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| **NNER and Partnership Grounding**  **Prior to the July 10 meeting, please read the questions to think about, Roger Soder context information, and as much of the chapter as you can. At a minimum, please read pages 182-186, to “Democracy: Do we Want It?” and then, starting at “Characteristics of a Democratic People,” pages 195-199.**  **A discussion of Roger Soder’s**  ***Education for Democracy: The Foundation for Democratic Character*** |

It is the practice of the governing board to dedicate time at every meeting to ground ourselves in the principles of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy, the ideals that guide the National Network for Educational Renewal and the Wyoming School-University Partnership. Board members see the opportunity as a time to step back and slow down, to renew ourselves to meet challenges of the work we do.

**To think about before the July 10 governing board meeting:**

1. For anyone interested in conversations around democratic practices and civil discourse, end-of-June national and international news stories provided considerable fodder: the Edward Snowden flight from U.S. authorities, President Obama going it alone on climate change and the effects of power plants on the environment, the Supreme Court’s decisions about the Voting Rights Act, Fisher v. the University of Texas, and gay marriage. The list goes on. In your July board packet, Beth Wiley has included a one page document alerting you to work of a Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences called *The Heart of the Matter*. The rhetoric in this document, at least some of it, mirrors Roger Soder’s chapter. Cynics among us would also claim that until the humanities and social sciences are tested like reading and math, don’t worry about such curricula finding a vital place in most U.S. public schools.
2. On page 185 of the excerpt, Soder lists seven features of government, almost all germane to adults, not school-aged children and youth. And yet, if schools are one sure place for the dispositions or characteristics of democratic character to be taught, it would seem that students, guided by their teachers, parents, and others, need to grapple with these issues. Is school still the right place?
3. Soder suggests that the democratic character should have a place for tolerance of ambiguity, making peace with the knowledge that there always will be contradiction, tension, and dilemma. He calls this patience. Trouble is, humans mostly hate ambiguity (and are impatient!), especially humans who are called to be teachers. Can you think of someone you have worked with in the past or currently who seems to model what Soder describes? Has that person been a successful model for others? Do you think tolerance of ambiguity can be modeled?

**A little more about Roger Soder**

With John Goodlad and the late Ken Sirornik, Roger Soder was a central author and contributor to a trilogy of books published in 1990. The trilogy includes *Teachers for Our Nation’s Schools*, *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, and *Places Where Teachers Are Taught*. The sum of this work launched the National Network for Educational Renewal, the Institute for Educational Inquiry, and, at the University of Washington in 1985, the Center for Educational Renewal. Roger was a senior researcher at the center.

Roger has a warm spot in his heart for the Wyoming School-University Partnership. In the 1990s he made several trips here and keynoted at least one conference. Those involved in Partnership work at the time likely remember him, including his vast knowledge about popular culture, especially movies. As this excerpt reveals, Roger is deeply appreciative of a movie’s power to teach. More recently, Roger has been affiliated with the University of Washington’s Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies where he teaches graduate classes for aspiring principals. Roger also teaches in Washington’s undergraduate Honors Program.