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Memo #1 addressed the idea of the SAS as a connector of *people* who play interdependent *roles* as they each try to make a personal difference in the lives of Montgomery County's children. This one focuses on those people's needs for appropriate *information* on which to base their daily choices and decisions as they respond to those children's requirements, and how defining those needs requires a broader view of how they relate to one another -- a *common map*. What follows presents some thoughts about the rationale for, and nature of, that *map* and the *territory* which it must portray.

"Data-driven decision-making" at all levels of the system is one of the contextual drivers for the SAS's development. In that context, it is seen primarily as a "data" and "information" system. But, as you already know, that is too limiting. For the isolated practitioner access to data by itself won't solve many problems. Because the SAS will provide not just information, but the connecting highways along which it will flow, it becomes important to understand not just *which* decisions?, *by whom*?, and *when*?, but also how they relate. The frame within which the connecting relationships among roles becomes clear is the common map that the superintendent has been seeking. Because you are also wearing the district's OD hat at this point, I'm going to suggest that much of the answer can come from the development work you will be doing for the SAS.

## DRIVING DATA WITHOUT A ROAD MAP

### Why maps?

An lot of people today are frantically trying to *make sense* of an educational world where what they used to *know* and *do* no longer seems to be enough. Reports and data on failures appear almost weekly. Practitioners blame each other and demand that others change. Public and private groups search for alternative approaches that bypass schools.

At its roots, this condition -- *and* its solution -- can be found entangled in the basic wiring of the human brain as a sense and meaning maker. Just as a body's other systems such as the heart and lungs provide a continual supply of nutrients needed for survival, the brain similarly provides another needed nutrient -- the *information* needed for survival. *Meaning* -making and *sense*-making drive the organization of that

information. Two unstated questions filter the incoming data of experience -- *What does it mean?* and *What do I mean?* And the answers then frame the way that information is organized.

On the personal level, evidence that the answers to each are no longer satisfactory may be seen in this decade's increasing interest in *spirituality*; and organizationally, in leaders' increasing search for ways to *get-out-of-the-box* and to find new *paradigms*. And, in the present case of school system leaders, it appears as a search for new "maps."

### Who needs them?

I believe Jerry hopes to use the *Baldrige* self-assessment process as a way to scan and raise questions about the "map" currently used for MCPS' journey. But that's down the line. More directly, during recent presentations to his Executive Team, he has been questioning staff searching as he says for a "common map" and "common language" so that everyone in the district can operate from the same base of understanding.

And he's not the only one in the district with that need. James intends to convene a meeting of national consultants currently assisting MCPS in some way to determine whether they share a common view of the system. Also, one recommendation of the *Work Group on Grading and Reporting* last month was a call for "educational leaders to develop, and communicate to all stakeholders, an assessment vision." Just how do all these diverse terms used for the information generated from the processes of instruction [grades, reporting, assessment, evaluation, etc.] fit together and make sense for everyone involved?

Jerry also is not the only superintendent feeling this need for a *different* map. For example, listen to Peter Negrone [A *Radical Role for Superintendents*, School Administrator, Sept. 2000]--

"...the imperative to educate students to high standards requires something concrete and often powerfully resisted. Educating all students to high standards requires, quite simply, ... a roadmap by which progress, performance and accomplishment can be interpreted and measured."

"...The establishment and embrace of such a roadmap is essentially connected not to the management of systems, but to the previously cloistered work of teaching and learning."

(It is)...a *shared set of lenses* through which principals, curriculum leaders and others will observe and change the ways that teachers teach and the ways that children learn. We must lead the effort for teaching and learning. The more focused the superintendent is on teaching and learning, the more focused the district will be on teaching and learning."

School district leaders, today, are like *convoy commanders* trying to ensure that their convoy of separately navigated "ships" together reach their common destination safely. Individually and together, they must navigate though relatively uncharted waters, and increasingly are finding that they are not getting where they want to go. To figure out why, they are beginning to question the "map" they have been using.

This map -- that serves as the plot board for organizational problem-solving -- is embedded in everyone's *mind*, and its more powerful form actually exists on *paper*. It is the organization chart. There have been continuous indicators that this map doesn't portray the nature and interrelationship of the system's actual *work*. Yet tinkering with it by flattening it, turning it upside down, or making its pieces autonomous don't seem to solve the problem. Apparently the "map" is not the same as the territory. Changing it therefore leaves much of the *work* untouched.

### The "Map" and the "Territory"

A *territory* has unchanging features. We know from geography that these are *natural* conditions which will be encountered and can't be ignored. They provide the context for the journey. Whether or not they are considered positive or negative may depend upon whether they are recognized and used to further the journey.

*Maps* are created from assumptions and beliefs about those natural features. We draw maps of that territory to represent what we *think* or have the *knowledge* to see there.

It may be important to clarify a third related concept here -- the difference between a *Blueprint* and a Map. Gerry House, former Memphis superintendent, provided a good example of that difference.

“We know that we could no longer tinker around the edges of change. We had to create a *map* that would guide whole systems of people to make the quantum leap necessary to turn all schools into student-centered, results-based learning environments where high achievement is the norm, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. *School-redesign models provide these maps for Memphis' schools.*”

House's last comment illustrates a danger of confusing the “map” for the “territory.” The “maps” she turned to --“school-redesign models” such as those tested and promoted by *New American Schools* -- can more appropriately be considered “blueprints” for structures to be built in the territory. Their design may take advantage of some of the built-in features of the territory, but they are not maps that portray the actual *scope and nature* of the unchanging features of the territory. And, as many similar “blueprint” implementors have discovered, it is many times these “territorial conditions” that provide the context that determines whether or not a new “building” will have any sustainable “foundations.”

Apparently, a different way of “seeing” the actual scope and nature of the territory -- the unchanging elements and their needs -- is required so that new maps can be envisioned on which one can “draw lines” between those needs, and then build the organizational “roadways” of relationships and information flow required to sustain the interactive nature of the traffic between them.

### What does the *Territory* look like?

If the map is not the territory, what do we know about the territory that we haven't been able to portray? What are the natural features of that territory that don't change? And why should it be so hard to see them?

Interestingly, the answers may come from looking at the features our present maps fail to include, and asking *why*? For example, Negrone questions why we accept...

“a dichotomy between the smooth management of schools as systems and the mysterious work of teaching and learning. ...We cannot manage systems if that means we neglect teaching and learning, leaving the gritty business of instruction to others. We cannot embrace individualized decentralization--that alphabet soup of school-based/-shared/-centered management and decision making--if it continues to consume educators' time at the boundaries of teaching and learning. To do so means we are leaving the core of instructional matters unquestioned, unexamined and essentially mysterious.”

Houston Supt. Rod Paige agrees [No Simple Answer, EDWEEK November 8, 2000] as he describes struggling to act on the understanding

“that the real work of a school system is what happens in classrooms and schools.”

Yet, this is an understanding that is not reflected in the “work” relationships portrayed on the organization chart.

Paige also adds a significant insight about the resources already embedded in the “territory” when he notes what he calls

“a major missing link in the school reform movement ... the untapped power of student effort.”

One reason present organizational maps don't include this because of an assumption that a student's capacity to manage his/her own learning is an *outcome* of the schooling process. But, as we now know from cognitive research, this is a capacity that they enter schooling with. A capacity that can continually develop if it is engaged and exercised from birth on.

What we have not been able to “see” until cognitive research gave us the lenses, is that the territory in which the *work* of schooling takes place is the human mind. Those of both the children and the adults. And information is the raw material that feeds that purposeful work.

What we now see seems to confirm many of the “theories” proposed in the past. It suggests that each child is not a passive receptacle for information, but is born with an innate *biological* capability for learning, that is fostered by some kinds of interactions and stifled by others.

In other words, biologically, teachers are to children's *mental* capacities as pediatricians are to their *physical* capacities – the developers of knowledge over time, delivered through *continual interaction*, that is needed to help them develop into healthy adults.

Consider the structure of a healing process for a child. No one in the medical profession questions that the actual healing takes place over time within a bounded system called "the individual child." The doctor and the hospital take measures to set up an environment within which the patient's body (and mind) can best manage his or her own healing over time. This “system's processes” ensure that everyone's efforts stay aligned with “results” even though roles are played out in different places and time frames.

<b>Actor</b>	Patient	Doctor	Hospital administrators and staff	Medical community
<b>Activity</b>	Manages the <i>healing</i> over time	<i>Curing</i> : removing constraints on healing and opening opportunities for healing, thus helping the patient manage healing over time	<i>“Hospitaling”</i> : providing an environment and tools that help the doctor manage curing over time.	<i>Knowledge-developing</i> : Developing, testing, and sharing the knowledge that makes hospitaling and curing more effective over time.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Moment by moment	Hour by hour	Year by year	Continuous

From this perspective, the more information that travels back and forth through the system, the more effective everyone can be. No one holds the pediatrician or hospital accountable for the patient's temperatures, pulse rates, and blood counts; only for doing something about them.

Everyone in the system knows that those measurements are indicators of a child's health at any given moment, and that the essence of high-quality medical practice is interactive responsiveness among all the parts of this system to that data.

To act on that understanding, there is a information-driven core work process independent of the condition being treated and the treatments provided. This core data-driven process -- feeding diagnosis & prescription - is what makes it possible for *each* person to have his/her needs responded to as an individual as part of the process in which the hospital responds to *all*.

What might we see if we looked at the territory of *schooling* in the same way?

(1) Everyone would accept that learning takes place *over time* within a bounded system called "the individual child."

(2) The teacher and the school would take measures to set up an environment within which the student's mind ( and body) can best manage his or her own learning over time.

(3) The *system's* "processes" would ensure that everyone's efforts stay aligned with "results" even though roles are played out in different places and time frames.

<b>Actor</b>	Student	Teacher	School district administrators and staff	Educational community
<b>Activity</b>	Manages the <i>learning</i> over time	<i>Teaching</i> : removing constraints on learning and opening opportunities for learning, thus helping the student manage learning over time	<i>Schooling</i> : providing an environment and tools that help teachers manage teaching over time.	<i>Knowledge-developing</i> : Developing, testing, and sharing the knowledge that makes schooling and teaching more effective over time.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Moment by moment	Hour by hour	Year by year	Continuous

Unfortunately, there has been no established mental model, similar to the "map" that frames the interactions in the medical professions, from which to organize education's roles and relationships to reflect the actual nature of the territory. With that framework missing, there is no way to see and understand the system's connections; roles are isolated; there is little trust. This results in very little interactive responsiveness up and down the system.

Without a common way to see relationships, improvement efforts focus on *fixing people*, instead of the system of *interactive relationships* that can empower them.

But there is no reason why such a framework couldn't be developed for Montgomery County. This mapping process would start with a description of the *territory* based upon an unquestioned acceptance of the innate capacities of children's' minds, and would define from that reference point the critical interactions with the minds of adults necessary to develop that mind's capacity to learn.

It would then look at examples from within the district and outside to see how it might explain their success or failure. This could include McNair Elementary in Germantown, Kensington/Parkwood, Bushey Park in Howard, Azelea in Pinellas and others where success seems to flow from going with the grain of the brain, instead of against it.

The overall purpose of this mapping would be to identify the *who*, *what* and *when* of the data, information, and *knowledge* that the system, itself, needs to meet its internal and external accountability requirements.

If the line of thinking above is okay with you, that mapping process will be the subject of Memo #3.