

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Keeping Score

If only education were more like baseball. In baseball, each player knows how well he is doing—batting .283, hitting 16 home runs, making 5 errors—and what the collective effort of the team adds up to—it makes the playoffs, or it doesn't; takes the pennant, or it doesn't; wins the world series, or it doesn't.

But in education, we rarely know how well we are doing. We may not even know who is on the team and who isn't, and we have few measures of individual or team performance. In fact, we can't even agree on which "stats" most clearly express our successes and failures. In short—no team, no batting averages, no world series.

Nevertheless, educators need to find out what their work adds up to. That is why they pay attention to the SAT, NAEP, and TIMSS results and the other measures of student performance. Here at Project 2061, we too want to know in what ways, if any, our work is making a difference.

As Project 2061 entered its tenth year, we asked: What has the work of a decade added up to? The Pew Charitable Trusts funded a year-long evaluation of the project by SRI International to find out. The SRI study points out some solid achievements, and those are reported elsewhere in this newsletter. But where do we go from here? My reading of the SRI report leads me to the following conclusions:

Stay the course. The Project 2061 commitment to comprehensive, goal-directed reform is having impact enough in the near-term (10 years or less) to justify its long-term strategy (25 years or more). If the study had found that our work was little known, rarely used, or made little difference when used, we could no longer justify continuing the meticulous, time-consuming field research that the project puts into developing reform tools. I see nothing in the report to lead to such a conclusion; instead I see encouragement for the project to continue to look beyond the immediate needs of reformers, however urgent, to help them

achieve more far-reaching goals.

Spread the word. Project 2061 receives high marks for its influence on federal agencies, national science standards, state and urban reform initiatives, teacher training institutions, and science education leaders. That's gratifying because those are the audiences we've been aiming for. But the SRI study also reveals that Project 2061 is not nearly as well known by K-12 teachers and administrators as we would like it to be. To some extent, this is because the project does not produce curricula, instructional materials, tests, or other resources that teachers use in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. But now it is time to tell our story to a much broader audience so that Project 2061 and its tools become as well-used by elementary, middle, and high school teachers as they are by state and national reformers.

Our pledge for the next ten years is *both* to keep on track and to get in better touch with the science, mathematics, and technology teachers who are essential to reform. If we do, I have no doubt that the next study (scheduled for the year 2000) will show that the work of Project 2061 adds up to even more than it does now. If we can just hit a few more home runs like *Science for All Americans* and *Benchmarks for Science Literacy*, we might at least make the playoffs. But remember, it's one inning at a time.



F. James Rutherford
Director

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