

# Chalkboard

By

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Collaboration. Teamwork. Partnership. Joint operation. Consensus. Group effort. Committee. These are concepts designed to counteract the concept of abulia. Perhaps even more, those concepts paint the mental picture of working together to achieve a common purpose. With only minor musing required, those terms also beg equality of individual contributions to a group process.

I recently shared the following thought to an older friend, a man in his late sixties, "I must be getting smarter because each day I am finding out how little I know." From the endless depths of his wisdom, he assured me, if I paid attention, that process would continue without end until my end.

It can be mildly humbling for some to discover that they are only one of several orbiters in a Copernican system rather than the orbited. Such revelation is easier if that person comes to that realization on his or her own rather than having to have it brought to his or her attention by others. I write having experienced an equal mix of both approaches.

Regardless of cause, after almost a half century in the making, I have come to embrace the idea that there may be some other ways to do things other than my own. Please understand this is a gentle departure from a person who used to half-jokingly espouse, "Mosquitoes were created by a committee incorporated with the purpose of designing a butterfly." Why did I say, "gentle departure" rather than "radical departure"? The truth of the matter is that I have always known that others are, more often than not, more competent than I. But I have also understood that in some situations, which require being a change agent, there is also a compressed time schedule involved. Generally a bus load of people headed toward a guard rail of a cliff do not bother to seek a majority vote as to whether or not to waken the driver.

I suspect that my own changing view about the practice of being a superintendent evolves from both the people I am charged with leading and from those who manage me. With regard to the first group and groups of sub-groups, I am fortunate to have a qualified, competent staff that work well together. With regard to the second, I am equally fortunate to have a diverse group of seven people who have the ability to blend seven different

points of view into a common purpose without complete regard to whether or not I agree.

To me, the real beauty of collaborative effort is the blending of the different experiences and natural abilities of individuals to drive a process that is better than any one of the individuals could singly accomplish. Does that mean that there is no room for individual achievement? Of course it does not. How many times have you been to some Pioneer athletic event where the team performance was average but some individual had an outstanding game? How many times did that individual performance equate to a victory for the team? How many times have you seen, on another night, some other player shine that did not shine the game before? A championship team, a good marriage, or a good organization is one where the weakness of one is complimented by the strength of another.

Such is real life. An effective organization is one in which the natural strengths and weaknesses of individuals are complimented by the natural strengths and weaknesses of other individuals.

So ends the *Chalkboards* for this school term. Not to fear, the series will be back in mid-July. As you might expect, the opening articles will deal with the district's need to build more classrooms. To do so will mean that you, the taxpayers, will need to form a consensus in the voting booths whether this is the right thing and right time to do so. Our millage campaigns are always "low key". As in past building program ventures, you will be given the particulars of what the school board and school officials deem the needs to be and then you will be left to make your own mind up as to whether the need justifies the expense. Gentry's way of waging a campaign is more akin to planning a family budget rather than waging a political strategy to win.

So, please excuse me for now. I have a lot of meetings to attend.