

# Archived Information

## Interim Evaluation of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

### **I. Brief Overview of Laboratory**

The NWREL interim evaluation was conducted at the Laboratory headquarters in Portland, Oregon, from April 5-9, 1999. In preparation for the Lab evaluation, I reviewed all of the materials assigned to the team. In addition to the group interviews shown in the agenda, I talked with Dr. Dean Arrasmith regarding the development and implementation status of the Information Planner. Dr. Arrasmith also demonstrated use of the Information Planner software for me. The Information Planner is an assessment and accountability initiative described in the initial RFP.

### **II. Implementation and Management**

#### **A. To what extent is the REL doing what they were approved to do during the first three contract years?**

Overall NWREL is performing adequately to above expectations in the third year of the contract cycle. NWREL is doing what it was approved to do as stated in the contract of work and as documented in modifications. Further, NWREL is fulfilling the mandated Lab functions of conducting applied research and development, providing technical services and building strategic alliances as it addresses the contract stipulations. Lab staff frequently express their efforts to “scale up” and to “put the pieces together” in product and services development/implementation as mandated in the RFP for this contract cycle.

Programs are funded and staffed to accomplish the tasks that have been set out. The Lab has been aggressive in seeking diversification of funding to meet board and Lab priorities and to maximize impact. Funds and staff are allocated across programs to accomplish desired objectives. Additionally, each of the programs and initiatives is monitored and evaluated for quality, utility and impact.

#### **Strengths:**

Strengths of the Lab include:

- (1) strong board governance, executive leadership and management;
- (2) aggressive leveraging of resources to maximize impact

(1) strong board governance and executive leadership and management

The beginning of this contract cycle coincided with significant changes in the governance, leadership and management of NWREL. Specifically, revisions in by-laws resulted in restructuring of the board of directors and a new Executive Director and Associate Executive Director were selected in response to a retirement and promotion, respectively. These changes occurred in the same time frame and appear to have re-energized much of the Lab work and increased the board's ability to provide appropriate oversight for the work of the Lab. According to members of the board's executive committee, the restructuring of the board was initiated at the board level through a self-assessment but was highly supported by the newly appointed executive director.

The restructuring of the board of directors resulted in a move from a board that operated in a highly ritualistic and uninvolved manner to an active working board. The board continues to maintain appropriate geographical, gender, ethnicity and role representation so that all stakeholders in the region have a voice on the board. All board members serve on committees, including financial, external relations, policy and strategic planning. The committee structure enables board members to provide direction to the Lab through setting of priorities, policy development and monitoring of performance. Listed below are examples to demonstrate recent board influence on Lab activities and direction.

- In terms of priority setting, the board established a priority for the Lab to seek diversification in funding in order to lessen reliance on OERI and federal funding. Lab administration responded in an aggressive manner and Lab funding now includes federal, district, educational agencies, private sector, foundations, higher education, community organizations, state education agencies and professional organization sources. Two significant areas of funding increasingly are represented by revenue from the U.S. Department of Justice and Americorps. Since 1996, by my assessment, NWREL has seen an increase of approximately 5% in its diversification of funding sources.

- Through a committee structure that results in all board members serving on at least one committee, the board provides oversight and direction to the Lab. The board appears to have been actively involved in the development of the Strategic Plan in 1995. Both the board executive committee and the Lab's executive leadership indicate that the board continues to be involved in annual revisions and modifications of the Strategic Plan. Board leadership ensures that the strategic plan is used to establish Lab priorities and direction and to align and monitor Lab operations on an on-going basis.
- With policy development, the executive board committee guides and sets parameters for the Lab operations. Oversight by the board is provided in such areas as use of resources, establishing processes for staff evaluation, budget development and development of compensation and retirement packages for staff.

In my assessment, the Lab executive staff also provides strong leadership in ensuring continuity of programs and services and efficiently manages its resources. They also remain alert to identification of emerging issues and refining of products to better serve clients. The Lab executive leadership represents differing but complementary areas of expertise and is generally long tenured with the Lab. With the exception of the Associate Executive Director, the executive staff is composed of persons who have been with the Lab twenty plus years in a variety of roles. This supports NWREL's ability to provide consistent direction in technical services and program delivery.

I recognize that the long tenure of staff could make it difficult for the Lab to dynamically change, adapt and adjust. However, from my review of materials and interview notes, I have concluded that the hiring of an Associate Executive Director from outside NWREL through a national search assisted in the successful transition that accompanied board restructuring and the setting of new directions in leadership from the executive staff.

Much of NWREL's success in assuring accountability within the organization comes from the oversight and supervision provided by the executive staff. In particular, the Associate Executive Director monitors implementation of the Strategic Plan and reports on progress of goals and objectives in quarterly updates to the NWREL Board. Additionally, the Associate Executive Director, working at the direction of the Executive Director, monitors and directs the

work of program and center staff. Regularly scheduled reports are submitted to appropriate persons by staff to ensure that task accomplishment is on target. The reporting structure and regularly scheduled meetings among staff also ensures oversight of operations and creates opportunities for collaborative work among staff

2) aggressive leveraging of resources to maximize impact

NWREL is aggressive in building alliances and leveraging funds to maximize impact. The Onward to Excellence efforts provides one example of NWREL's success in this area. With OTE I and II, NWREL has built alliances with several entities, including corporate foundations, state departments of education, intermediate educational units, schools and school districts. School districts, in turn, utilize grants and other funding sources to access Onward to Excellence.

NWREL also is committed to effective use of financial and people resources across programs. Both financial and people resources are allocated across programs and activities as they are needed. In addition, staff is situated physically in the work environment to encourage collaboration across programs.

**Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:**

Three areas are included in my recommendations for improvement to assist NWREL in more effectively doing what it said it would to in this contract cycle:

- 1) examine board composition to ensure that the only two groups guaranteed representation on the board of directors (chief state school officers and teachers) are adequately represented in the governance structure and assume appropriate responsibility for decision-making of the Lab
- 2) strengthen staff development opportunities for professional staff and board of directors;
- 3) examine School Improvement and Assessment initiatives to ensure that adequate internal communication is taking place and that opportunities for use of products developed in one area are used in another ,when appropriate, to maximize Lab impact

1) examine board composition to ensure that the only two groups guaranteed representation on the board of directors (chief state school officers and teachers) are adequately represented in the governance structure and assume appropriate responsibility for governance

Representation and assumption of responsibility for governance by both chief state school officers and teachers is critical to NWREL's ability to impact student achievement. The RFP for this contract cycle was intended to impact student achievement in K-12 environments. State Chief State School Officers, while holding membership on the board, participate in board governance and decision-making through representatives, usually a Deputy Superintendent. They also engage in a monthly conversation with Lab executives and each other via phone conference. The actual, in-person, participation of the Chief State School Officers in board governance and decision-making would serve to better align educational initiatives within each state and better enable NWREL to meet the needs of the total region.

As with Chief State School Officers, a teacher from each state of the region is represented on the board. However, the executive committee of the board includes no teachers. Rather, the executive committee includes two representatives of higher education, one of a private foundation and one school principal. Research suggests that those involved in implementation are more vested in successful implementation when they also are involved in setting direction and decision-making. This type of involvement also makes persons accountable.

2) strengthen staff development opportunities for professional staff and board of directors

According to the Executive Director, ½ of one percent of salaries is reserved annually for staff development. An examination of the actual staff development opportunities offered, however, indicate that the staff development is primarily targeted to development of skill areas. For example, much of the staff development is directed toward acquiring computer/technology skills. NWREL is highly aware of the importance of creating learning and growth opportunities through staff development for those whom it serves. Equally important from my perspective is the staff development opportunities afforded NWREL's own professional staff. This staff development should build leadership and management capacity and provide new growth opportunities for professional staff. Additionally, professional staff should be given

opportunities to learn and grow together through high quality in-house professional development experiences.

Similarly, strong board leadership is critical to NWREL's effective delivery of programs and services. While the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors recognizes the need for orientation for new board members, they should also consider on-going board training for all board members.

- 3) examine School Improvement and Assessment initiatives to ensure that adequate internal communication is taking place and that products developed in one area are used in another, when appropriate, to maximize NWREL's impact

NWREL staff legitimately cite many instances of collaboration and joint development across program and center lines. Nevertheless, in my view, some critical opportunities to share expertise and resources across programs may be lost. For example, the School Improvement and Assessment unit both are involved in research and development in specific areas that impact the assessment of student achievement. There may be opportunities to significantly increase Lab impact in use of products development across School Improvement and Assessment. Internal communication and even collaborative development should be possible as both entities lie within the Research and Development unit.

Specifically, NWREL should determine if parallel development of products is taking place in School Improvement and Assessment. Rather than the products being used and promoted across both units, they were discussed by Dr. Arrasmith and Dr. Blum in their presentations, as separate, unrelated developments. In interviews, focus group participants representing sites where OTE is being implemented praised the use of school profiling that is part of the OTE process. In fact, several attributed improvement in instruction and student achievement to the use of school profiling. As part of OTE, school profiling trains staff to collect and analyze essential school demographic and test data. Teachers and staff then use this data, along with research on best practices to make research based, data driven decisions regarding teaching and learning.

A common concern expressed by focus group members regarding the development of school profiles was the tedious and time-consuming nature of the development of the profile. They noted that recent discussions with NWREL OTE personnel had involved the possibility of the Lab staff developing the profiles for school and school district use. Meanwhile, the Assessment unit has developed an Informational Planner. The Information Planner software is designed to assist schools, school districts and classroom teachers to develop profiles based on an unlimited number of school demographic indicators or information sources. The Informational Planner helps staff to disaggregate data and depicts data in graphic form to assist in understanding and interpretation of the data. The Informational Planner is a specific deliverable promised by NWREL in the initial RFP for this contract cycle in the areas of assessment and accountability. Use of the Informational Planner in the OTE effort has great potential, in my view.

A second example supports the need for internal communication between School Improvement and Assessment personnel. The Assessment program has developed the Six Trait Reading Assessment based on a model of writing assessment that has proven to be of great use throughout the northwest and across the United States. The Six Trait Reading Assessment model is based on sound research, best practices and is proving highly successful in its pilot sites. The School Improvement unit through OTE encourages adoption of instructional models based on sound research and best practice. When asked about the use or recommended use of the traits writing or reading assessment model in OTE, focus group participants indicated little awareness of the availability or success of such models.

**B. To what extent is the REL using a self-monitoring process to plan and adapt activities in response to feedback and customer needs?**

NWREL employs several strategies as part of its self-monitoring to meet customer needs and to ensure quality in its operations and products. These include internal and external evaluations, needs assessments, implementation of NWREL's Quality Assurance Procedures and several planning documents, including the Strategic Plan . Annually, the Strategic Plan is revised and updated to better meet customer needs and to improve Lab operations based on what is learned in the self-monitoring process. Further, although external evaluation was not required in this

contract cycle, NWREL, to their credit, did conduct an external evaluation to gain additional feedback.

**Strengths:**

- 1) seeks feedback, assesses satisfaction and identifies needs of all constituents groups
- 2) monitors staff use of feedback and annually updates the Strategic Plan to reflect user and public feedback

1) seeks feedback, assesses satisfaction and identifies needs of all constituent groups  
NWREL gains feedback from its own staff as well as its users and observers. In addition, NWREL conducts an annual Institutional Evaluation that gives, in essence, a quick status report on Lab operations and accomplishments. NWREL also seeks feedback from users of services through the Professional Activity Reporting System (PARS.). Contact persons for NWREL services are quarterly asked to assess the service received. Finally, every other year, NWREL surveys the public and school personnel to identify needs and determine level of awareness and use of NWREL products and services. This data is used to respond to customer needs and to improve Lab operations.

- 2) monitors staff use of feedback and reflects user and public input in annual updates of the Strategic Plan

The Executive Director and Associate Executive Director monitor staff use of feedback through monthly submission of reports from staff and in discussions with staff at regularly scheduled Planning Council meetings. The Associate Executive Director ensures that recommendations from users and the public are reflected in an annual update of the Strategic Plan. This executive leadership staff also supervises staff work performance daily. Staff is monitored in terms of follow-through in responding to customer feedback.

**Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:**

- 1) Develop a strategy for selecting key questions to be asked of all constituent groups so that comparisons in responses may be made. While the commitment to seek feedback, assess satisfaction and identify needs of all constituent groups is laudable, the information gained

sometimes appears unconnected and unrelated. I believe that it would be helpful to the Lab to identify key issues that it wishes to collect from all respondents. Responses to the same issues from different constituent groups may provide for more focused direction to the Lab.

2) Ensure that reporting systems reflect Lab responses to feedback

In reviewing materials, Needs Assessments, responses to Technical questions, etc, it was often not clear to me how or whether an issue identified from feedback would be addressed. Appropriately, the Lab cannot address all issues raised through its feedback system. The Lab may well determine an issue is not relevant or is not to be addressed. A reporting system should document such decisions.

### **III. Quality**

#### **To what extent is NWREL developing high quality products and services?**

NWREL has developed many high quality products and services. The development of the Six Traits Reading Assessment is exemplary of NWREL's development of high quality products and services. This reading assessment is based on sound and current reading theory and practice. It is also based on sound research in how people learn to process and use language. Further, the Six Traits is based on the successful planning, development and implementation of the Six Traits Writing Assessment, which has a 15 year history. The Six Traits Writing Assessment also has gained a regional and national reputation.

The reading assessment is appropriately moving from the development stage to piloting in the field and validation. An intensive partnership with the Vancouver, Washington School District will provide much needed data regarding successful implementation and needed training. Finally, development to the Six Traits Reading Assessment has benefited from collaborative work with reading staff at the University of Michigan.

#### **Strengths:**

1) development of new products reflects what is learned in planning, development and implementation of successful products

- 2) involvement of staff in action research and development in the field
- 3) use of expert panels, peer reviewers

- 1) development of new products reflects what is learned in planning, development and implementation of successful products

The development of the Six Traits Reading Assessment provides a particularly good example of this strength. Planning, development and implementation of the Six Traits Reading Assessment is informed by learning gained in the development of the Six Traits Writing Assessment. The Six Traits Writing Assessment has a 15 year history and has been highly successful in terms of adoption by states and school districts and in terms of improving student achievement in writing. Two additional assessments are planned and will be informed by what is learned from the development and implementation of the writing and reading assessment. These include an assessment of oral communication and math problem solving.

- 2) involvement of staff in research and development in the field

NWREL 's product development involves action research in the field and staff work at the grassroots level—classroom, school, school district. NWREL consistently demonstrated a heavy, in-person involvement in research and development of products at the source of intended implementation. For example, the development of the Six Traits of Reading Assessment requires the principal developer, Dr. Lesley Thompson, to work in classrooms and school settings. Discussions with Dr. Bob Blum, chief developer of Onward to Excellence I and II indicated that development and implementation was informed by NWREL staff at work in schools and in school districts. Finally, in demonstrations provided to me of the Information Planner software by Dr. Dean Arrasmith, chief developer, discussed his work with middle school staff and administration in research and development of the product.

- 3) use of expert panels and peer reviewers

NWREL's Quality Assurance procedures are well designed and consistently applied. These QA procedures include use of expert panels and peer reviewers for all product and service development. Careful application of the QA procedures are being applied to review of the

development of the Six Traits Reading Assessment.

**Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:**

- 1) Identify and leverage the factors that must be in place to ensure successful implementation and adoption of NWREL products

A major understanding that has come from the implementation of OTE I and OTE II is the recognition that certain factors must be in place for successful implementation and adoption of OTE. NWREL may make a major contribution by identifying those factors for other educators. Further, NWREL may want to consider requiring assurance that those factors are in place prior to committing NWREL resources to a n implementation.

- 2) Address the issue of how to ensure the appropriateness of products and services for users from different backgrounds and perspectives

NWREL serves multiple users representative of multiple languages, ethnicities and governmental structures. Because of the great contrast in “what works” and what is appropriate with each of the groups, NWREL should continue to address how to ensure the appropriateness of its products and services. Likely NWREL is the REL with the greatest challenge in this area as it services urban, suburban, rural and nation-states. NWREL may make a major contribution by determining in what ways modifications must be made in products and service to address the needs of all its clients. NWREL may even determine that all products and services are not appropriate for all clients.

**IV. Utility**

- A. To what extent are the products and services provided by the Laboratory useful to and used by customers?**

NWREL proudly and appropriately cites statistics indicating great use of products and services and many requests for products and services. NWREL also measures and documents measurement of usefulness of products and services to customers.

**Strengths:**

- 1) development of loyal users of products and services;
- 2) use of data to improve and expand use of products and services

1) development of loyal users of products and services

The long use of NWREL products, particularly OTE, from clients across the country testifies to the utility of NWREL products. In interviews with focus groups participants involved with both OTE and writing and reading assessments, peer reviewers learned of the great commitment to NWREL products, services and staff on the part of client groups. Where NWREL products are “working, ” they are working very well. Further, NWREL has documented that approximately half of its clients are repeat users.

- 2) use of data to improve and expand use of products and services

From my reading and listening, I concluded that NWREL pays close attention to the data it collects regarding usefulness of products and services. Examples of revisions in products and delivery of services in response to user data are readily available with OTE and other products.

#### **Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:**

- 1) improve methodology and conduct follow-up to assess the reasons for data that indicates disappointing or unexpected results
- 2) respond to disappointing and unexpected results

- 1) improve methodology and conduct follow-up to assess the reasons for data that indicates disappointing or unexpected results

NWREL staff analyzes data received from constituent groups carefully. From time to time, that data reveals disappointing or unexpected results. For example, data describing teacher usage of NWREL products and services indicated a decline in usage in comparisons of responses in 1994 and 1997. Specifically, fewer teachers (17%) in 1997 used NWREL materials than did so in 1994 (22%.) Finally, the percentage of teachers participating in conferences and training remained stable from 1994-1997 (14%.) This is of concern as NWREL’s funding increased by 25% in the time period 1994-1997. This cycle of contract also began during the 1994-1997 time

span. Many of the major NWREL initiatives, such as the Reading and Writing Trait Assessments, are focused primarily on making a change in the classroom, specifically with teachers.

NWREL staff is sensitive to this data and express concern. Further, they offer explanations for the data. All concerned would be well served by NWREL conducting additional follow-up to respondents to the surveys. For example, NWREL might randomly invite a sample of respondents to participate in a phone interviews, electronic surveys or focus groups to determine the reasons for the results of the survey.

2) respond to disappointing or unexpected results

NWREL should revamp strategies to encourage use in response to data. This is especially significant in terms of responses from teachers regarding use of materials. Additionally, NWREL should identify "gaps" in usage across groups and seek to respond to those gaps. For example, peer reviewers received an overview of excellent science materials designed for teacher training. However, during the question and answer period, it appeared that little follow-up was done in terms of determining usage at teacher training institutions or in district staff development departments.

**B. To what extent is the REL focused on customer needs?**

NWREL continually focuses on current and future customer needs. Collection and usage of data by NWREL have previously been discussed at length.

**Strengths:**

1) Employs several information sources and monitoring systems to identify usefulness of products and services and to determine emerging needs.

NWREL utilizes feedback from customers to modify products and services. Modifications of OTE were noted by Focus Group members that they believed had come about in response to their feedback.

Additionally, NWREL employs several information sources and monitoring systems to identify current and emerging issues and to determine the importance of these issues to customers.

These sources include surveys of residents at large, school personnel, users of NWREL services, demographic data collected from a number of sources, analyses of newspaper clipping, input from advisory committees, analyses of RFPs and input from participants at state forums and from NWREL staff.

**Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:**

- 1) Continue to monitor the extent to which it is focused on customer needs

**V. Outcomes and Impact**

**A. To what extent is NWREL’s work contributing to improved student success, particularly in intensive implementation sites?**

NWREL is able to demonstrate several situations in which implementation of products and/or services appear to have resulted in increased student achievement. For example, focus group members who were participants in OTE and in the Six Trait Reading Assessment offered examples of improved student achievement. Dr. Blum and Dr. Arrasmith also documented examples of improved student achievement, particularly in intensive implementation sites. The intensive implementation partnership sites benefit from increased availability to NWREL resources and staff expertise. The challenge to NWREL is to determine how to duplicate the positive student achievement results in sites that do not have access to increased availability of NWREL resources and staff.

**Strengths:**

- 1) products and services are designed to improve student achievement;
- 2) products and services impact positively on student achievement under certain conditions

- 1) products and services are designed to improve student achievement

NWREL’s products and services are clearly intended and designed with increased student achievement in mind. That intention, directly or indirectly, may be noted in all NWREL materials. Review of products and services indicate that NWREL is "about improving student achievement."

2) products and services .impact positively on student achievement under certain conditions  
Specific instances of improved student achievement may be correlated with use of products such as OTE I and II and with the Six-Trait Writing Assessments as well as some other products.

**Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:**

1) Identify factors that make for successful implementation that positively impact student achievement.

Increased student achievement is not consistently realized by implementation of NWREL products and services, such OTE I and II and the Six Traits Writing Assessment. NWREL should identify and foster those factors that are necessary to successful implementation to increase student achievement.

2) Encourage and support users of products and services to collect and analyze student achievement data.

While NWREL may not have the resources to conduct multiple, in-depth studies of the impact of its products and services on student achievement, it is critical that such data be made available. Products such as OTE II represent large investments of time, expertise and resources. The fact that OTE appears to make a difference in student achievement under certain conditions is positive. However, the value of OTE over time will depend on its consistent improvement of student achievement.

**B. To what extent does the Laboratory assist states and localities to implement comprehensive school improvement strategies?**

NWREL’s presence in comprehensive school improvement efforts throughout the United States is exemplary. Products and services to support comprehensive school reform are developed with the intent of “scaling up.” NWREL staff are active participants in discussions of issues related to comprehensive school improvement. NWREL sponsors state and regional forums to create opportunities to inform and provide dialogue concerning issues related to comprehensive school reform. NWREL staff has testified in hearings before the Oregon legislature and has had

requests to make materials available for distribution to the U.S. Congress. Many excellent publications are produced by NWREL and distributed throughout the region and throughout the United States.

**Strengths:**

- 1) extensive development of and accessibility to comprehensive school improvement products and services
- 2) active role of NWREL in comprehensive school reform issues gives it the potential for policy impact at the state, local and regional level

- 1) extensive development of and accessibility to comprehensive school improvement products and services

NWREL is clear and focused in its discussions of its commitment to comprehensive school improvement products and services. Publications are distributed extensively throughout both the northwest region and the United States. These products and services earn the respects of those who access them. In particular, NWREL should be applauded for its efforts to identify research strategies and programs that work. This identification has provided a sound foundation for work in this area over many years.

- 2) active role of NWREL in comprehensive school reform issues gives it the potential for policy impact at the state, local and regional level

In several instances, NWREL has proven itself an able leader in comprehensive school reform. For example, NWREL has hosted forums throughout the northwest on charter schools and has developed information publications to begin a dialogue concerning charter schools.

**Areas of Improvement and Recommendations:**

- 1) Intensify efforts to expand outreach and to scale up comprehensive school reform efforts  
Earlier I cited data that indicated a decrease in teacher usage of NWREL products and a stable use of NWREL training opportunities within the northwest region. To the extent that the data reflects actual usage and awareness, teachers and students in the region (and throughout the United States) would benefit from NWREL's efforts to expand its outreach and to scale up at all levels--classroom--higher education institutions.

- 2) Identify ways to sustain momentum when project staff are no longer available to provide direct assistance

OTE focus group interviewees indicated that a major challenge to successful implementation of OTE overtime is the loss of support that occurs when NWREL staff are no longer available to provide direct assistance. NWREL has begun to identify strategies to assist sites in sustaining momentum. For example, web pages are being developed in several areas to provide additional support. Additional strategies to assist in sustaining momentum may contribute significantly to “putting the pieces together and scaling up.”

**C. To what extent has NWREL made progress in establishing a regional and national reputation in its specialty area?**

NWREL publications in appropriate journals are many. Dissemination of products throughout the United States in its specialty area is numerous. NWREL should be pleased with its accomplishments in establishing a regional and national reputation in its specialty area. An example of NWREL’s national presence may be noted in the publication by ASCD of an NWREL developed synthesis on research-based effective school improvement strategies.

**Strengths:**

Possesses outstanding national reputation in region and nation in the school improvement specialty area

**Areas for Improvement and Recommendations:**

- 1) Encourage and facilitate participation by institutions of higher education with comprehensive school improvement

NWREL should consider ways it may establish a vehicle for strong communication and involvement with the deans of the colleges of education in the northwest region's institutions of higher education. Changes in student achievement and comprehensive school reform are dependent upon the preparation of teachers and administrators provided by these institutions.

- 2) Intensify efforts to collaborate and to enter into joint ventures with other Labs, agencies or groups dedicated to comprehensive school improvement

Major challenges to NWREL come in terms of its ability to provide leadership in regional and national education initiatives in a time of swiftly changing educational priorities. In the case of the charter school movement, NWREL demonstrated its alertness to respond to emerging issues and its willingness to take a leadership role in that response. NWREL also quickly provided leadership in a major national reading initiative. However, NWREL should reach out aggressively to other Labs etc. to intensify the impact of its efforts.

## **VI. Overall Evaluation of Total Laboratory Programs, Products and Services**

NWREL is a Lab that is accomplishing its goals as specified in the contract of work. NWREL's major strengths lie in its strong governance board, competent executive leadership team, and its diversification of funding to impact student achievement. NWREL has gained the respect of those with whom it has worked. The Lab is known for its quality products and services. NWREL's efforts to collect data from users and others are extensive. However, NWREL may benefit from not only collecting data but in "listening and responding" to the data from its clients and others. Further, NWREL should consider ways that it may improve its collaboration across its own professional staff and reach out to other entities.

You don't have to be broken to get better. NWREL does much well and should continue to strive to become better and better at its goals. NWREL may well lead the way in acting as a catalyst for scaling up and putting the pieces together in comprehensive school improvement throughout the United States. The Lab is positioned to invite other Labs, agencies and institutions of higher education to join with it in collaborative efforts in comprehensive school reform.

**what they were contracted to do during their first three contract years?**

- Executes the REL program of work as outlined in the contract and modifications
- Executes the REL program of work in a timely manner
- Uses other internal organizational resources (within the institution) to enhance the REL monies
- Uses external resources efficiently and effectively
- Establishes networks, strategic alliances, and/or partnerships with other RELs, other institutions, and key individuals or organizations in the region (e.g., CSSOs, policymakers, districts, other educational agencies)

**LABORATORY OPERATIONS**

Data Sources:

Comments:

Overall Evaluation of the Lab.

**OTHER SELECTED OUTPUTS**

