk on stewardship of deliberative democracy. Replicated parts of each session in session for UNICoTE undergraduate students preparing to teach. Has been part of a UNI “Project 9/11” team considering ways to commemorate 9/11 next year (10th anniversary). Is promoting a deliberative forum approach, including efforts to extend forums to Iowa communities. More info to come, but could also be an IPL initiative, as well as for the Teaching Deliberatively group.
**Additional discussion**

Kelcy: Tried a 1 pager – half concerning position coming into forum and how/whether it changed; half on what they saw the class having in common. (Could be a documenting approach instead of a grade.) The group framing and presentation took way more time than planned, so will need to be graded in some way.

Sarah: To what age students are we introducing sophisticated issues? What might the relationship need to be between reading (pre-forum) and issue deliberation?

JSD: Shared a sheet of information/questions on the nature and role of “expertise” in issue framing and public deliberation, distinguishing between frames developed by national, well funded bodies and those locally framed. Local framing can nonetheless be valid and lead to meaningful forums. What organizational role needs to provide access to diverse frames for use in diverse settings?

Teaching Deliberatively blog: Helpful to several people, though most of us need to master use of it better. Kudos to Gerry for the service; a shout out to those who have participated!

**For continued exploration & further discussion**

As we infuse deliberative work into our curricula, what might need to precede a forum, and what might a forum precede? Sometimes curricular material may have its own importance and still enhance a subsequent forum (reading a story or essay in advance of a forum on a related issue); sometimes a forum might have its own issue based purpose and still enhance subsequent units, learning experiences, etc. (experiencing a deliberative forum on an issue and subsequently studying a related unit in social studies). Perhaps we can more intentionally “package” and relate multiple learning experiences? Perhaps we can learn to discern evidence of learning in student behavior during a subsequent learning experience?

What constitutes the integration of a deliberative mindset and approaches in our personal lives and even in our professional practices but not be formal issue framing or a deliberative forum?

How do framing and deliberative “skills” relate to civic capacities and to kinds of student learning sought by core standards? How do we develop these skills in students and turn forum management over to them? Can we “release” to those who must “learn by doing”?

Can student involvement in these practices bridge into community civic life? How? With what groups/organizations might we need to partner?

Can sufficient learning be accomplished through these processes that we can choose not to cover something? To allocate time and curriculum differently? [What about this work as “reading informational text”? As report writing?]

How might we manage group size for better deliberation? What about fish bowl adaptations? Multiple people in roles?
What are the bases for selection of issues, to frame or for forums on prepared materials?

What sources of prepared and/or adaptable frames can we find & share? Can the TD Blog be a vehicle for this and other sharing?

Should we attempt future iterations of this workshop and follow-up sequence? If so, how might we better recruit for them? Should they be moved around in the state?

What funding sources might we find? Should there be a second level extension at some point?

*Thanks to all who attended and participated! We missed colleagues from North Tama and Turkey Valley!*

Notes from April 9 Workshop Day

**Re-introductions (shared learning – recent, any area):**

**Jenni** (leaving teaching to go to seminary next year). Now seeing teaching differently as of this year, more as facilitator with learners having more control (more balanced, anyway). Many students want to be told, initially, but when deliberation does not “tell,” they want to do it again!

**Kelcy** Pondering her move from 9th to HS and literature circles working less well; has become interested in reciprocal teaching as a way of placing more responsibility on learners. Finds it “not hard to let go if you don’t care too much what the outcome is,” but challenging when you do.

**Angie** Given additions to her load, she is adapting to a broader array of grade levels. This could mean moving certain practices (like deliberation) to lower grades, but is it the practice or the ways of thinking we need to cultivate, and not always in the same way?

**Cathy** Has found ample room for civic literacy as they have had to code their program in relation to the Iowa/Common Core. (Good chance to discuss the workshop with Superintendent.)

**Jim** In higher education, is seeing an inverse relationship between a pedagogy of telling and any openness to deliberative practices.
Vicki – recently experienced the need to not “tell” a student teacher, but to engage in dialogue at the end of the day about how to do things differently, then adapted that stance and strategy to her student writers.

Gina – enjoying the reading/writing connection with 11th graders. If they enjoy the literature, they like to write about it and can do so quite well.

Mark – not serving as speech coach this year, so better able to see “telling” behavior in new coach. Is becoming more facilitative – taking longer, covering less, for better quality.

Serena – getting some mileage from goal sheet on Monday, with work checked daily. Tough building situation this year – discouraged principal, re-evaluating the role/job.

Dave – struggles between teacher & learner roles – what circumstances are conducive to learning? Kids are learning machines, just not devoted to what we want them to learn. Hard to describe/explicate what we do as teachers.

Gerry – learning from grandchildren that it is easier to answer what we did today than what we learned. Interested in need for teachers to have learning experiences which parallel those they expect their students to have.

Recent work with deliberation:

- Wapsi Valley

Gina – Nothing official since last session; plans to yet this year, in part to counter the “debate” norm. Has discussed it among friends.

Vicki – Interesting legislative town hall experiences with challenging legislator. Found farmers to be allies once they understood the situation. Misunderstanding of teacher economics.

Angie – Did a better job with another forum. Wants to do more with framing, and with younger students. Genuine interest when kids get to stay with an issue. Thinks exploratory investigation could lead to framing instead of persuasion/debate. Possible use of the “deconstruction” sheet?

Next year – team thinking about career fair applications, of more w/ framing, of integrating questioning elements into elementary.

- Oelwein

Kathy has felt “scared away” from framing by experts. Deliberation is helping her learn to get out of the way more effectively – takes thought and preparation time.

- Ankeny
Kelcy - has used an education frame – kids had background knowledge and could grasp the issue; want to pursue the argument against argument, overcoming the limits of debate. Next year wants to refine work in Eng. 10 – more of a student role, and start the year with a forum in 11th.

- Jesup

Mark – interested in political season possibilities next year; school challenges/issues and a new superintendent.
Serena – using a fishbowl approach to argument – role play variation. Thinking about novel/ short story applications. Role of extra-curriculars could be a frame for faculty deliberation.

Everyone challenged to consider:
Levels & degrees of implementation –

- What practices can be used at what levels without the students finding it redundant? How do we achieve variety in pursuit of a common goal? What should be similar, what different at grades 7, 9, 11 for example?
- What is evidence of learner progress? Of movement toward considering multiple perspectives? Ability to apply ideas and approaches to a new issue? Students asking about the omissions? About who is not at the table? Students “seeing” issues? Tending to “frame”? Students aware of the world acting on them? Is openness to learning enough?
- What do the possibilities for common ground mean in classrooms? A basis for action? Is it enough for students to see issues to be addressed (complex) rather than problems to be solved (simple, if not simplistic)? Is there a responsibility for some coming together?

Possible results:

- Understanding the complexity of (an) issue(s) – that issues are complex, public, and not subject to expert solution alone;
- Appreciation of others’ perspectives;
- Recognition of potential (for) action(s).

IPL and IWP invest in this work because literacy, writing, and civic life are capacities (not skills) dependent on dispositions and passions. Complex alignment with multiple disciplines and with common core concerns.
Invitations: (To those present and absent)

Please provide feedback, especially to help us refine a second workshop in July;

Through IPL/IWP consider this group, future participants and others to be an audience
for your work, your documentation of and especially your reflections on that work;

Consider IPL/IWP a source of consultation as you move forward with your efforts;

Participate in follow-up sessions next year with the new group from this summer.

Thank you for all your work on this shared commitment to improved civic life!

ABOUT THE KETTERING FOUNDATION

The Kettering Foundation is an independent, nonpartisan research organization rooted in the American
tradition of cooperative research. Everything Kettering researches relate to one central question: what
does it take for democracy to work as it should? Or put another way: What does it take for citizens to
shape their collective future?

The foundation explores ways that key political practices can be strengthened through innovations that
emphasize active roles for citizens. Kettering’s research is distinctive because it is conducted from the
perspective of citizens and focuses on what people collectively can do to address problems affecting
their lives, their community, and their nation.

The foundation seeks to identify and address the challenges to making democracy work as it should
through interrelated program areas that focus on citizens, communities, and institutions. But Kettering
doesn’t study communities, schools, professions, or institutions like governments or colleges and
universities. Instead, we study how all of these relate to citizens trying to make a difference in shaping
their common future.