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The new school year is always a good time to make a fresh start in so many ways. Here, at *SEEN*, we thought one of the most basic ways to make a fresh start and an impact at the beginning of the school year was to focus on something we, as people, rarely do well: **talking**.

Now, as educators, your first instinct is to say, “I talk all day.” While this may be true, are you having true dialogue with your parents and co-workers? Are you connecting with the parent when you have parent-teacher conferences – so that everyone knows how to maximize the student’s potential? Is your administrator/superintendent/school board aware of your concerns as an educator/an employee? These are the conversations that are often better addressed at the beginning of the school year to set the tone for successful communications moving forward. That’s why we chose to focus on **community, culture, and conversations** in this Fall issue of *SEEN*. Our authors really dig deep in this subject and show ways to foster authentic, engaging dialogue in our school culture.

After all, if we learn how to have meaningful conversations regarding parent-teacher involvement, family engagement, and student behaviors, we should naturally have better understanding of what it takes to foster a well-rounded student. With better conversations, we can also create a better and more open school culture — ultimately leading to a better, active community.

It sounds idyllic but it has been proven time and time again that the partnership of parent-teacher-administrator has made all the difference in the trajectory of someone’s life. Hopefully, always, for the better.

I’m hopeful as we move into a new academic year that we are more vigilant in the safety of our schools and our communities. In this issue, we take a look back at the safety incidences from last year and look to this year’s solutions for securing our campuses. In true “back-to-school” fashion, we’re also looking at updating the facilities you will call home for the next nine months, new products and perspectives in **curriculum and technology**, highlighting where you can enroll in some of the best graduate programs for the year, and why you should attend more conferences this year.

With our theme of conversations in mind, *SEEN* is looking forward to hearing more from you as well! We want to know more about the accomplishments and challenges your schools are facing this year. We want to be part of the conversations that help elevate your districts in the coming months. Stay tuned for some great things headed your way from *SEEN* magazine and I wish everyone a great Fall/Winter semester!

Best,

Deirdre Edwards
Editor –In- Chief
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This last week I received a tee shirt from a friend. Across the front were the words "ALLEGEDLY RETIRED." That’s very true for me. When I left my position as superintendent of a county school system, I lasted all of 20 minutes. Then it was time to get on with what I had come to believe was one of the most important things we can do — engaging families.

I realize that’s not what most of us signed up for. We all thought we were going to teach high school math, middle school science, or kindergarten. We like the age of the kids or the subject(s) or both and this is what we’d planned to do. Our university instruction gave us a couple of hours in one class on families so clearly it wasn’t a high priority. At least that’s what I thought.

That was before I got into the world of teaching and especially teaching of children with special needs. What I found there was a need not only to address the child’s learning, but the concerns and frustrations of the parents. When there’s a diagnosis of autism or when the child is born with Downs Syndrome, the parents may be at a total loss. Or in another case, when a very healthy child took a dive off a board and ended up breaking vertebrae that put her in a wheelchair and on a ventilator. There’s trauma to the child certainly, but there a huge trauma to the family as well. How they deal with it depends a good deal on how we deal with it.

As I spent more time in my career, I began to realize that most children had some sort of “special need” whether they were gifted and didn’t deal well with their peers or had a penchant for art or dance to the exclusion of math and science. Or perhaps it was the other way around where math and science were the first love above all else. Whatever the issue, it meant that the parents had some needs as well since what their child’s interests or issues are may not be what they’d anticipated. Two of my own children, who never needed special programs at school, clearly had needs. One had a liver disorder and the other had two heart valve replacements before she graduated from high school. As a parent, I had lots of questions and my own needs, as well as theirs, in order to try to understand and be mindful of what was happening and how to deal with what was happening.

Now let’s talk for a minute about the teachers...
and administrators with whom I worked. For the most part, they loved their work and were dedicated to it. Yet, if you look under the surface, here were the pains of life — marital struggles, payments, children, cancer and just running a classroom or a school. There were needs there too. They had families and clearly they had needs. Was anyone addressing those?

So yes, when retirement approached for me, it wasn't about leaving education. It was about what else I could do and, again, in the most important area I had seen throughout my career — engaging families.

OK, if we agree that engaging families is important, how do we do that? I've written books on this topic so we won't get to all the details here, but we're going to start with some A, B, Cs.

**A is Attitude.** What is your attitude? What are your expectations of families, staff and most of all yourself? When I do workshops we always start here because what you’re thinking and what you believe is how you’re going to act and react. You will get the results you expect. We start there first. If you believe parents aren’t helpful, they aren’t. If you believe they can help you teach what you know you need to teach, then you will find ways to engage them in that teaching. Success starts with the attitude you hold. Ask yourself, what do I expect from parents? What do I expect from other staff members? What attitudes do I have about staff and parent interaction? If I could picture that relationship in the most ideal way, what would it look like? Once you have an answer for that question, you can move to the next step.

**B is about Building Capacity.** Often we think we are building the capacity of the parent to help with school work. Sometimes that's the case. Often, though, it's building the capacity of staff members to know how to interact with parents. And a step farther, it's about building the capacity of staff and parents to work together toward achieving the goals they both want. Go back to your ideal. How do you build capacity to get there? Who would you work with first? Parents? Staff members? Don't forget support staff. That front desk person can make or break a good relationship and relationships are definitely a capacity to build.

That moves us to C. **C is for Collaboration.** One of the major things I suggest is a collaborative project where both parents and staff can work together on a common goal. I encourage the first two or three of these projects to about something both groups want and not particularly education related. Many schools have trouble with their drop-off and pick-up places. They're not safe for kids, teachers or parents and all groups would like this one cleaned up. What a great place to collaborate and fix the issue. Create a group with both parents and staff to see if they can come up with some solutions.

This last one, C, is really important to test attitude and capacity building, but it's key to building trust, interactions, and those all-important relationships. When you know who you can call on and that they will get the job done, it's so much easier to trust that person with other things. You know them. You know they will come through for you.

Once the parking area is fixed you can move on to the landscaping or graffiti or some other area where again, you are building trust. Eventually, after there's a level of comfortableness established, someone will ask if we can do something about reading or math. Sure. That will become the next project.

As a parent, I had lots of questions and my own needs, as well as theirs, in order to try to understand and be mindful of what was happening and how to deal with what was happening.

A school I visited in the Republic of Georgia, yes the former Soviet country not the state of Georgia, had started their parent engagement program by asking the parents what they would like to engage with the staff on. The parents responded with something totally unexpected. They wanted to know more about breast cancer. Admittedly this threw the staff off. They were expecting some academic work that they knew about and could respond to easily. They weren't sure if this is what they wanted to do at all. But they had asked, and they kept their word. They brought in several experts and set up workshops on breast cancer.

Parents attended and interacted with the staff asking questions. Next the parents wanted safety issues and again, the staff responded. As their requests were heard and the parents and staff worked together, the school became a safe place. It was a place that listened to you. It was a place that had what you needed and you could even give suggestions and they heard you. The school became the hub for help, support and information. The school began to grow because people heard about it, and knew this was a place that would support not only children, but the parents as well. Today it's several times the size of what it was originally and has an active parent-staff support network.

It's designated an International Baccalaureate school and attracts students from a wide variety of countries. Collaboration, according to both their director and their parent engagement person — starting with breast cancer awareness — was a big part of their success.

Does this take some time? Yes, it does. Is it possible to run into problems or give up altogether? Yes. However, I ask you not to. This is vitally important for you, the staff, the parents, and most especially the children. In the schools where we’ve implemented these kids of activities, the results have been clear, certainly in test results, but even more so in the attitudes toward school and learning for everyone involved. It makes a difference.

Is there more? Yes. We have a D, E, F and G as well as EdCoaching when you hit those snags and rough spots, but for now, if you implement the A, B, Cs you are doing a wonderful job of engaging parents.

*Dr. Joni Samples is the author of The Parent Connection and the Parent Playbook series. She does workshops in Family Engagement through www.familyfriendlyschools.com. Contact her for more information.*

www.seenmagazine.us
Soup’s On!  With Amy Newmark, from Chicken Soup for the Soul®

A CLEAN SLATE
FOR THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Don’t confuse me with the facts; my mind is already made up! How many times have you seen someone act as if they’re thinking that? Or been guilty of it yourself? How sad to go into a situation with preconceived ideas without giving an event or a person the benefit of the doubt.

This kind of thing happens all the time. It even happens in the classroom, or the teachers’ lounge, or the district supervisor’s office, and everywhere in between.

The beginning of a new school year is the perfect time to throw away those preconceived notions. After all, everyone and everything is entitled to a fresh start — and that includes curriculum, students, parents and teachers.

Third-grade teacher Diane Stark talked about this in her story entitled “Brand New Starts” in our Chicken Soup for the Soul: Teacher Tales book. Just before the start of school one of the second-grade teachers stopped Diane in the hall and reached for the class roster Diane had just received. She wanted to help Diane by telling her about the students; names. “This one’s not too bright. That one can’t sit still.”

“Mark my words. This one can’t read. That one has a bad school year—and the next morning he decided that he didn’t want to have a good school year, and the next morning he handed the letter back to Diane. Now it read, “I used to hate school and I used to hate teachers. But that was last year.”

Luckily for Darren, and all the children in that third-grade class, Diane wasn’t swayed by what she had heard from the other teacher. She gave each student the benefit of the doubt and let everyone have a fresh start.

The beginning of the new school is a time to wipe the slate clean of all of the previous year’s problems. It works the other way around too. Students shouldn’t listen to the stories they’ve heard from other students about any particular teacher: “She’s tough.” “He’s mean and yells all the time.” “She doesn’t like me.” “He’s not fair.”

Besides, you’re not a bad kid. You seem like a very nice boy.” She asked Darren what he had been trying to tell her when he wrote the letter. He said, “That I’m stupid. That I used to try in school but I couldn’t get it. So I stopped trying and just started being bad. Now, nobody remembers that I’m stupid.” That was true. The teacher who had gone over Diane’s class roster had only classified Darren as rebellious, not knowing that he had academic issues. His cover-up had worked!

Diane assured Darren that the last year didn’t matter. She said, “You have to try your best. And remember that every day—and every school year—is a brand new start.” After talking to Diane, Darren decided that he didn’t want to have a bad school year, and the next morning he handed the letter back to Diane. Now it read, “I used to hate school and I used to hate teachers. But that was last year.”

As the students came through the door on the first day of school, Diane couldn’t help but think about the other teacher’s words of warning, subconsciously prejudging each child. At lunchtime, Diane went into the teachers’ lounge. There, she met a few other teachers, and since she was new to the school, those teachers asked Diane about herself.

She shared some of the things about her life with them but when she was done she realized that she had only shared the things she wanted them to know…the positive things. She didn’t mention anything negative about herself or list any of the mistakes she had made. She didn’t mention the fact she had flunked high school chemistry or that she had gotten two speeding tickets in one day! No deep dark secrets were revealed. She only told them the things she wanted them to know.

And no one was there, pointing to her name on a list, saying negative things about her such as, “Oh that Diane Stark, you’ll have to watch out for her. She’s not a very good teacher. She waits until the last minute to do her lesson plans.” The teachers in the lounge at her new school assumed she was a good person. She was given the benefit of the doubt.

Diane decided her third graders deserved the same benefit of the doubt that the other teachers had given her. When she went back into the classroom after lunch, she discarded her lesson plans for the afternoon. Instead, she asked the children to write her letters and tell her three things they wanted her to know about themselves. “They can be about school, or about your family or your house. You can write about what you like or what you don’t like. You can tell me anything you want me to know.”

When Diane collected and read the letters she was both surprised and touched by what her students had written. Most of the students wrote about their siblings, their pets or their favorite foods. But a few of the students had gotten quite personal. The little girl whose father was in jail wrote, “My dad’s in jail because he sold drugs. He did a bad thing, but that doesn’t make him bad. It doesn’t mean that I’m bad either, even though the kids make fun of me.”

Diane, the boy the other teacher had labeled “nothing but trouble,” wrote that he hated school, he hated teachers and that he was stupid. When he was done he looked her in the eye and said, “That I’m stupid. That I used to try in school but I couldn’t get it. So I stopped trying and just started being bad. Now, nobody remembers that I’m stupid.”

Diane assured Darren that the last year didn’t matter. She said, “You have to try your best. And remember that every day—and every school year—is a brand new start.” After talking to Diane, Darren decided that he didn’t want to have a bad school year, and the next morning he handed the letter back to Diane. Now it read, “I used to hate school and I used to hate teachers. But that was last year.”

Luckily for Darren, and all the children in that third-grade class, Diane wasn’t swayed by what she had heard from the other teacher. She gave each student the benefit of the doubt and let everyone have a fresh start.

The beginning of the new school is a time to wipe the slate clean for everyone. Teachers need to assume that all students want to learn, and if there are problems, they need to take the time to get to the roots of the problems. And it works the other way around too. Students shouldn’t listen to the stories they’ve heard from other students about any particular teacher: “She’s tough.” “He’s mean and yells all the time.” “She doesn’t like kids with blond hair.” “If you have him for your teacher, you’ll get an F!”

You get the idea. Preconceived ideas. Gossip. Reputations. Let’s wipe the slate clean of all of them.

To read more about Chicken Soup for the Soul: Teacher Tales, please visit http://www.chickensoup.com/book/21683/teacher-tales.
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When starting a new school year, every administrator thinks about how to bring about positive change. We hear a lot about making data-driven decisions, and yes, I’ll bet every school district waits for those all-important standardized test scores to arrive and begin to analyze what is going well and what needs to change. Schools, in general, seem to align themselves in terms of excellent, high performing schools, low performing schools and all the rest that fall somewhere in the middle. One might think that a high performing school has no need to change and a low performing school should change everything from the curriculum to the lunch choices. In reality, no matter where your school falls on this achievement continuum, there is always room for change and there is always a need to change. One of my favorite quotes by Horace Mann, often considered the Father of Education is, “It is not enough to be superior to others if you are inferior to your own potential.”

Unfortunately, it is human nature to resist change and education is no exception. It is just easier to rely on the status quo where you feel comfortable in your place. But the reality is that the world is changing faster than ever before, and if we don’t make changes we will most certainly be left behind in the dust. Technology is a perfect example of necessary change that requires many to go to their zone of discomfort. Again, the skillful leader must carry these individuals on his or her back and show them that they can “walk the talk.”

Although an ultimate goal is always higher achievement, educators must have a broader view of beginning a new year with relevant change. A fresh look at teaching and teacher empowerment is a lofty and necessary goal. I discuss a phenomena in my book, The Future Ready Challenge, that I refer to as the wash, rinse, dry, repeat cycle of learning. This refers to the classrooms in America that do the same thing in the same way year after year. This complacency rests on the back of the school leadership. It is up to us to make certain that our teachers are motivated to make meaningful changes in their classrooms. Teaching in every classroom should be filled with excitement and energy.

So how do we initiate change in our schools? Here are five “rules for change” you can do to structure positive change in your school:

1. Make sure you are changing something that needs changed. Do not let the desire to change something become the driving force.

Sometimes change can be a force of
power all its own, but you must ask, is this a change that is needed? Look at your mission and decide if this change will get you closer to that which you desire. Will the ultimate effect of this change result in higher achievement? Change just for the sake of change can result in confusion.

2. Research what you are changing and why you are changing it.

John F. Kennedy once said, “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future” There is plenty of research available to underline the need for change, but you research specifically that which you are contemplating changing. If you are thinking about the need for more student voice in making school decisions, be armed with a sufficient amount of research data to not only show a need, but also to show the results of such change.

3. Make sure you can understand what the deficiency is that you are trying to improve and how the anticipated change is going to positively affect this deficiency.

This takes us back to my initial discussion on data-driven decision making. Find your organization’s deficiencies and then begin to develop a plan for change to happen. Another excellent means of diagnosing deficiencies is to have teachers, parents and even students complete survey questionnaires at the end of each year. This will give you a structure to look at how your stakeholders perceive the need for change.

4. Have buy-in from your team prior to setting out the changes.

Give them ownership of the change. Let them be the driving force behind what gets changed, what it gets changed to and how to implement that change. They are going to be the ones working through the change. One of the biggest mistakes a school leader can make is to institute a change without empowering the teaching team to help develop the action plan. Catherine Powell, in her article, “How to get your Team’s buy-in to New Processes,” shares that the team that is involved in making change become evangelists: they enforce the change, they brag about the change and they seek to make it better.

5. Make sure the changes are meaningful and sustainable.

Once again with teacher buy-in you are helping to guarantee the longevity of the changes. More often than not, many great changes go by the wayside when the leader is transferred or replaced. When changes are adopted for the right reasons and everyone understands those reasons, and most everyone — sometimes you just can’t get 100 percent — is on board, you are on your way to meaningful and sustainable change.

When you combine these “rules for change,” you will most certainly be able to structure positive change for the new year. I hope you all have a great school year and with the right amount of change in your classroom. I hope your year is better than the last.

Dr. L. Robert Furman is an educator, principal, speaker, and published author. As a former teacher and now administrator, Dr. Rob serves in the foreground of everyday education. Currently, Dr. Rob serves as Principal at South Park Elementary Center outside of Pittsburgh, PA, and has truly become a sought after leader in topics surrounding the field of education today. Dr. Rob is the author of several books including Reading, Technology, and Digital Literacy and the ISTE bestselling title Are You Future Ready. His latest book, Engaging All Readers will be out this Spring. Beyond speaking at venues across the country, Dr. Rob is also a contributing blogger for The Huffington Post as well as the EdTech Review. Rob also hosts a well-known YouTube educational video blog called The Seditionists and educational podcast called the Council on the Future of Education. Further, he has received several prestigious awards, such as being named in the National School Board Association’s “20 To Watch” in technology education and a Pittsburgh Tribune Review News Maker of the year.
LET’S TALK!
COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND CONVERSATIONS
STRENGTHENING
Family-School Partnerships

By Jim Accomando

When my children started elementary school, my wife and I wanted to make sure their school had all the tools and resources needed to help them and their classmates succeed.
We didn't have all the answers and needed guidance in navigating the school community to help meet the individual needs of each of our children.

That was the beginning of our family’s 20-year partnership with teachers, administrators and other parents — as well as community leaders — that over time grew strong through genuine relationships and honest communication. And I became THE PTA DAD, helping other parents cultivate relationships to meet the needs of their child, school, county and state.

“There is no partnership more formidable than that between parents and educators,” PBS President and CEO Paula Kerger once shared with PTA members. “Your voice and your leadership are vital to our country’s ability to prepare the next generation for the opportunities and challenges ahead.”

Over 40 years of research shows that when families are active in their child’s school activities and learning, students are more likely to:

• Attend school regularly
• Earn better grades
• Enroll in higher-level programs, and eventually …
• Finish school and graduate!

Research also shows that family engagement is also essential for school turnarounds. When it comes to school improvement efforts, active families are just as important as having a great principal and teachers, strong curriculum and a positive school climate.

While parents and families need to be active participants in the education of their children, schools need to facilitate a welcoming environment, foster clear communication and involve parents in the decision-making process. It’s a shared effort.

Every school year, educators and PTAs across the country work with families in their communities to help our nation’s children learn and grow to their full potential.

According to the Pew Research Center’s 2015 “Parenting in America” report, over 85 percent of parents with school-age children said they talked to a teacher about their children’s academic progress in the 12 months prior to the survey.

But was it effective communication where everyone’s needs were heard and understood? Did those parents leave the discussions feeling empowered and able to help their child?

We face some challenges in engaging the new generation of parents into our school community. Family demographics have changed, and family schedules are complex and busy, so parents and guardians must strategically choose what’s best.

Over half (54 percent) of the parents in the Pew survey said they can never be too involved when it comes to their children’s education, and 46 percent said they wish they could do more.

The challenge for many parents, however, is figuring out what they can do and knowing the most effective ways to get involved. That’s why our communication with families should be clear, collaborative and purposeful.

In building strong family-school partnerships, the mission of our communication is to enhance learning opportunities and inspire student progress and success.

Here are three proven ways to strengthen family-school partnerships.

Establish Your Brand of Communication

During the “getting to know you” phase, it is essential that parents and educators keep in touch often. Early, regular, two-way, meaningful communication is critical and will help build trust and demonstrate the value of a supportive school community.

Parents can share knowledge and information that will help teachers and administrators get to know their children as individuals and support their growth and achievement. Teachers and administrators can provide parents with tools and resources to support their children at home, as well as outside learning opportunities for their children and information on ways for parents to get involved.

According to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation’s 2017 report, “How Family School, and Community Engagement Can Improve Student Achievement and Influence School Reform,” several studies show that increased communication efforts with families can have a positive impact on school success and student outcomes.

Specifically, school outreach such as PTA and student meetings, teacher communications and reports, and family invites to school events had a positive impact on a student’s reading and math achievement. The report also found that grades, behavior problems and student motivation and participation also improved.

Mandy Manning, 2018 Teacher of the Year, teaches students who are immigrants and refugees. She uses home visits to lay the foundation for parents to trust her and reach out for support during the school year.

“Home visits allow me to see a whole other side of my kids and their families,” said Manning. “We all have the well-being of their child in common, and that is a great place to begin any relationship with a parent.”

• Freely share with parents the online systems, portals or apps your school is using. Make sure they know how to access these tools and use them to track their child’s progress and ensure they are receiving the right supports.

• Make messages to parents easy to digest. Most parents do not know specific education and child development terminology, but they are experts on their children. Explain educational jargon in simple terms — because you can bet the parent is thinking, “How does this affect my child and what can I do?”

• Keep your communication short and use bullets or sub-headlines to break down content. When appropriate, strive to be fun, inspirational and informative — and always include a call to action to foster interaction.

• Translate materials to reach all families. If possible, translate your messages into at least one of the most popular languages in the school community. Although it takes time and resources, doing this demonstrates a commitment to making sure all parents and families have the information they need to support their child’s learning and development.

Harness the Power of Technology — Strategically

Technology provides important opportunities for families, teachers and school staff to engage in regular and
meaningful communication about a child’s strengths, challenges and growth.

A lot of communication between families and schools is via email, text, apps, social media and even video conference. The key to success is to know your families and how they collectively and individually prefer to receive and share information.

While updates and school news can be shared on Facebook and sent via text message with positive response, some of the same parents may not be as responsive to the same information when you send it through email or post it to the parent portal. Knowing the difference can empower parents to best support their child throughout the school year.

• Invite families to participate through a variety of communications channels, so they are aware of how they can get involved. Findings of a study on “Using Technology to Increase Parent Involvement in School” showed that parents of students in fourth through sixth grades demonstrated a positive perception of technology use to improve family engagement at the school, depending on the type of information being shared. Emails, phone messages or fliers were preferred for information exchanges that involve quick updates or yes/no questions. Phone calls or in-person communications were preferred for discussions about student performance or behavior.

• Engage parents through social media. Use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to deliver news and important updates, share pictures and encourage parent engagement. Be fun and informative with live announcements, an interactive Question of the Day, inspirational quotes, coupons/deals, and blog posts and news articles.

• While technology provides great opportunities for family involvement and parent-school communication, it can be a barrier to engagement. For example, a large number of portals and apps require parents to register and save passwords repeatedly, frustrating the parent until they stop using them. Equally frustrating, some systems are not mobile-friendly. These factors can be a hindrance for parents. Evaluate and eliminate such barriers to increase access to and use of technology among families.

Share Power: Include Parents in the Decision-Making Process

Parents and their children are the consumers of our nation’s public education system, yet they haven’t always been included at the decision-making table. This has caused confusion, mistrust and backlash when new initiatives are considered and implemented at the local, district, state and federal level.

Families play an important role in helping students navigate educational and career decisions and are influential in shaping students’ perceptions of what is possible for their futures. Gain valuable support for your initiatives by building a culture of inclusion, where families have a seat at the table and the opportunity to provide input on decisions that impact their children and schools.

• Ensure that in these meetings the families at the table represent the entire school community, with parents from all neighborhoods to promote access and diversity. Together, you can inform, influence and create policies, practices and programs.

• Create the appropriate channels for parents to provide regular feedback, and make sure education decision makers listen when parents share their thoughts. When all voices are heard and valued, it increases engagement and consensus.

• While it may be easy avoid real or perceived conflict, face it head on. As PTA mom Jennifer Steiner shared, “The beautiful thing about investing in a genuine relationship with the school is that when you have to ask hard questions or raise concerns, it's coming from a position of partnership.”

As you apply these strategies, remember family-school relationships are cultivated and sustained over time. And don’t be afraid to create relationships with community members who may not be a traditional part of the education system, but have a lot to offer our students, teachers, families and schools.

Jim Accomando is president of National PTA, the nation’s oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association. He is the parent of two public school educated children and the husband of a public school teacher.
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A Guide to Difficult Conversations

By Will Henson
As educators we are, by the nature of our work, faced with many opportunities to have difficult conversations. These occur with students, with parents, and sometimes even with each other. Our job is, at its core, to help people grow and learn. To do this we have to be able to address and talk about things that might be uncomfortable. In this article, we are going to explore the idea of having difficult conversations: It’s my hope that by the end of this you have some new tools to do so.

Let’s start with the big picture on tough conversations — they are part of life — and whether they are successful depends not on logic and not on how right you are, but on whether you can establish a successful dialogue that allows both people to feel heard and reach a resolution.

A conversation is a relationship: It is not a set of techniques or tricks you do to someone — it’s a shared experience — with a shared outcome. Having a conversation isn’t a battle; no one wins (that’s called an argument). The core aspect of having a good conversation with someone is to communicate.

A Good Conversation is:

(a) Safe: The conversation has to be “safe” and by that, I mean free from judgment, criticism or coercion. The number one goal for you is to establish a welcoming, open atmosphere that conveys you are there to help, and that you are willing to listen and work with the person. This is true even and especially when you are addressing a topic you and the other person might not agree on.

(b) Mutual: A conversation is two ways — you have to show your willingness to listen and a desire to understand the other person’s perspective because chances are, they have their own reasons for thinking, feeling and acting the way they do.

(c) Empathetic: Empathy means you understand not only what someone is saying, but you are picking up on the unspoken and non-verbal elements of the message. Being empathetic means listening to emotions as well as words and acknowledging them — often through our own non-verbal responses. This kind of resonance goes a long way to build trust.

At the end of the day, your chance of having a successful conversation with someone on a difficult topic isn’t determined by how hard the topic is but on how well you can create the right climate for a conversation.

What is a “Difficult Conversation”?

When I talk about a “difficult” conversation, I’m going to define it for our purposes as one in which you need to convey information that the other person may find hard to hear. The list of possibly difficult conversations is endless. Common conversations might include:

- Discussing an area of academic weakness with a student or parent
- Addressing an ongoing problem with a student, parent or co-worker
- Letting a parent know you suspect their child has a disability
- Discussing an incident that made you feel uncomfortable or was unsafe
- Informing a parent about discipline their child will receive, such as suspension.

Step One: Decide if You Need to Have this Conversation

The first step in deciding how to approach a conversation is to decide if it is necessary to have this conversation at all. Some important questions to ask include:

- Is the conversation something that can help both parties?
- Does the conversation benefit the students and community you serve?
- Are you the right person to have the conversation? Is this within your role? Would the issue be better addressed by someone else (e.g. parent, supervisor)?
- Could the conversation have an adverse effect that might make you think twice about having it?

If the conversation is only for you to “be heard” or “be right” or let someone know something that’s bugging you and isn’t helpful to the other person you might think twice about having it. A difficult conversation isn’t self-serving. It is heroic, because although it’s hard for you, it is intended to serve the greater good.

Step Two: Have a Plan

It’s critical that you don’t go into a difficult conversation without thinking it through. You want to keep the conversation short and sweet but long enough to get things resolved. You don’t want to go on and on,

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which you might do if you don’t have a plan or are feeling nervous. While you can’t plan everything, it helps to think about:

- How will you introduce the conversation?
- Rehearse it in your head: think about how you want to say it — both the words you will use and the intonation and non-verbal signals you might use as well. Get comfortable saying the words. Practicing can go a long way towards helping you feel comfortable and ready.
- How will you respond if the other party reacts negatively? Think about what they might think or say. If you are ready for the “worst case” scenario reactions you will feel more confident.

**Step Three: Check Yourself**

If the conversation is about something that you are emotionally passionate about, or perhaps even angry about, you have to stop and make sure you are ready to have the conversation without wrecking it by broadcasting a lot of negative emotion. Your calmness and comfort with the subject is going to transfer to your conversation partner.

**Step Four: Introduction**

The introduction to a conversation is the very important part. This is where you will introduce the topic and discuss why it’s important before going into specifics. You might start by saying what you have noticed and ask the person to help you understand it.

**Step Five: Listen First**

Listen FIRST! You are probably going to be ready to discuss your point of view and want to say those important things, but it is helpful to get the other person’s perspective before you start on your own. After you’ve invited the person to talk on the subject, try to summarize their point of view and see where they might be coming from.

**Step Six: Ask for Suggestions**

Once you have the problem on the table, you can ask the person for suggestions on how to solve the problem. This is a lot better than telling your partner what you want, or what they should do. Ask how you can help and be part of the solution where appropriate. Think about and evaluate solutions and potential roadblocks.

**Step Seven: Dealing with Resistance**

What if the other person gets defensive or angry? It’s likely that they feel attacked or criticized by your actions. They might even do or say things that make you even more angry, shifting the blame onto you or someone else, making excuses or failing to see how the issue is a problem. At times like this REMAIN CALM. You may not get to the solution today.

You may encounter people becoming defensive. Remember that people try to protect themselves in different ways and those ways aren’t always pleasant. When you see someone getting defensive, that’s a signal to you they are feeling attacked and you have to do what you can to help them feel more comfortable in the conversation.

**Step Eight: Ending the Conversation**

At the end of the conversation you can summarize what you both have agreed on as a solution. You may NOT have gotten to a solution and sometimes you won’t. If this is the case, it’s important that you end the conversation with an agreement to keep talking about it and keep the lines of communication open. If the conversation is awkward or heated, try to end it on a pleasant note. Thank the person for talking with you and acknowledge that it is hard to discuss the topic. You may agree to disagree. In the end, if you have a better relationship and more trust with the other person, that is something you can feel good about.

The problem that prompted your conversation might not be solved. In fact, sometimes you may have to bring in a third party, take the issue to a supervisor, let the issue go or maybe even have another conversation.

I hope these tips will help you put difficult conversations into perspective and allow you to bravely go forward and talk about those things that improve the lives of the people you serve and work with.

Dr. Will Henson is a licensed clinical psychologist and an education consultant to school districts, and a co-founder of 321insight, provider of online video training for trauma-informed school staff and paraprofessional effectiveness. Dr. Henson consults, speaks and gives trainings on topics including paraprofessional effectiveness, trauma-informed practices, threat management, functional assessment and best practices in supporting students with emotional and behavioral disorders. His first book “Behavior Support Strategies for Education Paraprofessionals” was published in 2008, and his 321insight content is used by schools and districts across the country.
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Orchestrating a brighter world
Building Relationships
WITH STUDENTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA

By Dr. Billie Jo Cowley
What is trauma? How may trauma affect my student’s academic performance? What can I do as a teacher to help students who have experienced trauma? What are ACEs and how do they affect my students? These are commonly asked questions by teachers and professionals working with school-aged children.

“Trauma is an exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person's capacity to cope” (Rice & Groves, 2005). In their study, Felitti and Anda describe how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as abuse, divorce, parental incarceration, homelessness, bullying, or death of a loved one have significant impact on child development and academic success. In an average classroom of 25 students, two students will have three or more ACEs; three students will have two ACEs; five students will have one ACE; and 14 students will have no known ACEs (Souers & Hall, 2018). Trauma is one of the most powerful risk factors in developing a mental health illness. Even though an individual may have experienced trauma, it doesn't mean a mental health prognosis will occur; it just increases the chances. Trauma that has occurred in early childhood may not be apparent until adolescence. Adolescent behavior can be misconstrued as defiant or disrespectful rather than a response to an event that triggered fear or physical reaction to the traumatic event that occurred. A child may not recall the traumatic event. However, the child's body has the power to store the trauma. The experiences are often stored in the body, not in the mind.

The Brain

Brain research correlates to how students who experienced trauma respond to triggers. The neocortex, also known as the rational brain, helps control the ability to think, reason, use higher order thinking skills, make decisions and maintain flexibility (Forbes, 2012). The neocortex is the outer layer of the brain and sometimes referred to as the “upstairs brain” (Souers & Hall, 2018). When this part of the brain is regulated, the child can focus on learning. In contrast, the limbic system, or “downstairs brain” (Souers & Hall, 2018), regulates mood, memory, attention, and hormone control. This part of the brain houses the child's survival mode and “is concerned with self-preservation, fear, and protective responses related to defense such as fight or flight” (Forbes, 2012, p. 24). Learning cannot happen when a child is functioning in the “downstairs brain.” The last part of the brain, reptilian, includes the brain stem and cerebellum. This part of the brain also is concerned with self-preservation and is ready to respond at all times during the day. "Mental health issues such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and panic disorder have roots in this part of the brain” (Forbes, 2012, p. 25). Knowing where the child is in their brain helps the teacher know how to respond accordingly.

Student-Teacher Relationship

Educators can create a trauma-sensitive learning environment to help students who have experienced trauma. Building a positive student-teacher relationship should be the first priority in the classroom (Forbes, 2012). This relationship provides security and safety for the child, who can then focus on his academics. Academic achievement happens when the child is calm and secure. A child doesn't care how much you know until he knows how much you care. Being genuine, knowing yourself, and asking the right questions are key to building a healthy and safe student-teacher relationship. Rather than asking, “I wonder what's wrong with that person?” rephrase the question to “I wonder what happened to the student that caused them to behave that way?” Some teachers tend to respond to negative behaviors such as classroom outburst, verbal defiance, or anger by resorting to traditional discipline measures that are not effective for students who have experienced trauma. Time-outs, seclusion rooms and staying in from recess have a direct impact on the child’s safety; therefore, these techniques are ineffective.

Teachers need to ask more questions of themselves such as:

- What is driving the behavior?
- What else is really going on?
- What does this child need?
- How can I change my perspective?
- What is this behavior communicating right now?
- What could be triggering this behavior?
• What negative beliefs does the child have about himself?
• In what ways are my expectations triggering him?
• Where is the child in his brain? (Forbes, 2012)

Teachers need to stay true to who they are when trying to build relationships with students who have experienced trauma.

**Strategies When Talking with a Youth who has Experienced Trauma**

A child who has experienced trauma may have many questions or choose not to talk about the event at all. Either way, a teacher may be the trusted adult in which the child confides. If the child asks questions, the teacher should try to answer them. If the teacher doesn’t know how to answer a question, admit that to the child. A child should never be forced to talk about his traumatic experience before he is ready. When the child is ready, he may choose different outlets such as writing, drawing, or playing with toys. As the child is sharing the experience, the teacher should avoid telling the child how he should feel. Teachers should expect strong emotions from the child; assure the child that it is

In their study, Felitti and Anda describe how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as abuse, divorce, parental incarceration, homelessness, bullying, or death of a loved one have significant impact on child development and academic success.

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okay to feel upset (Mental Health First Aid USA, 2016).

**Strategies to Help with Regulation**

Self-regulation happens when a person recognizes he is operating in the emotional “downstairs brain” and needs to regulate back to the “upstairs brain.” Many adults are able to recognize when they are about to “blow their tops.” When they feel this way, some go for a walk, take deep breaths, read, or exercise. Teaching a child about self-regulation is important. If the child is in the “downstairs brain”, the teacher can help teach the child how to regulate so he gets back to the “upstairs brain.” There are many regulating strategies to use to assist the child.

1. **Be present with the child.** Listen to what he is saying and validate his feelings. Use reflective listening and clarifying statements to help the child talk through his feelings.
2. **Integrate the upstairs and downstairs brain by asking for facts such as “What is 4 times 5?”** Ask open-ended “What would you do”-type questions. This strategy keeps the child from thinking so emotional (downstairs brain) and using his upstairs brain to answer the questions.
3. **Have the child mimic your breathing pattern.** This strategy can help the child focus on breathing until he is ready to talk.
4. **Help the child find appropriate regulating strategies.** When the child feels he will have an outburst, teach him how to regulate on his own. As part of the student-teacher relationship, the teacher will need to know the child’s interests and help him decide what will work for him. For example, he may need to walk the halls, read a book, or go to a safe place in the room designated for him. Whatever it is, the teacher should communicate the child’s decision [on how he will self-regulate] to others in the building.

**Conclusion**

Students today are entering the classroom with many different experiences. Some of these experiences have been very positive, whereas, others have left a negative impact on the child’s development. As teachers, recognizing and responding to students’ trauma or adverse childhood experiences that affect the child’s behavior will be more effective than the traditional reactive approach to negative behavior. Building positive relationships with students is the key to help with social and emotional development.

Dr. Billie Jo Cowley is the Chair of Master’s of Education Program and an associate professor at Upper Iowa University.

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For individuals with disabilities, the success of intervention depends on many variables. Providing evidence-based effective treatment, ongoing staff training and feedback, and identifying appropriate goals, for example, all influence the extent to which meaningful progress might occur. In addition to those elements of treatment, success is also influenced by the extent to which members of teams effectively collaborate with one another. Intervention is a complex enterprise and requires the ability to discuss alternate points of view, navigate differences of opinion, and resolve interpersonal difficulties. The success of intervention and the individuals’ subjective impressions of the team’s health may be determined, in part, by the degree to which team members are able to demonstrate mutual respect, communicate effectively and exude compassion.

One of the most crucial foundations of effective collaboration between parents and professionals is compassion, or the capacity to truly understand the unique challenges and extraordinary stress experienced by families or loved ones. Most clinicians have a general understanding of the ways in which having a family member with a disability might pose emotional and logistical challenges. However, they may not recall that information in everyday clinical interactions. They may feel frustrated when a family is not following a behavior plan, taking requested data, or writing back in the communication book. Such frustration may be conveyed in direct or subtle ways, leaving family members feeling that they are being evaluated negatively or falling short of expectations. Allen and Warzak (2000) emphasized the need for clinicians to assess why family members might be failing to adhere to treatment recommendations. They point out that family members may be asked to work on goals that are not highly motivating, or may be given plans that are simply too complex to implement in the natural environment. In other words, these authors suggest that a foundation of compassion might help clinicians to assess such non-adherence, to understand its persistence, and to change their own behaviors to partner more effectively with parents. The challenges encountered in a home setting and the chronicity of the stress inherent in the family context need to be considered in analyzing such problems.

It is not always the case that such skills are taught to students or to staff members. A tremendous amount of energy is spent teaching skills in instructing students, in recording data, and in summarizing progress. Comparatively little attention may be given to helping teachers and human service professionals to develop these skills. Yet, it is clear that compassion skills can be defined and can be taught (Bonvincini et al.). Even simple component skills such as learning to listen effectively and to ask questions make a difference in the extent to which the listener feels supported and understood. Being able to summarize the content that a conversational partner has offered goes a long way toward feeling valued and heard. In
addition, checking in with parents to request information and clarification (e.g., “Did I miss anything?”), and offering assistance and partnership can make the difference in working effectively with families, and can reduce familial isolation and stress in some cases (e.g., Coulehan et al., 2001; Epstein et al., 1993; Hardee, 2003).

One of the goals of human service provision organizations needs to be in expanding the lens through which they view effective service delivery, by including effective partnerships with families. Staff members need to be exposed to information about family experience and family impact, and be trained in the skills that make a difference in family support. Helping to build a foundation of empathy in providers may make it more likely that parental non-adherence is interpreted as a failure to provide clinical services that match family capacity and preference, rather than as a failure on a family’s part. Teaching skills in listening and in communicating respectfully may make families feel more understood and appreciated in the context of care.

In addition to collaboration with families, staff members also need to learn to collaborate effectively with staff members from other disciplines. The nature of intervention for those with disciplines is interdisciplinary by nature. The complex needs of learners require the expertise of many disciplines. Coordination among the disciplines is important and ultimately necessary to achieve maximum growth and progress. Each discipline comes to the table focusing on its respective goals, based on its specialized assessments. Each discipline, then, implements its own treatment interventions (either directly or through training of other staff); all of this must be coordinated throughout the treatment environments. At times, disciplines fall into doing separate work somewhat independently of other disciplines. This, in part, is a result of the logistical complexity of scheduling a number of therapies offered by a number of disciplines; finding time for discussion and observation with other professionals can be difficult to arrange. However, it is important for there to be opportunities for members of different disciplines to discuss their points of view, to share their impressions, to observe one another’s approaches, and to co-treat together.

Broadhead (2015) urges behavior analysts (and, one could propose, those in other disciplines) to develop an understanding of the foundations and approaches of each discipline, to understand why certain recommendations may be made, to translate other procedures into one’s own worldview and framework, and to be open to procedures suggested by other professionals. Many others have noted that failures to communicate and collaborate with professionals from other disciplines may lead to misunderstandings. Professionals may feel devalued or marginalized in a team context, may believe that their views are less valuable, and may feel unable to influence team decisions. When this occurs, these professionals may remain silent and hesitate to prescribe a necessary treatment intervention.

This is another area where little is done to train professionals in the skills of collaboration. In behavior analysis, for instance, more attention is given to ensuring that clinicians understand the ethical obligations to offer science-based intervention than to dialog with teams about intervention choices. Yet, inadvertently, behavior analysts emphasizing evidence-based intervention may offend clinicians from other perspectives when they point out a lack of evidence for a proposed procedure. While all of these topics are part of the necessary discussion, gaps exist in training and practice in this crucial area.

It is helpful to consider how organizations might help instill a culture of collaboration to aid all staff in developing effective alliances with families and successful teams. It may be that training and supervision around these essential skills will enhance the ability of staff members to exude skills that make other members of the team feel heard, valued, respected, and understood. This should ultimately lead to more effective learner outcomes and higher satisfaction from consumers and employees.

In sum, collaboration across disciplines and with families has great influence on the success of treatment. Good collaboration ‘sets the table’ for maximizing the success of the student/client. However, successful collaboration also means that all professionals need to have and maintain open minds, be willing to be flexible and share their time, and believe that all learners can succeed. Faulty collaboration may interfere with treatment delivery and adherence. All professionals need to step back, reflect on how each can contribute, and strive to behave in ways that not only maximize their individual effectiveness, but also elevate the team with whom they provide services to the client. To that end, these steps can be considered as a basic roadmap to enhancing collaboration and effectiveness:

1. Train staff members in the realities of family stress and family experience; actively contextualize problems in plan adherence in this context.
2. Encourage functional assessments of parental non-adherence, and develop plans to alter staff behavior and clinical interventions to address these concerns.
3. Target soft skills that will increase parental comfort. Teach staff members basic active listening skills and effective communication skills.
4. Obtain information from parents about the extent to which they feel valued, respected, supported, and understood. For example, this can be done through regular family satisfaction surveys.
5. Actively seek to develop true interdisciplinary teams. Work against a silo approach. Foster true communication among disciplines. Create regular interdisciplinary team meetings.
6. Remember that true collaboration takes time, flexibility and response effort. Allow for as much planning time and flexibility as possible.
7. Encourage observation of sessions by other professionals and seek opportunities for co-treating.
8. Disseminate information from all disciplines. In professional development contexts, bring in speakers from multiple professions. Share articles from many fields of study.
9. Ensure that respect is conveyed to all professions, and that professional disagreements are resolved with respect.
10. Emphasize collaboration skills in staff training.
11. Evaluate the extent to which professionals feel respected within the organization. Embed questions on this issue within the annual employee surveys.

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The Possibilities of Mutualism

By Mac Bogert
Dis-Integrated Learning

I started teaching at a nationally recognized high school in Fairfax, Virginia. Our test scores, graduation rate and college acceptance numbers were strong. Yet the only time faculty members gathered outside of their departments was on lunch duty, in assemblies and momentarily in the tiny teacher’s lounge. Bells signaled the temporary stampede in the hallways. Students sat in rows, sophomores with sophomores, seniors with seniors. Administrators, like a ship’s officers, kept to the quarterdeck — the office — with few exceptions. Parents? Back-to-school night and conferences.

Those separate streams seldom flowed together, as if learning needed to be broken up in order to be managed. As I was writing the first paragraph above, I kept wondering why I never questioned the dis-integration of the community of learning.

The Aslan Phenomenon

Any element of a school that nurtures learning adds quality, any element that impedes learning reduces it. The industrial approach to schooling — uniformity, standardization, hierarchy, the assembly line mindset — elevates control over learning. Maybe that approach is a leftover, an example of The Aslan Phenomenon, coined by a fellow named Roger van Oech.*

Roger loves to run. He also loves dogs. As he jogged around his new neighborhood one day, he happened upon a dog named Aslan who couldn’t wait to make a new friend. Roger made a point to run by Aslan’s yard every day to play. One day he came by and Aslan was nowhere to be seen. A man working in the yard told him Aslan had passed away. Yet the next morning Roger found himself running by Aslan’s yard even though the reason for doing it was gone.
Let’s ask ourselves how many Aslan phenomena in our schools’ habits about power and control crowd out the engagement of our students, teachers, administrators and parents as equal leaders.

**Beyond Carrots and Sticks**

What if we don’t need to motivate students to learn? Parents to participate more actively? Teachers and administrators to see each other as equals? What if we accept that the default setting for human beings is to be motivated and involved?

Most organizations, whether HOAs, church groups, businesses or schools, rely on a flawed understanding of what drives people to high performance. We call it carrot and stick: rewarding “correct” behaviors and accomplishment, punishing mistakes and failures. What we know from current research is that this pattern reduces accountability and dersails continuous learning.

Daniel Pink, in “Drive,” shows how extrinsic drivers (carrots and sticks) destroy initiative, innovation, performance and learning. His research, focused on behavioral science and myriad case studies, indicates that all human beings have three intrinsic motivators. These create extraordinary performance if we remove the barriers — excessive control and lack of trust in others’ capacity — that hold them back.

He concludes that we all share the desire to:

1. **Control our own lives**;
2. **Learn and create new things**;
3. **Do better by ourselves and our world**.

This is not pie-in-the-sky thinking but, as he says, “. . . a way of thinking and an approach to business grounded in the real science of human motivation.”

Given conclusive research about intrinsic motivation, how can we remove barriers that prevent these three motors of performance from coming forward? For our teachers, for our parents, our administrators, and most important, for our children. We can model intrinsic motivation and give them permission to do the same.

**Learning Mutually**

I’ve had many jobs in my life, never once only working with people my own age. So why do we group our children by age? Aslan Phenomenon, perhaps? Why do we systematically (and systemically) create walls between the roles of administrators, teachers, parents and students? Separation not only restricts learning a subject like geometry, it also (maybe more importantly) restricts the development of leadership skills, communication expertise, and mutualism: how to act together.

A seminal study in this field is George Land’s “Grow or Die.” How’s that for a cheery title? He suggests we all have the opportunity to move through three stages in our lives. The first is accretion: childhood, when we focus on getting what we need to survive, i.e. food, love, diaper changing, shelter, etc. The second stage he calls replication, when we begin to form tribes by copying behavior. Adolescents copy athletes, performers, other teenagers, images from marketing firms. The final stage many of us never reach he calls mutualism.

Mutualism accepts, even treasures differences. We achieve mutualism by lots of interactions with lots of different people until we see differences between people or ideas as resources, not threats. So why not have students work together? Why not have parents, teachers, administrators and students work cooperatively to operate the school, in every aspect?

**Leadership over Management**

I am very grateful to have learned two important lessons about learning in my first two years of teaching. I wish I’d learned them before I started, but I was caught up in archaic ideas about what learning looked like. I think I was also trapped by my own self-importance as the teacher. Here’s what I found out in spite of those blinders:

If I really want to explore an idea or topic, teach it!

The more I engage my students in that teaching, the better we all learn.

Before I discovered these insights (or they discovered me), I had mistaken teaching as management rather than understanding teaching as leadership. Taking roll, handing out assignments, grading papers, making announcements, keeping the classroom orderly, are all management. I’d even had a course in graduate school entitled Classroom Management. There was no course available, maybe still isn’t, called Classroom Leadership.

Some years ago, I was facilitating a group at the Department of Education and heard a very smart fellow by the name of Bill Taggart say “Two things you develop before you need the: capability and relationships. You manage things, lead people. If you treat people like things, you’ll turn them off.”

So, we can ask ourselves Do we want our children to spend most of their formative years in a dictatorship or a republic? To learn how to follow or learn how to lead? To assume learning is separate from everyday life? That we learn best in isolation?

Let’s re-think, and re-design, our disconnections and provide schools where learning, leadership and collaboration flow together.

**Three First Steps**

1. Build a framework for convening parents, teachers, staff and students, on an equal footing, to look at re-forming your school to share communication, accountability for learning and leadership with everyone equitably. Even having that conversation is an important change.
2. Give all students the opportunity to mentor each other and form learning teams across grade levels. These can be project teams, community service teams, rules committees, any focused, collaborative effort that builds the student community across age lines.
3. Establish a “What’s holding us back?” blackboard/website for gathering and disseminating ideas for mutualism in our community of learning.

Learning is powerful and limitless. Let’s confront old ideas about what a school should look like, who should lead learning and fearlessly open ourselves to greater possibilities.

Since 1994, Mac Bogert has been president of Aza Learning, providing innovative coaching and learning programs focused on leadership and creative thinking. He began teaching in 1971 after attending Washington and Lee University and the University of Virginia. He’s taught in a variety of schools, from elementary to college, today providing learning support for 200 clients nationwide.

He recently published Learning Chaos: How Disorder Can Save Education, which suggests we don’t need to make people learn but to remove the barriers that prevent learning. Mac lives in Annapolis, MD, where he works, writes, sails and plays blues guitar, though not all at the same time.
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How Safe are our Schools?

Violent Threats And Incidents In Schools: An Analysis of the 2017-2018 School Year

Researched and Written by Dr. Amy Klinger and Amanda Klinger, Esq.

On February 14, 2018, the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida became the spark that once again ignited a national conversation about violence in schools. Amid the political agendas, recriminations, activism, and just plain fear, a critical element has been overlooked — the need to move beyond speculation and anecdotes about school safety to a data-based analysis of the threats and incidents of violence that have occurred in K-12 United States schools during the past academic year. This report provides insights and a critical analysis of the 2017-2018 school year.

The Educator’s School Safety Network (ESSN), a national non-profit school safety organization, has compiled the most current information on threats and incidents of violence in America’s schools to examine the frequency, scope and severity of the problem. In the 2017-2018 school year, more than 3,659 threats and incidents of violence occurred in American K-12 schools. Perhaps the most concerning figures are the significant increases from school year to school year. There were at least 3,380 threats recorded in the 2017-2018 school year, a 62 percent increase from 2,085 threats in the 2016-2017 school year.

Concurrent with these troubling findings, school administrators and law enforcement officials find themselves in the untenable position of having to make critical decisions about the validity of threats with little to no threat assessment protocols, few established best practices, outdated procedures, and typically, a complete lack of education-based school safety training. In the wake of the Parkland shooting, gun related issues and law enforcement solutions have become the central focus to the exclusion of a comprehensive, all-hazards approach to both violence prevention and response.

Summary of Findings

There were 3,380 threats recorded in the 2017-2018 school year, a 62 percent increase from 2,085 threats in the 2016-2017 school year. There were 279 incidents of violence that occurred in the 2017-2018 school year, compared to 131 events in 2016-2017 school year – an increase of 113 percent.

Threats of Violence

- For purposes of this research, ‘threats’ are defined as an expressed intent to do harm. The number of threats in the 2017-2018 school year were shooting threats (38.8 percent of all threats), followed by generalized or unspecified threats of violence (35.8 percent), and bomb threats (22.5 percent). This is a slight change from the 2016-2017 school year when bomb threats were the most common (34.6 percent) followed by shooting threats (30 percent) and unspecified threats (26 percent).

Method of Delivery of Threats

- While the method of delivery of threats was not always reported, when it was reported, social media was the most common source of threats, accounting for 39.2 percent of all threats in the 2017-2018 school year. Written threats were discovered within the school 20 percent of time, most commonly in the restroom. Verbal comments were the source of threats 12.7 percent of the time.

Individuals Who Made Threats of Violence

- During the 2017-2018 school year, ESSN began to track information related to the sex, age, and affiliation of those who either made threats or perpetrated incidents of violence. While this information was not always known or reported, when it was available, it was analyzed for both incidents and
threats. When the data was available, 81 percent of all threats of violence during the 2017-2018 school year came from students. Juveniles who were not students at the impacted school were the source of threats 7.3 percent of the time, followed by adults (other than parents or staff) 6.8 percent of the time. Parents and staff were the source of the threat less than one percent of the time. Males were the source of threats 83 percent of the time. Regardless of sex, the age of those who made threats (when known) ranged from nine to 81 years of age: 41 percent were 13 – 15 years old, 40 percent were 16 – 18 years old, 12 percent were 18 years or older, and eight percent were 12 years or younger.

**Types of Schools Impacted by Threats**
- In the 2017-2018 school year, high schools were impacted most frequently by threats (59 percent), followed by middle schools (25 percent), and elementary schools (17 percent).

**The Parkland Shooting’s Impact on Threats**
- Forty-three percent of all the threats documented in the 2017-2018 school year occurred just in the 30 days after Parkland. It is important to note that this number is significantly underreported due to the sheer volume of threats that occurred in the days following the tragedy, which resulted in numerous threats never being reported in the media. Despite this, prior to the Parkland event, there was an average of 10.2 threats per day, which rose to an average of 24.2 per day after.

**Incidents of Violence**
- The 2017-2018 school year saw 279 incidents of violence compared to 131 events in the 2016-2017 school year. In addition to the increase of 113 percent from the previous year, a significant increase in the number of violent incidents occurred from fall of 2017 to spring of 2018. The rate of violent incidents increased by 109 percent from the fall to the spring of the 2017-2018 school year. 90 violent incidents occurred in the fall of 2018 and 188 incidents of violence occurred in the spring of 2018.
Types of Incidents

The most frequent type of incident during the 2017-2018 school year was guns found on campus, (77 instances or 28 percent of all incidents), followed by shootings or shots fired (70 events or 25 percent of all incidents), and thwarted attacks or plots (38 events or 14 percent of all incidents).

• Guns found — The number of guns found on campus was not only the most common incident, but also an area that showed a significant increase. The 77 guns reported in the entire 2017-2018 school year was an overall increase of a staggering 267 percent. Only 21 guns were reported in the 2016-2017 school year. There was also a significant increase in guns brought on campus after the Parkland shooting, with 28 guns found before and after 14th, a 75 percent increase within the same year.

• Shootings and/or shots fired — The manner in which “school shootings” or “shots fired” are defined differs between data sets. For the purpose of this report, an incident was categorized as a “shooting” when shots were deliberately fired on the campus of a school with the intent to cause harm. An event was categorized as “shots fired” when a weapon was discharged on school grounds that was not considered targeted violence. There were 35 school shootings in the 2017-2018 school year, a 30 percent increase from the 27 shootings that occurred in the 2016-2017 school year. The number of incidents of shots fired also increased from 21 in 2016-2017 to 35 in 2017-2018. In the 2016-2017 school year, shootings or instances of shots fired accounted for a higher percent of incidents (36.6 percent) compared to 25 percent this past year, but the actual number of shootings or shots fired was higher in the 2017-2018 school year — a total of 70 versus 49.

• Thwarted plots — More than 38 planned attacks were thwarted during the 2017-2018 school year, comprising 14 percent of all incidents recorded. Seventy-one percent of all the thwarted plots in the school year (27 potential attacks) occurred from January to June of 2018, compared to 29 percent of the thwarted attacks (11 instances) that were discovered in the fall of 2017. More than half (55 percent) of all the thwarted plots in the school year were uncovered after the Parkland shooting on February 14th.

• Bomb incidents — One detonation, four explosive devices, and 22 suspicious items accounted for 10 percent of all violent incidents in the 2017-2018 school year. In the 2016-2017 school year, two detonations, two explosive devices, and 24 suspicious items accounted for 21 percent of all violent incidents. Still, bomb threats and incidents accounted for 22 percent of all the threats and incidents recorded this past school year, compared to 37 percent of all threats and incidents the previous year.

• Suicides on campus - Suicides that occurred on school campuses accounted for four percent of all violent incidents. While this percentage hasn’t changed significantly when compared to the 2016-2017 school year, the actual number of suicides more than doubled from four to 10 in 2017-2018.

Individuals Who Perpetrated Violence

As was the case with threats, the majority (79 percent) of all violent incidents in the 2017-2018 school year were perpetrated by students followed by adults who were not parents or staff members (14 percent). The rate of violence by staff, parent, or non-student juvenile perpetrators was two percent or less for each group. Ninety-four percent of all incidents of violence were perpetrated by males. Regardless of sex, the age of the known perpetrators of violence ranged from eight – 57 years of age. 44 percent were 16-18 years old, 30 percent were 13 – 15 years old, 20 percent were 18 years or older, and five percent were 12 years or younger.

Types of Schools Where Violence Occurred

The breakdown of the type of schools impacted by incidents of violence is similar to that of threats noted earlier in the report. During the 2017-2018 school year, 72 percent of violent incidents occurred in high schools, 22 percent in middle schools, and 16 percent in elementary schools.

The Overall Impact of the Parkland Shooting

An examination of pre and post Parkland data indicates that while the actual number of violent incidents increased overall in the 2017-2018 school year, the increase was not particularly significant after the Parkland shooting. Roughly half of the violent incidents took place before the shooting and half after. There were 136 incidents of violence in the school year before the Parkland shooting (49 percent) and 142 incidents after (51 percent). It could be argued that the Parkland shooting was the catalyst for the violent incidents and threats that followed, but was instead a horrific example of the overall increase in violence that was already occurring during the 2017-2018 school year. As noted earlier in the report, there were significant increases, however, in both the frequency of threats, and the number of guns brought to school in the days immediately following the shooting event in Parkland.

30 Days After Parkland

The most significant impact of the Parkland shooting was in the immediate aftermath of the event. Schools were impacted the most during this time period as related to both threats and incidents of violence. In the 30 days immediately following the tragedy: 35 percent of all school-based threats occurred, 27 percent of all violent incidents occurred. The most dramatic increase in the 30-day time period was noted in the number of guns found on school campuses in the wake of the shooting: 36 guns were found on campus – that’s 47 percent of guns found all school year.

This report addresses two factors that are impediments to improving school safety: (1) the lack of consistent information about violent threats and incidents in schools along with recommendations for safety practices, and (2) the fragmentation of information and resources between the educational and emergency response communities. Although catastrophic events in schools may be rare, the potential for violence exists in all schools, every school day. The first critical step for improvement is to shift the thinking about school safety from an occasional concern to an everyday operation for educators that involves planning for, preventing, and responding to the potential for violence.

Reprinted with permission from: The Educator’s School Safety Network. ESSN was founded by Dr. Amy Klinger and Amanda Klinger, Esq. Since 2010, ESSN experts have presented at 33 conferences to more than 4,000 educators and emergency responders in 15 different states at 8 national, 6 regional, 14 state, and 5 local conferences. ESSN experts have been the keynote speaker at 23 of 33 conferences. ESSN experts have trained more than 11,000 school staff members, students, parents, and emergency responders in 39 different school districts or organizations since 2010 in 11 states as well as the province of Ontario. ESSN experts have authored: In Search of Safer Schools, articles in six different journals and co-authored 2 FEMA/Department of Homeland Security participant and instructor course manuals. ESSN experts have been featured as subject matter experts more than 35 times by national, regional, and local television, radio, and print media outlets in response to school crisis events.
It’s Time to Get Serious about School Safety

Even with the unprecedented amount of money available in the 2018/2019 academic year for school safety and security, most schools will not reach a level of sustainable safety. The simple truth is that money is not the answer to our school security problem. Knowledge is. The ability to see the whole picture and execute a plan that includes all the best available resources administered by leading security experts is essential.

Alliance Technology Group is a systems integration and Information Technology provider with 12 regional locations across America and a physical presence in every state. They have Fortune 500 commercial customers, higher education customers like the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins Medical Center, and school systems including Anne Arundel County Schools and Prince George County (Maryland). They also keep over 200 government agencies and departments safe, most notably the Federal Reserve, the Department of Energy, the FBI and the Department of Defense.

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Alliance knows that technology plays a critical role in physical security. The Internet of Things fundamentally changes how schools need to protect people, property and assets. Alliance Technology’s Vigilant Platforms division integrates the latest technologies into the school environment to ensure they have the highest level of security and emergency response functionality that can include various sensors, biometrics and the best analytics in the industry. Vigilant designs and implements solutions for video surveillance, access control and biometrics, visitor management, credentialing and badging, command and control centers, situational awareness, mobile emergency communications, visualization, LPR, and emergency notification with the corresponding and best IT infrastructure. Their background in high-level government security makes Alliance Technologies the best systems integration choice for schools to meet the needs of an ever-increasing and demanding technology environment.

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Vigilant Platforms ensures organizations have the appropriate layers of technologies to protect their students and staff, as well as the organization’s property and assets. Vigilant gives school systems full situational awareness. This includes multiple layer perimeter defenses, fully integrated multi-domain communication capability even in the harshest environments and the ability to appropriately react.

The Roadmap: From Where You are to Where You Need to Be

Vigilant Platform’s team of experts can help your school or district develop and implement an enterprise wide strategy to integrate new technologies into your existing physical security infrastructure. The Roadmap serves as a long-term integrated physical security plan, allowing your organization to seamlessly add additional layers of defense over time. Understanding, evaluating and integrating the latest security technologies into a school’s existing infrastructure can be overwhelming. Alliance Technology Group and its Vigilant Platform has experienced engineers that can assess your current environment and seamlessly integrate the solution into your existing infrastructure, then train your staff for operational excellence.

For more information, visit www.vigilantplatforms.com
By Mindy Marvel

As a parent, I am grateful that my daughters not only received a great education but had no major safety issues throughout their years in school. However, as a security technology professional, I recognize that our school campuses are woefully in need of a major security facelift. While school incidents have been on the rise, funding has typically not been allocated to school security investments over the past few years. As a result, schools have been compelled to do what they can with less manpower, aging security equipment, and out of date network technology. The technology component of school safety, safety plans, procedures and governance are not addressed but are an integral part of school safety.

Device use is growing rapidly. Today, students come to class with an average of 3 devices and the number is estimated to grow to 5+ devices by 2020. Network availability, scalability and reliability are expected. Protection of personal information is a major concern. And security is paramount. Outages, poor security footage, and lack of security governance cannot and will not be tolerated by students, parents or teaching staff.

Networks are no longer incidental – they should be considered critical infrastructure. IP-based networks deliver much more than computer data – they also support voice, video, access control, television, and a host of other services 24x7x365 and must be secured. Networks must provide ubiquitous access to the students, faculty, administration, and visitors while supporting proper and secure segmentation, adaptability to new technology and future vision. Additionally, by building failover and redundancy into the design, maximum uptime and bandwidth is ensured.

And the network is just the beginning. Security should always be designed to incorporate these four tenets: deterrence (prevention), detection (alerting), delay (slowing the perpetrator), and response (both by the proper resources like police, fire, and medical and to the perpetrator(s)). Below are some areas where security improvement will facilitate better protection of people, property and assets on campus.

Surveillance – According to the Department of Education, 81% of schools had surveillance cameras which means 19% need new cameras. However, a large percentage of the schools have analog cameras that are woefully out of date. Existing analog cameras should be replaced with a minimum of a 2MP camera for indoor and 5MP for outdoor use and, depending on whether facial details are required, more powerful cameras might be needed. If there are any areas where key features or actions are crucial, (replace with better ones).
counting. like object detection, motion detection, and cameras have analytic capabilities built-in like object detection, motion detection, and counting.

**Access Control** – Today, access control must go well beyond locking entry doors at certain hours of the day. Weapon detection at entry doors, facial recognition, camera-based door controllers, visitor and employee badging, and intrusion detection for areas that are available to only those individuals approved for entry should be considered. Glass and window breaks should be a staple as well for undesired entry/exit notification. While a majority of schools are monitoring entrance doors and/or gates, many do not use more than simple locks. A large percentage of schools and campuses are missing effective electronic means of access control.

**Video Management System (VMS)** – Managing surveillance and access real-time is just as important as having it! Surveillance has typically been something to reference post-incident but, in today’s world, video capture can be used during an active incident to identify, locate, and determine actions and weapons of perpetrators and be instantly alerted to access attempts or breaches. Look for VMS systems that are equipped with analytics, can notify security personnel in various ways, and can support both video and access control.

**Analytics** – There are a whole host of analytics now available to help notify security personnel of a change in situation. Some cameras now have analytics built in that can alert when someone is entering a restricted area, movement when there should be none, or an object has been left for a prolonged period of time.

**Personal security** – In California, it is now mandatory for hotel personnel working alone in a guest room to be equipped with a panic button that instantly notifies security personnel there is sexual harassment, suspect activities, or threatening actions. All campuses can and should provide a like device to students, faculty, and administration. The purchase of this device can be incorporated into student fees (i.e. Technology or Security), effectively extending the cost to the parents/students in lieu of the university.

**Mass Notification** – When there is an incident on school premises, within the district or within proximity of the school, impacted parties (i.e. parents) can be notified by email, phone, or text. Messages should be easily created or modified whether on school premises or remotely (i.e. weather closure, emergent event) and available 7x24x365. The application should be installed in a highly secure environment or off-campus in a redundant data center (i.e. hosted/cloud offer).

**Body worn or mobile cameras** – Utilize these products to protect the university and officers from lawsuits that impact reputation. It is also extremely useful for capturing footage that can be used for investigations, searches, and avoiding and/or supporting legal matters.

**Parking lots and garages** – Emergency call boxes are antiquated and blue lights do not provide adequate coverage. Many parking garages now have full surveillance throughout the parking area, capture license plates, and alert to available parking spaces. Panic alerting should also be conveniently available coupled with 2-way voice.

**Command and control in campus safety** – In addition to campus/school security, interaction and communications with police and other external emergency response entities, other municipalities, and/or surrounding businesses is commonplace and facilitates faster and integrated response to incidents.

**9-1-1** – All phones associated with the school’s telephony system must be able to dial emergency services without dialing additional digits or special codes. 22 of the 50 states have enacted Kari’s Law and will be in effect for all states in 2020. Make sure the school telephony system has been updated or configured to support 9-1-1 dialing.

**Security Dispatch** – Once school/campus security is aware of an alarm or potential incident, there must be a way to effectively dispatch officers, communicate video images and/or building floorplan information, and relate video/audio capture to the incident report. Mobility is key to allow security personnel to perform non-incident related tasks when not responding to an emergent situation or alarm.

**IoT/Smart Buildings** – Sensors are very effective in protecting critical resources such as electricity, water, carbon dioxide, and temperature as well as having control of lights, locks, and HVAC. Additionally, these can be integrated into VMS solutions to trigger key personnel of an attempted breach or issue before critical infrastructure is affected.

In developing and implementing a multifaceted security program, there are a couple of other key points that should be top of mind. First, most manufacturers comply with open standards-based products like ONVIF. Because no manufacturer can provide all aspects of a secure environment, standards-based products are essential. Proprietary protocols only prevent integration of third-party applications and products and are not considered more secure.

Creating a comprehensive security program requires input from multiple parties within a school system. IT, Campus Security, and Facilities Management, at minimum, should be engaged as well as administrative leadership.

And lastly, emergency governance is vital. Document school/district security policies, define emergency events and associated processes dependent on type and severity, and how to reach key security personnel. This is critical. For example, there are times when mass notification causes more harm and could prevent a timely response. A well-versed security integration company should be well-versed in all these topics and can assist with the security plan. The vendor can also be a vital member of the technology research process. Most importantly, validate that the new technology enables these procedures post-installation.

With more than 35 years in the technology industry, Mindy has successfully guided product development, corporate operations and business development focused on communications, networking and security solutions. She has a passion for helping enterprises leverage compelling products and services to meet strategic initiatives and eradicate challenges. Mindy is currently providing leadership for the Vigilant Platforms Physical Security Division of Alliance Technology Group in Hanover, MD.
In a post-Parkland America, state lawmakers have earmarked over $250 million in school safety grants in states along the Southeastern coast line from Virginia through Florida alone.

Tragic events like the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and the increasing frequency of school shootings across the country has led to an increased recognition that schools need assistance to create a safe environment for their students and staff. The amount of funding to improve school safety is growing but many school officials don’t know where to start.

This influx of available funding that must be spent by schools has led to an inundation of security firms, contractors, and various device companies vying to provide their services, to capture these funds. How are school officials supposed to know which move to make first? Which vendor should you use? What are the ramifications for selecting the wrong one?

Ultimately, these decisions are about the safety and security of the children in your care. All! schools want to keep their students and staff safe. But keep in mind that these decisions will be heavily scrutinized. You will want to work with organizations that have strong reputations for delivering the highest quality service and safety outcomes.

The following tips can help you evaluate potential vendors as you navigate the school safety planning process.

**Start with An Evaluation**

The best way to decrease your liability and ensure you have the right security measures in place is to start with a risk assessment. Before committing to school safety purchase decisions, you should evaluate what you have in place currently and make sure that the purchases support a larger plan.

Risk assessments are a comprehensive analysis of your facility, policies and people to identify critical factors that can negatively impact your safety and security. When you hire an assessor he or she should be able to apply, design and integrate physical security systems as well as a plan to implement the recommended security measures.

Many of the state-level grants funds available are tied directly to risk assessments.

**Mitigate Risk and Liability with a Certified Assessor**

The purpose of a risk assessment is risk mitigation and liability protection. These assessments should be the foundation of strategic planning and long-term safety, security and infrastructure investment. To achieve this goal, you must hire a professionally certified assessor.

Just because someone has an impressive resume, does not mean they are a physical security professional. ASIS International Board Certification for Physical Security Professionals (PSP®) is the leading physical security designation in the private sector. ASIS Board Certification has received the DHS Safety Act designation, meaning that ASIS board-certified professionals’ customers are shielded from lawsuits involving ASIS certification and acts of terrorism. Ultimately, when selecting an assessor, you must consider the legal ramifications. If your assessor does not have a certification, you may be increasing your risk of liability if their assessment does not hold up under legal scrutiny.

**Beware of Traps**

There are vendors out there who offer to provide a risk assessment for free. These companies typically specialize in some other product, such as security cameras and systems, shot detection systems, door locks, etc. If you select a device company to provide your risk assessment, you can be sure that your assessment results will call for installation of whatever product they sell. This may or may not be an appropriate solution. But it is more than likely the assessment conducted will not be as thorough as it needs to be.

**Risk Assessments Must Be Comprehensive**

These assessments must be comprehensive and multi-faceted. Assessments should incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) but should also go further. Assessments need to analyze physical facilities and infrastructure, external environment, people, and policies. They should be done from outside/inside and inside/out. A majority of school shooting events start inside with a shooter who actually belongs inside of the building. Therefore, external security measures won’t keep out individuals who are supposed to be inside. A holistic assessment will include mitigation strategies for internal threats and external threats.

A professionally certified assessor will integrate current security systems combining the architecture, technology and operational aspects into a responsive and adaptable system. Risk assessments are not checklists or templates. These are not one size fits all plans. Assessments are living documents that continue ongoing security improvements, not a stack of papers put in a binder on a shelf never to be looked at again. Assessments provide an implementation guide for all security measures that are incorporated in the plan.

**Avoid Knee-Jerk Reactions**

Risk assessments of your facility should be completed before you purchase any equipment. This prevents reactive purchases that are more expensive, potentially unnecessary and not research based. There is a booming industry of safety gadgets and devices aimed at making facilities seem safer. Yes, some of these products can enhance safety. However, they are not a magic bullet. Safety and security plans need to be customized to each facility. Certified assessors do
not recommend buying things just to give the appearance of security. Their recommendations include long-term planning for personnel, continued support and maintenance for equipment and planning for replacement. Quick decisions to purchase devices may appear to increase safety, but many of these decisions are not looking at long-term maintenance, personnel requirements and ongoing costs. These purchase decisions should be part of a larger strategic safety and security plan.

Risk assessments are not only meant to provide strategic guidance and holistic solutions to address gaps in your security but also help mitigate risk in the event a catastrophic man-made incident occurs. Your assessor should not only help you understand which move to make first but also the cadence of change. They should identify where you need to increase your security focus to ensure everything is in place to prepare your staff, students and facility to exceed safety standards. When your assessment is done you should have a goal for a safe school, a clear plan to reach that goal, an up-to-date EOP, and a long-term maintenance schedule to ensure a safe environment conducive to education, learning and community engagement.

Retiring after a distinguished 27-year career with the Kent State Police Department, Lt. Hendry has been named by the Ohio Department of Homeland Security and the Ohio Attorney General’s Office as an expert in civilian and law enforcement response to active threats.

He holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Telecommunications from Kent State University, is a graduate of the “Police Executive Leadership College” and the “Certified Law Enforcement Executive” program. He is a trained Crisis Intervention Team officer in dealing with mental health issues. He served six years in the United States Marine Corps. He was an Intelligence Liaison Officer with Ohio Homeland Security.

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FACILITIES
What K-12 Administrators Need to Know About the Building Code Process

By Deidre “Dee” Leclair, AIA

In what has become a standard three-year code cycle at a national level, the International Code Council (ICC) and its supporting committees revise and update the International Codes and standards to evolve with industry trends in design, manufacturing and safety practices. Every three to six years, the time comes for all 50 states to review the new code changes provided by the ICC.

Every state has the option to adopt or amend new codes, but as new construction materials become available and standards to mitigate risk are reevaluated and affect the way we design and build schools, it is imperative for school administrators and design and construction professionals working in the K-12 school arena to understand how code changes impact their schools.

The process for code adoption and implementation affecting K-12 schools can become confusing and often presents its own unique set of challenges, especially when dealing with renovations, which is usually the case with K-12 schools.

Understanding the Various Types of Codes

There are several codes often discussed and reviewed when working on K-12 projects, and it is important to be knowledgeable of each before submitting a project for permitting.

The International Building Code (IBC) is intended to provide minimum
requirements for new construction and repair and alternative approaches for renovations to existing buildings. Additionally, it determines aspects like building occupancy type, construction types, maximum heights and square footage, fire-rated construction, wind provisions and occupancy numbers for special areas like gymnasiums and auditoriums.

The International Mechanical Code (IMC) is a convention concentrating on the safety of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Simply put, it outlines how HVAC systems, appliances and appliance venting should be installed in school buildings.

The International Fuel Gas Code (IFGC) regulates the addition of any fuel-fired appliances such as gas-fired or oil-fired furnaces, water heaters and gas stoves. This code determines and effects the way gas piping and systems are installed in schools, especially kitchens and the gas piping running to roof top units.

The Americans with Disabilities Act Code (ADA) outlines the inclusion of accessible design for handicapped and disabled students and teachers. This includes handicap parking spots, wheelchair accessible-tables, door vision panels and automatic doors in schools.

The International Fire Code (IFC) outlines ideas surrounding where fire detectors and safety hydrants should be placed throughout the school. From 2011-2015, fires on educational properties accounted for one percent of all reported fires and resulted in one death, 70 injuries and $70 million in direct property damage.

The International Plumbing Codes (IPC) outlines plumbing regulations, including fixture installations and minimum plumbing fixture (i.e. water closets, sinks, drinking fountains) counts for school buildings. This is especially important as more schools begin to implement water conservation programs, including installing low-flow and no-flow fixtures.

The International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) establishes the minimum design and construction requirements for energy consumption – the second-highest operational expense to schools each year, after salaries.

The National Electric Code (NEC) is published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and deals with the electricity of the building, including the placement of all electrical outlets and panelboards as well as the voltage allowed in places such as classrooms, cafeterias and football stadiums.

NFPA 101 Life Safety Code regulates emergency exits, life safety provisions, maximum occupancy counts and exit signage. This code is unique from most codes as it applies to all existing structures as well as new structures. In states that enforce the Life Safety Code, it is heavily used by architects and designers during the design stage of K-12 schools when trying to determine the egress of the building. Since this code is a valuable source when determining liability in accidents, it is also used by insurance companies to evaluate risks and set rates.

The International Swimming Pool and Spa Code (ISPSC), which regulates and outlines the addition of swimming pools in K-12 schools. This code outlines the entire process from the design and construction of the swimming pool to repair and maintenance.

Navigating the Code Approval Process
ICC’s multiyear code review process tends to incorporate updates to almost every single code it publishes. In most states, there is a process that allows industry stakeholders, like contractors, architects, engineers, manufacturers, trade associations and facility managers, to amend a code that may negatively impact a single building type, such as schools. In some cases, if the code language is unclear, or could pose a safety concern, it might also be amended.

For example, if a company manufactures a new device that might be prohibited or limited by the code, that company has the right to propose changes and testify at a hearing to have changes in the code approved. Many companies will attend these public hearings in order to advocate for their products and they may even testify against a proposed code change. Design professionals also might testify for a code change because the language is confusing and might lead to problems during future renovations or construction.

States adopt a list of codes that are typically considered to be a minimum State Code. The code adoption process can be different in each state. Some states use the ICC codes as a base to create their own versions and incorporate their state amendments to each code book that is then also published by ICC. Some states may publish a separate document that amends the ICC codes. Since these amendments could impact school design and renovations, it is important to be familiar with them and what state agency may oversee the code adoption process.

Some local jurisdictions may adopt local ordinances that are stricter than the state minimum. A good example of this would be the cities of Kennesaw and St. Marys in Georgia. They have adopted the state’s optional Disaster Resilient Construction Appendices as mandatory for renovations and new construction. This appendix requires all new schools and some renovations to add storm shelters for students and staff. This code provision was modeled after Alabama’s state law requiring storm shelters in new schools.

The applicable codes required for each building are determined by the timeframe in which the permits for that project are approved. For example, if permits to renovate a school were approved before a new edition of the code goes into effect, that project would not be required to be revised to incorporate any new code changes.

Changes in codes are communicated in a chain-like order. First, each division of the local government must be notified of the new code regulations and changes. This is often shared via a memo or posted on the state government website. After that, the agency responsible for building code adoptions distributes a memo or letter to the superintendents of all the schools throughout the state that outlines which codes have been adopted.

Design professionals and facility managers can readily find training sessions, seminars, online webinars and conferences to learn first-hand what these new codes and regulations mean for the industry and how they will change or alter various projects.

New Codes, New Challenges
Adopting new codes always comes with challenges. Most often, these challenges are caused by lack of communication between administrators and local jurisdictions.
The best thing an administrator can do before beginning the construction process is to communicate with all the parties involved. Contractors and industry professionals will often call and make sure they are aware and well-informed of any new code changes that could affect pending permits for new constructions or renovations.

The design team will then begin to look at the new codes to ensure they plan and design each building up to code. These processes take a large amount of time and local jurisdictions will often have the final interpretation. The best way to avoid confusion and ensure the timing of your project stays on track is to regularly communicate with the local building authority during the design process to make sure your project meets code before you start moving dirt.

Renovations present the largest set of challenges when adopting new codes, as there are many variables when dealing with an existing building and its systems. The approach is not always straightforward since no code can predict every scenario. Additionally, the codes for renovations have more area for interpretation, especially on a local level. Depending on the extent of the renovation, a good rule of thumb is the 50 percent rule, meaning that if the renovation consists of 50 percent of the project's cost or construction or changes to the building systems, then new code regulations may need to be applied.

Renovations can be tricky depending on how much needs to be done. For example, the design team might not be adding sprinklers to its renovation plan, but an official might tell the design team it is impacting enough of the building that a sprinkler system must be included. Although this seems like a minor addition, sometimes changing a few smaller items can add up quickly and put the project over budget.

**Code Communication is Key**

Provisions to new codes can also increase overall costs, especially if the official decides to make a design team bring the renovation up to current code for all the systems. This is when communication and great relationships with local building and fire officials are beneficial.

By hiring experienced team members and educating themselves, administrators can remove most of the challenges associated with the changing codes and regulations and implement a seamless process for designing and building in the ever-changing world of K-12 schools.

As you can see, the process outlining, adopting and implementing codes can be complex and time-consuming. Educating oneself and keeping up with the various code changes will prevent future challenges. Learn more about this year's code additions by visiting ICC's official website at https://www.iccsafe.org/. To see the ICC codes adopted in each state and links to key contacts within those states visit https://codes.iccsafe.org/public/.

Deidre “Dee” Leclair, AIA, is a senior architect at Stevens & Wilkinson, a full-service architecture, engineering and interior design firm with offices in Atlanta and Columbia, South Carolina.
This upcoming year, our entire focus will be on America’s learners and the resources they will need for success in the global world of tomorrow.

**HERE’S WHAT’S NEXT**

*Volume 21 Issue 1*

**Spring/Summer 2019**

- Equity in Education
- New Strategies in School Security
- Health, Wellness, and the Educator
- The Future of Ed Tech
- Vacation Destinations

**SEEN**

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Quality learning environments have been found to exert a positive influence on students’ educational performance. Research indicates that it is not important if the school building is old or new, but that it provides a comfortable, well-lit, healthy learning environment. So, it is important to take care of existing buildings and make sure the learning environment is optimized.

It is also wise to remember that most people expect public entities to take reasonably good care of community assets. Not doing so typically leads to less than favorable responses from the community to requests for operating budget increases or bond elections.

What maintenance, repairs, updates or improvements are important to consider today – and into the future – and what is the process for doing so?

Facility Conditions Assessment

A facility conditions assessment can identify changes that may be needed to existing buildings in order to adequately support educational programs. The assessment thoroughly examines facilities to determine their structural and functional integrity, the remaining useful life of major systems and components, such as heating and cooling systems and roofs, and standard maintenance or repair issues. The assessment should include a considerable amount of detail along with estimated costs for repairs and improvements that are identified.

Following are examples of questions you should ask about your facilities.

- Are the structures sound? If not, what problems exist?
- Are the mechanical/HVAC systems in good working order and efficient to operate?
- Is the electrical system in good working order and adequate for your facilities’ evolving technology needs?
- Are the buildings energy efficient and well insulated?
- Are the roofs sound and in good condition?
- Is your cafeteria and kitchen equipment still adequate to accommodate your enrollment?
- Are all areas well-lit?
- In what condition are the grounds, including parking lots, driveways, walkways, playgrounds and equipment, site drainage, sports fields and other grounds areas?
- Have traffic patterns or means of transportation of students changed significantly such that safety issues may exist? Once you’ve identified necessary maintenance, repairs or improvements, you'll need to prioritize them based on need and then, of course, determine how to fund those projects.

Comprehensive Facility Master Plan – A More Effective Approach

A comprehensive facility master plan can save millions of dollars. Simply put, a facility master plan should have two major components:

1. **A facility conditions assessment**, as discussed above, but with consideration for the long-term, which will be determined by

2. **A forward-looking plan** to address future needs from projected growth or net attrition issues. Questions to ask when considering future needs should include:

   - How will enrollment changes affect the need for spaces?
   - Where is enrollment growth or decline occurring?
   - What may cause enrollment changes (+/-) in the future?
   - Can we expect similar changes as in the past or something different?
   - Will we need to remodel, expand or build additional schools?
   - How far in advance will we need to prepare for these facilities?

   The **facility conditions assessment** that is performed for your facility master plan should be more in-depth than periodic assessments that are performed to review the status of your structures. The existing individual spaces and amenities of older facilities should be fully evaluated to determine their capability to adequately meet current educational specifications and to accommodate...
Facility Repairs and Improvements

anticipated, future, instructional programs. Such an evaluation is also necessary when considering construction of additions or building new schools.

If deficiencies are identified, it may be possible to include the needed improvements in the proposed capital construction plan and address the question of equity across the district. Many routine improvements to existing facilities can also be incorporated into annual capital plans as part of the capital reserve budget. This might include large ticket items such as repair/replacement of roofs, boilers, HVAC systems, windows and more. However, if costs are too high, they may be included in a capital improvement plan financed by a bond election or other larger funding approach.

Besides determining costs, be sure you have covered all the bases. Let’s take the example of a window sill on which paint was continually cracking and peeling. While it may appear that it’s a simple scrape and repaint issue, you may need to dig a little deeper to determine the root cause of the peeling. It could be that the roof was leaking down the wall and causing more problems than just the obvious peeling paint. Consequently, it is critical that a facility assessment be extremely thorough and conducted by a professional team of architects and engineers. As the old saying goes, “You can pay me now or you can pay me (a lot more) later.”

The facility assessment should also address efficiency and utilization. Step back and look at the bigger picture. If certain schools are underutilized it’s a good idea to include them as part of the solution for providing adequate capacity. This may require only very simple actions such as overflow busing (temporary solution) or adjusting attendance areas (a long-term solution but not without controversy). Or, the solution may require reconstructing a building for a different purpose, which could very well be a major undertaking.

Failure to fully assess current facilities deprives the district of a potentially cost-effective solution that many constituents will likely notice, a factor that will not be favorable when it comes time to ask for public support. Sound facility master plans aid greatly in garnering support from your local community. Understanding and documenting how your school district will ensure that students receive a good education in a safe, healthy space will help compel voters to support the planned programs and approve applicable funding mechanisms. By demonstrating that you are looking out for the students’ best interests, you can:

- Adequately support academic goals
- Design spaces to meet changing instructional strategies
- Minimize long-term costs
- Protect and preserve community assets

A comprehensive, well-researched facility master plan will:

- Support the district’s mission and vision
- Provide a safe and healthy learning environment
- Accommodate both support and administrative functions
- “Program” facilities to implement your district’s educational specifications
- Address improvements required at existing schools
- Forecast needs for future facilities
- Offer solutions to accommodate enrollment growth (or decline)

On too many occasions, we’ve found more bandages than long-term solutions, which can cost a district millions of dollars. Smart planning up front not only saves school districts money but makes room for more palatable changes ten and twenty years down the road. When considering short versus long-term solutions consider the most important questions: How detrimental is inaction to our students’ academic progress? What’s best for our kids? Creating a facility master plan can be a complex process, but taken step-by-step, you’ll have the confidence that you’re equipped to serve your student population optimally, both now and in the future.

For more than 30 years, Denny Hill’s work has focused on laying a great foundation for education. Through the company he founded in 1996, Strategic Resources West, Inc., Denny has developed an approach that is both flexible and focused, to assist with the creation, design, or redevelopment of K-12 educational facilities. He recently authored the book, The Essential Guide to School Facility Planning, guiding school boards in his 7-step strategic process to save districts time and money. Denny currently is Advising Consultant for School Planning Advisory Services (www.schoolplanningadvisor.com), helping superintendents, CFOs, and other school district personnel achieve their districts’ objectives.
The start of the school season brings the start of the fall and winter sports. Many of us equate fall sports, especially, with one word: football. While this is a natural and correct assumption, there are other fall and winters sports that people are just as excited about like: soccer, volleyball, wrestling and, of course, basketball. You can find fans split between all sports in upcoming months – cheering and lamenting on the sidelines for their teams and players. While fans are enjoying the games, they may notice some changes in the way high school games are played this season:

**FOOTBALL**

According to www.usafootball.com, The National Federation of State High School Associations announced there are some rule changes for the 2018 high school football season throughout the United States:

1) Players with missing or improperly worn
certain criteria and if the applicable state association approved the request. If approved by the state high school association, players could participate with a head covering for medical or cosmetic reasons or for religious reasons.

3) When a player commits an offense against an opponent within its team penalty area that denies the opponent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity and the referee awards a penalty kick, a yellow card is given if the offense was an attempt to play the ball. Previously in this scenario, the player received a red card in addition to the team receiving a penalty kick.

SOCCER
Per www.greenvilleonline.com, these were some of the NFHS changes for soccer:
1) Teams will be reversing their home and visiting uniforms, with the home teams wearing dark jerseys and socks and the visiting teams wearing solid white jerseys and solid white socks.

2) The committee is now permitting a player to participate while wearing a head covering, if the player meets equipment during play will be removed for at least one down, unless it’s directly attributable to a foul by the opponent. In a related change, the head coach is responsible for assuring all players are legally equipped. The penalty for use of illegal equipment remains unchanged, and will result in an unsportsmanlike foul charged to the coach.

2) Another change provides another option for teams on fouls committed by the kicking team during free kicks and scrimmage kicks. Now, the receiving team can accept a 5-yard penalty from the succeeding spot. The previous three options remain: accept a 5-yard penalty from the previous spot and have the kicking team re-kick, put the ball in play at the inbounds spot 25 yards beyond the previous spot or decline the penalty and put the ball in play at the inbounds spot.

3) Also, changes were made in relation to a defenseless player, where provisions don’t apply to a passer until a legal forward pass is thrown. The passer continues to be a defenseless player until the pass ends or the passer moves to participate in the play.

VOLLEYBALL
On www.nfhs.org, here are some of the 2018-2019 volleyball changes:
1) After a team is charged with unnecessary delay, no further substitutions may be requested by that team until the next completed rally. This change eliminates further delay of the set by removing the option of requesting additional substitutions after a team is charged with an unnecessary delay.

2) In its ongoing effort to address risk minimization, the Volleyball Rules committee approved a new rule, which states that between sets, teams may warm up in their playing area; however, volleyballs may not be hit over the net.

BASKETBALL
On www.nfhs.org, here are some of the basketball changes for the year:
1) It (basketball) shall have a deeply-pebbled, granulated surface, with horizontally shaped panels bonded tightly to the rubber carcass. According to NFHS, the rationale behind this change is that “the additional words give manufacturers a better sense of what a deeply-pebbled cover should look like.”

2) A player shall not be the first to touch the ball after it has been in team control in the frontcourt, if he/she or a teammate last touched or was touched by the ball in the frontcourt before it went to the backcourt. EXCEPTION: Any player located in the backcourt may recover a ball deflected from the frontcourt by the defense. The rationale behind this change is “to ensure that a team is not unfairly disadvantaged on a deflected pass.

PHIT America recently quoted findings of inactivity in a recent opinion article. The article, written in conjunction with the U.S. Army, speaks to the obesity of children and their ability to be ineligible for military service based on being overweight (“OP-ED: U.S. ARMY & PHIT AMERICA RESPOND TO OBESITY NEWS National Defense Is At Risk If Physical Inactivity Is Not Reversed”). While addressing the military issue in the article, the organizations also cited some alarming statistics from other health organizations.

The PHIT America article states, “In a recent study of global fitness, conducted by the British Journal of Sports Medicine, U.S. kids ranked 47th out of 50 countries in global fitness. This is not surprising because in a separate study by the Physical Activity Council, the percentage of U.S. children who are physically active just three times a week in fitness-related activities has dropped from nearly 29 percent to 24.8 percent in the last year. Suffice it to say, American children are increasingly more physically inactive.”

With those startling numbers, we should definitely take an active role in the health of our students and look to find ways to keep them healthy and active in the coming year.
Physical Inactivity in America

A Quiet, National Killer

By Herschel Walker
One of the biggest keys to my success in life has been physical activity — on a daily basis. I attribute my success in life to a P.E. teacher and his class back in my hometown of Wrightsville, Georgia. Back then, P.E. was a life changer for me and it can be for children today. Sadly, physical inactivity is one of the biggest issues negatively affecting life in the U.S. right now. And, one of the big age groups which physical inactivity is impacting is children who are aged six to 17. The three big side effects of physical inactivity are sad, but, fortunately, reversible:

(1) In 2017, life expectancy in the U.S. declined for the second straight year
(2) Roughly 75 percent of all U.S. teens are not fit enough to join the military
(3) Only seven percent of American children are physically active to CDC standards

Again, the common element affecting those negative trends in American life is physical inactivity. Right now, nearly 83 million Americans are physically inactive and not exercising, according to PHIT America. The side effects of physical inactivity are being felt across the U.S. on multiple fronts.

“The declines in physical activity are impacting healthcare costs, national fitness, life expectancy and ability of this country to recruit enough fit military personnel,” said Jim Baugh, Founder, PHIT America, who commented on the findings of PHIT America’s newly released 2018 ‘Inactivity Pandemic’ Report.

According to PHIT America’s latest study, the number of children who are physically active is getting smaller. Yes, U.S. children are increasingly physically inactive and not playing sports like past generations have.

From 2012 to 2017, the number of six to 12-year-old and 13 to 17-year-old children in the U.S. who are physically active, exercising, riding bikes, swimming, and playing ball with friends — like I did in Wrightsville, Georgia — has dropped. Sadly, there are similar patterns of physical inactivity by Americans of all ages in all states.

The negative trend of those participation statistics is reinforced by the overall national trend of more casual sports participants and fewer core sports participants. Since 2007, casual sports participation has been on the rise, while core sports participation has been steadily dropping. Furthermore, the percentage of children now playing team sports in the U.S. is also on the decline — going from 43.1 percent of children in 2012 to 40.7 percent of kids in 2017. Those statistics are sad and staggering.

Globally, U.S. kids are in bad shape, which is sad, staggering and unnecessary. A recent study by the “British Journal of Sports Medicine” placed American children in 47th place in a global fitness test with children from 50 countries. This lack of national fitness is impacting America’s ability to defend its sovereignty, according to the U.S. Army.

“A lack of physical activity amongst today’s youth does cause significant challenges for the U.S. Army. Only 29 percent of youth meet the qualifications to join the military, and obesity is the leading disqualifier,” said Major General Jeffrey Snow, commanding general of U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky.

For society as a whole, the biggest key to solving the physical inactivity crisis may well be companionship. According to research from Sports Marketing Surveys USA, the two biggest outside factors which motivate people to get physically active are (1) “having
someone to take part with” and (2) “having a friend take me along.”

Schools are also an ideal place to reignite physical activity in the U.S. However, as with most areas of life, finances are also an issue when it comes to the activity, or inactivity, of children in today’s schools. There is a huge need for the grants and other financial support for P.E., as many school districts have cut back on P.E. and eliminated recess. With the average budget for P.E. programs throughout the U.S. at only $762 per year for an entire school, it’s estimated more than 40,000 schools throughout the U.S. are in need of help.

One of the best solutions to this trend of physical inactivity in the U.S. is the return of physical education for all students in all grades at all schools. Research by Sports Marketing Surveys USA has revealed the lifetime impact of P.E.

“Students who receive P.E. in school are two to three times more likely to be physically active out of school,” said Keith Storey, Vice President, Sports Marketing Surveys USA (Jupiter, Florida) “P.E. also impacts the activity levels of adults, as 39 percent of adults in the U.S. who didn’t have P.E. are physically inactive, while just 21 percent of adults in the U.S. who did have P.E. are physically inactive.”

I’m happy to report that P.E. is still impacting my life based on the number of push-ups, sit-ups and dips that I do every day. P.E. was good for me and I know it will be good for others.

Herschel Walker is Celebrity Ambassador for PHIT America.

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Experiment during training to identify the volume of fluid to drink that feels comfortable and allows you to perform at your best.

GOALS OF PERFORMANCE HYDRATION:

There are 6 key nutrients that are important for good health, however water or fluid is frequently overlooked as a key nutrient for optimal performance. There are 4 main goals of hydration during sports; they are:

1) TO DELAY FATIGUE AND MAINTAIN MENTAL SHARPNESS
2) TO OPTIMIZE YOUR ABILITY TO REGULATE BODY HEAT, ESPECIALLY IN HOT ENVIRONMENTS
3) TO SATISFY YOUR THIRST AND PREVENT SIGNIFICANT WEIGHT LOSS FROM SWEATING
4) TO IMPROVE YOUR ABILITY TO RECOVER QUICKLY FROM TRAINING AND COMPETITION

COMPARED WITH ADULTS OR TEENAGERS, preadolescent kids need to be especially careful about drinking enough fluids because:

1) CHILDREN DO NOT TOLERATE TEMPERATURE EXTREMES WELL
2) CHILDREN SWEAT LESS
3) CHILDREN GET HOTTER DURING EXERCISE
4) CHILDREN HAVE A LOWER CARDIAC OUTPUT (THEY PUMP LESS BLOOD THROUGH THE VENTRICLES OVER A PERIOD OF TIME COMPARED TO ADULTS)

All of these factors increase the risk of dehydration in children. Therefore, fluids play a critical role in maintaining the health and optimal performance of the child athlete. In addition, some sports require specific considerations regarding monitoring hydration status. These include:

- Football and hockey players who wear protective gear, which reduces the ability of the body to cool itself.
- Swimmers often do not realize that they are losing body water through sweat. They also become dehydrated from sitting around in hot, humid environments.
- Athletes in sports with weight requirements, such as wrestling.

**Athletes should never** deprive themselves of water to lose weight. This will only harm performance and potentially increase their risk of serious injury.

AS A PERSON exercises, heat generated by working muscles raises the temperature of the entire body. When the body gets hot, it sweats. As the sweat evaporates, the body cools. If this sweat is not replaced by drinking fluids, the body’s water balance will be upset and the body may soon overheat.

Initial symptoms of dehydration include thirst, chills, muscle pain, throbbing heart and clammy skin. As dehydration worsens, the symptoms become more severe and are associated with heat exhaustion. These symptoms include dizziness, headache, shortness of breath and extreme fatigue. If ignored, these symptoms can lead to a life-threatening condition known as heat stroke.

Written by: Roxanne Moore MS, RD • National Director of Wellness • Sodexo Schools • roxanne.moore@sodexo.com
At the point where you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated. For every one pound lost during exercise, you need to replenish your body with 2 cups of fluid.

THE FLUID PYRAMID

All athletes must drink properly every day so they are well hydrated for practice and competition days. Dehydration can start when as little as 1% of body weight has been lost. In a 100-pound child, that means about a 1-pound weight loss. Follow the basic guidelines in the Fluid Pyramid above to ensure you are drinking enough water every day and during exercise. Plain, cold water is the most economical source of fluid. Sports drinks offer flavor to help promote consumption, as well as carbohydrate to replenish glycogen stores, but they are designed for people exercising for more than 90 minutes. An ideal sports drink contains about 15 to 18 grams of carbohydrate per 1 cup (8 ounces). Avoid juice before and during exercise to prevent stomach upset, cramping, and loose bowels. Also avoid carbonation and caffeine before and during performance.

Resource: Gatorade Fluid Pyramid

HYDRATION TIPS AND STRATEGIES

1. Check your hydration status. A clear, light-colored urine means you are well hydrated.

2. Monitor your weight pre- and post-exercise. For every one pound lost, you need to replace it with 2 cups of fluid.

3. Thirst is not a reliable indicator of your need for fluid. The body's thirst mechanism does not work well during exercise and you need to remind yourself to drink with a plan for hydration.

4. Cold fluids are absorbed faster than warmer ones.

5. Sports drinks are designed for people exercising for more than 90 minutes.

6. You can make your own “sports drink” by combining equal volumes of water with fruit juice. (1 cup of water for every 1 cup of juice)

7. Foods that contain water, such as fruits, vegetables and soups, can be used to rehydrate the body in conjunction with water. These foods are ideal choices after exercise.

8. Salt tablets should NEVER be consumed by athletes!
HEALTH AND WELLNESS

What’s for Lunch?

By Roxanne Moore
Since 1946, the USDA Child Nutrition Programs has maintained a mission of providing healthy school meals to children all across America in grades K12. Today, this federally funded program serves lunch to 31 million children and breakfast to 14 million children every day. Although the program was created to provide nutritionally low-cost or free school meals to children in need, students and their families from diverse socio-economic backgrounds are realizing the value a healthy school meal can offer for their students mental and physical performance.

There have always been regulations regarding what must be served for a school meal. These regulations were designed based upon recommendations from scientific resources that provide evidence on eating behaviors that would promote health and wellness and prevent disease. In 2012, for the first time in 15 years, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a final rule updating meal patterns and nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. For some school foodservice operations, as well as food manufacturers and suppliers, this created a significant change in school nutrition business operations. It further signaled to school leaders, teachers, parents and students that school nutrition was embarking on a new path. Since 2012, the school meal reform has created an unprecedented platform for USDA Child Nutrition Services department, as well as foodservice programs in schools. Specifically, the standards have helped highlight the important role that Child Nutrition Services plays in the students’ overall health and well-being. The revised nutrition standards have required schools to increase healthy food offerings, including fruits and vegetables and whole grain-rich products, as well as reduce levels of sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat in school meals. The standards also set grade level-specific calorie requirements for meals when averaged over a week. School districts were required to comply with the revised federal meal standards beginning July 1, 2012, with provisions phased in through school year 2022 – 2023.

After the initial implementation, schools across America were met with resistance. Some of the initial challenges that schools faced included push back from students who witnessed a change in portion sizes, were being told they must take a fruit or vegetable with their meal and in some cases, were served new whole grain products that did not meet their approval. Concerns of dwindling participation, school foodservice Directors all across the nation rose to the challenge to ensure students were well nourished and satisfied. The importance of the School Foodservice Directors was amplified as their actions would prove to play a critical role in the implementation of the new regulations and the sustainment of customer satisfaction.

To combat, or prevent, dwindling participation, school foodservice leaders realized that first and foremost, students needed to be served foods they would love to eat. Foodservice Directors from self-operated and food service management companies, as well as food manufacturers, non-profit organizations, chefs and dietitians all came together to develop new recipes, ingredients and products that would meet new regulatory requirements, while also meeting the meal costs limitations of tight school foodservice budgets. In addition to these efforts, the USDA, as well as state agencies that help to administer the child nutrition programs, created training opportunities that would help improve culinary skills of frontline staff, provided education on topics such as behavioral economics to help drive student participation, and offered numerous resources to help schools with menu planning. Since 2012, the USDA has also collected significant volumes of feedback from school nutrition programs regarding challenges in meeting the new school me requirements. As a consequence, USDA is now offering some flexibility to the final rule that was implemented in 2012.

This brings us to the start of the School year 2018-19. The new School Meal Flexibility Rule, implemented in November 2017, makes targeted changes to standards for meals provided under USDA’s National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. This rule focuses on flexibilities with whole grains, sodium and milk. The interim final rule gives schools the option to serve low-fat (1 percent) flavored milk. With the initial 2012 final rule schools were permitted to serve only low-fat and non-fat unflavored milk as well as non-fat flavored milk.

States will also be allowed to grant
exemptions to schools experiencing hardship in obtaining whole grain-rich products acceptable to students during School Year (SY) 2018-2019. Originally food costs, student acceptance, and the availability of product were the primary challenges reported in implementing the whole grain-rich requirement in full. Much like whole grain rich products, schools and industry shared a need for more time to reduce sodium levels in school meals. So...instead of further restricting sodium levels for SY 2018-2019, schools that meet the current – “Target 1” – limit will be considered compliant with USDA’s sodium requirements.

As School Foodservice Directors reflect on the flexibility being offered by USDA, a few key points need to be considered. The first is the reality that this rule will be in effect for SY 2018-2019. It is not a final change to the initial regulation set in place back in 2012. USDA will be accepting public comments on these flexibilities via www.regulations.gov to inform the development of a final rule, which will address the availability of these three flexibilities in the long term. The second key point is centered around the word “hardship” as it relates to flexibility with the whole grains. Hardships may include those caused by lack of availability in the market, financial concerns, an increase in plate waste, lack of student acceptability, and “others”. State approval is required to implement the whole grain flexibility.

As School Foodservice Directors embark on a new year, the following points represent suggestions to help move forward in meeting the original 2012 nutrition standards for school meals.

• Assess your overall success with participation and evaluate opportunities for growth
• Talk with other school districts that are meeting all the established meal requirements and learn from their success
• Reach out to your State Agency if you are struggling to meet any of the school meal requirements. Often you will find that they have training resources to help you achieve success.
• Talk with your food suppliers about lower-sodium meal options and whole-grain rich products that have been student tested and approved. As industry has increased the variety and quality of their offerings, schools are finding it easier to source lower-sodium and whole-grain rich options.
• If possible, work with a team of chefs and registered dietitians to design and/or source healthier ingredients, create recipes and implement compliant menus that will satisfy student taste buds
• Taste test new products or recipes with students
• Check out the USDA Team Nutrition page for training grants and education: https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/team-nutrition
• Work with your community. Help community leaders and parents understand school nutrition programs, the regulations and the importance of encouraging student participation.
• Engage with Farm To School programs to help reinforce the value of locally, grown foods.

Often we hear “it takes a village” and in the case of child nutrition this is so true. School Nutrition programs are offering one step in a process of encouraging a lifetime of healthy eating for students.

If school nutrition programs want to grow, or continue, their success, they must engage their most valuable customer…the student. Students know what students want. Giving students a voice, offering students a choice and engaging them in hands-on learning experiences will create a win-win situation for students, school nutrition programs and school leaders.
Educators play an important role in teaching children about nutritious and balanced diets. The Dairy Alliance is proud to offer classroom tools that help students of all ages learn the benefits of incorporating wholesome milk, cheese and yogurt into their diets. Our online Teacher Resources library includes school activities and science-based lesson plans, coloring sheets, games, fun facts and other helpful information to make learning about nutrition exciting. A healthy body makes for a healthy mind!

Visit The Dairy Alliance Teacher Resources website to access:
» Free lessons, state-specific activities and worksheets, colorful posters, infographics and fun, interactive games.

» “Healthy Farming, Healthy You,” “Farm to Table,” “Bones Under Construction,” “Virtual Dairy Farm Tour” and other lessons show students how milk is collected, processed and brought fresh to schools every day.

» “Meet Our Dairy Farmers” videos introduce students to life on local dairy farms.
BACK TO SCHOOL
BTS
BACK TO SCHOOL PRODUCT REVIEW

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Parent engagement in the classroom is all the rage in the EdTech market. Most recently, the conversation in schools has shifted from, “we’re doing everything we can” to “what we’re doing isn’t working” and “how do we make it better?” Everyone wants parent engagement in education — teachers, parents, policymakers, the students themselves. That isn’t the issue. We all know it’s essential.

Fortunately, we are starting to look at “active” parent engagement — implying there’s an ongoing conversation happening both inside and outside of the classroom. As a result, we’re seeing a massive shift in EdTech, and it’s an exciting place to be.

Cultivating a Culture of Active Parent Engagement

What does active parent engagement look like? Watching my kids communicate with their friends, it’s clear. No teenagers are in the dark about what’s going on at school, in their social group, or who’s beating whom in Fortnite. Shouldn’t it be that easy for parents to find out how their kids are doing at school and communicate with their child’s teacher? Just as easy as picking up your iPhone and logging into an app?

Active parental engagement should look more like social media — like the Facebooks and Instagrams of the world that help facilitate quick and easy sharing.

In an ideal world, it would safely connect all stakeholders involved in a child’s education in real time. That includes grandma and grandpa. We can’t share the refrigerator where we used to display our children’s work, but there are various tools in the market that allow us to share content.

An educational platform with content is interesting; one without reliable data is useless. The question is, are you ready to engage parents and what are you going to share that will be valuable to them?

Demanding Access to Timely and Reliable Education Data

In a recent report about education data, the President of National PTA said:

“For families to be meaningfully engaged in their child’s education, they need clear, timely information on their child’s learning experiences and expect that information to be kept safe. We need to ensure that families in every state have data that is accessible, useful and meaningful so they can be strong advocates for their students.”

He was clear that he sees access to data as a game changer for parent engagement. He’s not alone.

The poll is based on the work of The Data Quality Campaign. The initiative showed that parents and teachers agree that education data is necessary to make important decisions in support of students.

Ninety-three percent of parents say they not only value data, but they need it to understand their child’s progress at school so they can support the learning journey. A pretty compelling case.

Shifting Beyond Data into Evidence

As someone who has spent the better part of the last 25 years working on technology in education, and as a parent, I agree that data is a key part of the conversation that helps parents reinforce teacher’s efforts.

Evidence of learning is not just interesting for parents. It can make teachers more effective at teaching. Using information about how a student learns and what they need to do to grow helps teachers set learning goals that are more impactful.

That’s not to say that access to this information doesn’t come with its own set of problems. Barriers to entry include:

• Parents getting clear, timely access to data
• Teachers having enough time during the school day to access data and use it
• The training effort of showing teachers how to capture data effectively and how to understand it.

Then there’s the problem that numbers and grades are poor proxies for the actual work students are doing.

If we want parents to engage deeply we need to share the actual work with them. We need to shift from data to evidence — the difference between a grade and a video. Data is still needed, but we can use new tools to connect it directly to evidence which is far more meaningful.

As John Hattie puts it, “When teaching and learning are visible, there is a greater likelihood of students reaching higher levels of achievement.”

FreshGrade is used to encourage a deeper conversation about learning. The portfolio and assessment platform is designed to be used by any educator wherever they are in their teaching practice. By taking regular snapshots of a child’s learning, teachers are able to gather incremental data that can be shared with the parent in real time.

Beyond Basic Parent Engagement

Schools don’t set out to buy a platform, what they want is better instruction. A critical part of engaging and motivating today’s learners is incorporating parent engagement into teaching practices.

One angle is helping parents to give feedback that encourages dialogue and goes further than “great job on your physics homework,” or “WOW! That painting is fantastic.”

Another angle is to involve parents in project work more actively. Imagine an assignment where the grade involves engaging parents with student work — provoking a thoughtful response to their ideas. Wouldn’t the engagement provide a more comprehensive view for the instructor to gauge the work of the student? Wouldn’t the assignment be more authentic?

Are you ready for active parent engagement in your school community? Here are a few questions to stir the pot as you consider your strategy:

• What are you doing to encourage student work that is visible beyond the classroom?
• Have you created a space where students can share their work with their parents?
• What data are you able to share about a student’s learning?
• Do you regularly engage with parents yourself?
• What are you doing to help teachers make this transition?
• What are you doing to help parents with this change?

Lee Wilson is the President of FreshGrade, a portfolio and assessment platform that helps educators, parents, and students have deeper conversations about learning. Follow them on Twitter @freshgrade.
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Augmented Reality appears to have gone “mainstream” for the first time. Augmented reality superimposes information on our world through the use of technology. When I say mainstream, I am referring to the use of Augmentation in our modern world. Remember the video game, Pokémon? Millions of children — and adults — ran around their neighborhood looking for Pokémon characters. These characters were a product of Augmented Reality. We recently rented a high-end vehicle and in the windshield in front of the driver was the speed limit of the area, the speed at which you were traveling and a GPS directional highway — augmented reality. Even more recently, our country experienced a monster hurricane on the east coast. The Weather Chanel shared the power of augmented reality by not only discussing the storm surge as possibly six to nine feet, but also demonstrating what this surge would actually look like as compared to a human being.

You can see this video on You

Continued on Page 72
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Augmented reality adds an interactive dimension to the learning experience with the student being able to manipulate 3D objects. Students would certainly enjoy manipulating geometric shapes in a 3D environment as opposed to the flat two dimensional textbook shapes. You can imagine the student’s new ability to solve problems using the actual three dimensional objects as they leap from the tablet.

One particular piece of technology is taking the educational augmented reality experience by storm, the Merge Cube. The Merge Cube along with their apps has successfully brought augmented reality into the classroom. Using their apps, the study of the human body becomes a trip to the Science Center and viewing an actual heart and lungs and watching the entire circulatory system operate becomes an amazing lesson for all children. How about the excitement generated as the entire solar system rotates around the classroom ceiling? Learning can become so much more relevant as we take advantage of these simple augmented reality lessons.

Drew Minock, in an Edutopia article, shares ways augmented reality can be used in the classroom:

- **Book Reviews:** Students can record themselves giving a brief book review, and attach that “aura” (assigned digital information) to the book. An aura is an augmented reality object used in the Aurasma app. Other students can then scan the cover of the book and access the book review complements of our student.

- **Word Walls:** Primary teachers love to use word walls for many and varied purposes. Again students can record themselves providing the definitions to the different vocabulary words. Using the Aurasma app, the student pops up on the screen sharing his or her definition.

- **Safety in the Classroom:** The teacher can place what is referred to as “triggers” or symbols which begin the augmented reality experience similar to a QR code around the classroom and the students can scan them and quickly learn the safety rules of the classroom.

I think it is obvious that augmented reality can bring new life into our classrooms. Even flashcards used to learn the alphabet can become creative tools as the cards come to life. Again the opportunities for learning are endless. The problem with advancement in education is that it is often a very long, drawn out process, and we just don’t have the time to draw out the process. All you need is a smartphone or a tablet, a few apps and you’re in business. The future is now and it’s not going to wait for our educators to catch up.

Dr. L. Robert Furman is an educator, principal, speaker, and published author. Dr. Rob serves as Principal at South Park Elementary Center outside of Pittsburgh, PA, and is the author of several books including Reading, Technology, and Digital Literacy and the ISTE bestselling title Are You Future Ready. His latest book, Engaging All Readers will be out this Spring. Further, he has received several prestigious awards, such as being named in the National School Board Association’s “20 To Watch” in technology education and a Pittsburgh Tribune Review News Maker of the year.
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Technology in the Classroom: One Person’s Point of View

By Robert Holl

Having spent my entire career in education, a career spanning nearly 50 years, I have seen many changes impacting how instruction is delivered. And in those 50 years, nothing has impacted change more than technology and the Internet. As with most change, there have been both positive and negative outcomes. But I acknowledge that whether a given change is positive or negative will often depend on one’s own perspective.

My career, upon graduating from college, began as a classroom teacher and then transitioned into various facets of educational publishing. These varied experiences have affected my point of view and influenced my current thinking. However, the last 15 years, during which I founded and grew the Learning A-Z Publishing Company and developed hundreds of classroom resources, have led me to appreciate more fully how technology can assist teachers and improve learning for students.

As a publisher of learning resources and as a former classroom teacher, I have always believed that it is vital to never lose sight of the teacher’s significance in and out of the classroom. I have carefully weighed every product development decision to ensure that it strengthens a teacher’s instructional efficiency and effectiveness.

It seems to me that there are two faces of technology in the classroom. On the one side, I have come to believe that overuse of technology can have a dehumanizing effect. But on the other hand, I also have come to believe that technology can help personalize learning, promote interaction and engagement, and help improve motivation. From my point of view, we should not park students in front of a computer or other device and deliver technology-driven curriculum solutions that place limitations on human connections. This, I believe, would be detrimental to the development of the whole child. But there are countless benefits that support the use of technology in classrooms.

One of the most compelling benefits technology offers is its ability to save teachers time and deliver resources economically, 24/7. Take, for example, books and other resources needed to build reading skills, grow knowledge and motivate readers. Today’s teachers can have a library of electronic books delivered directly to their classroom as PDF documents that can be printed and made into low-cost books for their students to read in the classroom or at home.

These same books can be assigned as eBooks to read on any type of device. Teachers can also project these books within whole class and small group instructional settings. Never have so many books and other reading resources, in multiple formats, been so readily accessible to teachers and their
students – developmentally appropriate books aligned with students’ interest.

Technology-enhanced text resources can have many embedded tools to support and guide the reader. For example, an audio track for listening to the entire text with words and phrases highlighted so the student can follow along—especially helpful to struggling readers and English-language learners. In addition, words that are unknown and difficult to pronounce can be selected for a pronunciation and a definition. E-books can also have recording features for students to record their reading of text and then play it back to self-monitor fluency. They can also send a recorded reading to their teacher who can then listen and monitor student progress.

Student engagement and interactivity with text can be facilitated by highlighting and other mark-up tools, notetaking and journaling features, as well as embedded prompts for students to respond to as they read. These tools and features can enhance comprehension and free up the teacher to interact more personally with students who need extra help.

Technology can now assist a teacher by gathering students’ performance data from tasks and activities they have completed on an electronic device, then organize and report this data in ways that inform teachers about the instructional needs of each student. The data also provides students with timely feedback on their performance of tasks. No longer do teachers have to spend countless hours grading papers and observing and recording student performance. Instead, they can take the data they receive to plan more effective instruction that targets specific student needs. This data can also be rearranged in meaningful ways for administrators and parents so they, too, can stay informed about learning gains or lack thereof.

Data gathered on student reading activity can also be used to establish a reader profile and then automatically suggest books and articles that are of interest to a reader. This is yet another way technology can save teachers time and provide teachers with valuable feedback about their students - information that can then help deliver more targeted instruction.

Technology can also be used to identify a student’s reading level by analyzing reading behavior and performance on online reading quizzes or other tasks. At Learning A-Z, each quiz item is tagged to a specific skill and reports are generated showing teachers which skills students are
Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important.

— Bill Gates

mastering and which skills need more work. Again, this saves teachers a tremendous amount of time and helps inform them of the instructional needs of each student. It also leads to the assignment of “just-right” developmentally appropriate books and articles that can improve student reading performance and reduce frustration.

Features like electronic file cabinets found on some publisher’s websites, including Learning A-Z, allow teachers to organize and store resources in file folders that align with their district’s curriculum framework. These resource folders can be shared with other teachers in a school or district. Website tools that align website resources to state standards or core curriculum programs make it possible for teachers to quickly gain access to resources targeting a specific standard at a chosen grade level, all with the click of a mouse or tap of a finger.

Another area where technology can expand learning is in the realm of virtual and augmented reality. Today’s students can visit places around the world and immerse themselves without leaving a classroom. They can manipulate objects and perform certain simulated activities without the cost and dangers associated with the actual activity. These tools along with teacher-facilitated discussions greatly broaden the experiences of students within the confines of a classroom.

It seems that the possibilities are endless. And the constant emergence of new technology applications simply increases the possibilities for improving classroom efficiencies, expediting the delivery of instruction, and enhancing interactive and engaging learning experiences. There are, no doubt, real benefits to the use of technology in the classroom. The uses mentioned above are just a few examples of the benefits technology brings to a classroom. However, none of them should replace a teacher. Instead, they should be used to strengthen teacher effectiveness and efficiency.

We cannot and should not allow technology tools to remove the real face-to-face human connections needed to develop well-educated citizens – citizens who possess the knowledge, as well as problem solving, social and emotional skills needed to collaborate and fulfill their roles as productive citizens. Teacher-to-student and student-to-student talk are necessary components to the education of the whole child, an education that can be enhanced with the appropriate use of technology. It goes without saying that both teachers and students should be trained on the correct use of technology and taught the skills of digital literacy—skills needed to succeed in a world that becomes more and more technology-driven with each passing day.

Robert Holl is Founder and former President of Learning A-Z, a division of Cambium Learning. He has devoted his entire career to education, serving as a classroom teacher after graduating from college. He earned both Bachelor of Science and Master of Education degrees. After ten years, he left teaching to begin his publishing career. Bob has spent over 35 years in the publishing industry, serving as Vice President Editor-in-chief for Addison-Wesley Publishing and Scott Foresman Publishing companies, Vice President of Development for Video Discovery and for The Wright Group. In 2000, he founded Learning A-Z. Bob and his wife reside in Tucson, Arizona.
Why is Early Literacy ESSENTIAL?

By Beth H. Scott, Ed.D.

Over a career that has spanned 40-plus years, I have worn a variety of hats in the education arena. First as a rural educator, then inner-city urban educator (where most of my teaching years were spent), higher education leader, director of teacher preparation programs, and charter school leadership, among others before landing at my current position in research and evaluation.

I worked with students in high poverty areas whose lack of preparedness for post-secondary education led me to research dropout-prevention when writing my doctoral dissertation. Once students left the public school system, graduates or not, they were often destined to perpetuate the cycle of poverty that was in the best interest of no one. Students became disenfranchised, lacking the basic skills to access and be successful in a college setting and more importantly never able to realize their individual potential in any or all aspects of their lives. The result: we as a society lose the potential for them to be active participants in the social and economic growth of our communities and beyond. The absence of a competitive edge most often results in a growing, unmanageable, undereducated workforce. We are only as strong as the individuals who comprise the whole.

I remember one of my first mentors in the Rochester City School District, a woman I greatly admired, who became principal of an under-performing school (not unlike most of the schools in the district). She became the district’s scapegoat for her middle school students’ abysmal scores on New York State’s eighth-grade math assessment. She appropriately pointed out, the eighth-grade math scores were the result of the fourth-grade reading scores. “Students not reading well in third grade are four times more likely to drop out” (Students First, Statistics about Education in America).

In my first year teaching at a local high school, I observed students who had made it to graduation only to walk across that stage at their graduation ceremony and receive a high school diploma even though they could not read. Roughly two-thirds of US prisons are occupied by high school dropouts, according to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics, and graduation rates in our most economically deprived cities still lag far behind their more affluent counterparts (the district where I was previously employed was at 38 percent). What astonished me was not only the cost to the individual, the community, and society as a whole, but that a solution was as crystal clear then as it is today.
As the organization ProLiteracy states, “Every important social issue is impacted by low literacy.” According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of following in their footsteps, often leading to an increased risk of lower academic performance, behavioral and attendance issues, and a higher likelihood of dropping out. In their biennial report from 2012-13, the Harlem Children’s Zone notes, “Today’s high-school sophomore with a behavior problem may have been yesterday’s second grader with a reading problem.” It seems obvious that the lack of literacy competence as these children enter adulthood can have devastating consequences.

The Nations Report Card tells us that two thirds of students do not read at grade level, and the economist James Heckman from the University of Chicago warns us, “If you haven’t achieved basic reading fluency by eight or nine or ten, it’s very hard to learn after that.” In 1991, Ernest Boyer of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching reported that if a child is a poor reader at the end of first grade, s/he has a 90 percent probability of remaining a poor reader at the end of fourth grade. That, in turn, is an early predictor of a lower high school and college graduation rate, and lifetime earnings (McKinsey & Company, April 2009).

The cycle of despair becomes more and more difficult to overcome. Have I convinced you yet that literacy is a social justice issue that needs our immediate attention? I hope we can agree that learning to read and subsequently reading to learn are crucial to an individual’s ability to become a productive member of a democratic society. How then do we move the needle in a positive direction considering the fact that the literacy rate in this nation has not improved in the last ten years (National Center for Education Statistics)?

Study after study over the past couple of decades indicate that access to books in the home is critical to reading acquisition. If we are to address the basic needs of children even prior to entering formal schooling and level the playing field for them not starting behind from the get-go, we need to put books (or digital devices) in the hands of children and their parents and/or caregivers. Schools that facilitate the teacher’s ability to teach children literacy skills in a multitude of ways further empower students to seek access to a variety of books with their newly found or enhanced capabilities. This will ideally carry over to the home environment, thus contributing to greater parent engagement. Many families struggle financially or have limited mobility to get to a library or other similar venue, but may benefit from a personal online home library or by taking advantage of community resources that bring the books to them through such things as portable lending libraries. Having the materials at hand and promoting reading and understanding will set the stage for building on those basic skills throughout their children’s schooling and, one would hope, instill an intrinsic desire to learn more.

In my current role, I initiate research partnerships with school districts, charter schools, universities and community organizations across the nation and world. I am constantly amazed at the ways students and educators utilize digital resources and the pervasive, unwavering belief of our stakeholders that all children are entitled to have the tools that will enable them to succeed in the classroom and beyond. By expanding literacy opportunities to everyone, we could go a long way towards closing that so-called achievement gap and put our children on an upward trajectory towards reaching their full potential. Anything less is not acceptable.

Beth Scott is a research associate at Learning A-Z who initiates academic and community partnerships.

As a lifelong educator, she spent close to 40 years in both K-12 and higher education.

She holds an undergraduate degree in Secondary Education and French from the State University of NY at Buffalo, a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Administration from the State University College of NY at Brockport, and both a Masters Degree in Linguistics and Doctorate of Education from the University of Rochester. She has served as an evaluator for the Charter School Institute of NY and the Arizona Department of Education Solutions Team, evaluating schools’ viability and level of success in educating the children in their charge. Her doctoral work focused on bridging the gap between K-12 and post-secondary education for students of low socioeconomic status.
Main Idea (Summative) Comprehension

This complex skill happens to have a large role in reading comprehension overall. Instruction in main idea comprehension has been identified as one of the instructional practices with greatest impact on reading comprehension by many leading experts in the field. Main idea comprehension also appears frequently in instructional practices (such as close reading) and reading assessments.

Teaching students to find the main idea of a text is a challenge to many educators. To begin, let’s look at some of the variations in the questions, all of which ask essentially the same thing:

• What is the main idea of the passage?
• What is another good title for this passage?
• What is this passage mostly about?
• What is a good summary sentence for this passage?

These four questions (and similar ones floating around in different activities and tests) point to the same underlying skill of summative comprehension. As its name implies, summative comprehension is the ability to distill a text down to its core idea. That core idea must be broad enough to not be inconsistent with any part of the text, yet specific enough to give readers an appropriately meaningful notion of what the text is about.

The Challenge of Teaching Main Idea Comprehension

In order for students to do something, they first need to know what they are expected to do. For example, before asking students to describe the setting of a story, we explain to them that the setting is the time and place, or the when and where of the story. However, in the case of main idea comprehension, teachers are in a difficult position from the beginning as they try to define “main idea” for their students. The term is highly abstract: try to explain what “main idea” means without using the words “main” or “idea” in your definition. Then, try to convert your definition into something that eight- or nine-year olds will understand, and you will experience part of the challenge that teachers face when teaching main idea.

The abstract nature of the term “main idea” is just a herald of the difficulties that lie ahead when teachers begin to instruct students on how to find the main idea of a text. It may be tempting to take an approach where students are exposed to many different passages and types of main ideas and expected to grasp the concept through practice alone. This approach is known as EGRUL, or learning a concept by being exposed to examples and non-examples of it. EGRUL approaches work well for concepts that are relatively straightforward, but are risky when we are teaching complex or abstract concepts such as main idea. If this is all the instruction that students receive, they may not develop summative comprehension skills.

As a result, students end up learning tricks to identify the main idea, including using the text’s title, using the first sentence of the first paragraph, or using the last sentence of the last paragraph. Because these tricks do work out sometimes, students learn to look for the main idea in the title or in specific locations in the text and not to analyze a passage in terms of its themes.

A Model for Teaching Main Idea Comprehension

One effective strategy relies on making explicit what people implicitly do when they identify the main theme of a text - evaluating the relative frequency of different themes and choosing which one is the most dominant.

Students may need considerable support at the beginning. Since this approach requires students to find a theme, a first step is to teach students to find the theme of individual sentences before they try to find the theme of whole paragraphs or passages. Because main idea comprehension is a tight rope between generality and specificity, instruction in main idea may be one of the places where using multiple-choice questions is the most efficient way to get students thinking along the lines of themes that are “just right” in their broadness. The following question shows a possible beginner-level questioning strategy. Note that the two distractors mention the park, which is a theme in the sentence but an incorrect answer.

They played at the park.
What is this sentence about?

a) where they played [correct answer]
b) how to get to the park [distractor]
c) what they ate at the park [distractor]

Despite looking obvious, this level of initial support benefits students who are not
Teaching students to find the main idea of a text is a challenge to many educators.

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The Data Story
Uncovering the narrative to our children’s future

By Iris Garner, Ph.D.

In academia, buzzwords and acronyms are everywhere. Research, educational policy, politics and media help shape the terminology and rhetoric. Some terms trend and others seem to fade away. The term or concept of “Data” has been trending since the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and continues to be highly referenced. Before NCLB, most teachers did not pursue student information in either a systematic or rigorous way. Instead of gathering and analyzing data to learn about their students, they would put together a general picture based on fragmented information obtained from student journals, student artwork, parent comments, teacher’s annotates, student observations, etc. In some cases, teachers did not forge any personal connections with students. Knowing and understanding their students was not considered essential; it was optional and even then, highly subjective.

Data Components and Value

How times have changed! Today, knowing your learner is vital and understanding the data story is paramount, beginning with the earliest learners. This information is the compass that provides direction that informs challenges and strengths of students, teachers, populations, programs and systems.

Student, educator and system are types of data that help us determine student achievement as well as teacher and school development effectiveness. Student data includes, but is not limited to, attendance, assessments (informal and formal), behavior, participation, observations, home language and more. Some educator data includes student progress, parent engagement, professional development plan, classroom assessments, classroom management and achievement towards learning goals. Core system data includes audits summaries, student achievement, operational modifications, financial management, stakeholder awareness, as well as student and teacher engagement. Administrators use system data collections to understand how to adjust systems in a manner that increases efficiency and effectiveness, allowing for sustainable teaching and learning. Regardless of the type or source of data, student achievement is part of the equation and the nucleus from which all decisions should be based. The standing question should always be what is best for the students?

While data seeks initially to inform, it also provides the pillar for education justice (a social justice movement which emphasizes the belief that all students can reach proficiency). Without easily accessible, reliable information, education justice is merely a concept and can’t be realized, especially when establishing the foundation in early learning or the college or career track in high school. School and district leaders cannot provide resources adequately without first fully understanding the depth of the challenge. Nor can they
effectively chart the proper course of action without information that is comprehensive, clear, relevant and accurate.

**Understanding the Data**

Obtaining the data is only part of the story; understanding the data and validating its authenticity are equally important.

Data literacy includes the ability to operationalize data in a learning environment, contributing to student achievement. Educators, administrators, publishers and community partners need to understand the principles of using data to inform instruction and practices on an ongoing basis. Core elements like explanations with indicators, clear summaries and easy accessibility work are essential to create the storyline and plan of action. All stakeholders’ understanding, buy-in and contributions influence student achievement in some way.

**Core Stakeholders**

Teachers may use quizzes and observations to understand student thought processes and create student-learning groups. Standardized test scores may be used to differentiate instruction. If data is not properly implemented and reviewed, it is useless. Teachers need ongoing support to understand how to collect, analyze, and reflect on data in order to provide quality personalized instruction to students. A better understanding of students can also create a pathway that will change the trajectory of that student’s learning; every piece of data helps to create a picture for the teacher. To maximize teaching and learning, we need to dig deeper than simply an superficial acquaintance with data.

Data informs what books students are likely to read, what assessment items are accessible, what lessons/content the student will likely engage with, what vocabulary is included in their personal inventory, what learning environmental characteristics interfere with their learning, what instructional structures are needed and so much more. To be truly effective in today’s learning environment, teachers should:

1) Understand what data is available and frequency of availability  
2) Understand the data limitations  
3) Participate in a professional learning community to create a list of best practices and collegiate sharing  
4) Build a data-rich culture, promote exploration across all stakeholders  
5) Utilize statistical tools that provide reliable data more readily.

Students’ data literacy is fundamental; setting personal educational goals that are measurable and obtainable is contingent on understanding where the student is and the desired outcome. That information is incorporated in student achievement data. Learning gaps and gains are being assessed with the aid of pre-established metrics. Holding students accountable for not meeting certain metrics without providing them with a thorough overview of the skill(s), behavior(s), and assessment(s) criteria jeopardizes their rate of success as well as education justice.

**Data Story: Now What?**

Education policy sets forth rules and regulations that govern the operation of education systems. Policies are set forth only when a problem is identified as a prominent issue. Data literacy is an issue that affects all levels of education from primary to graduate school. Educators and advocates need to come together to move this issue onto the policy agenda. Data Quality Campaign (DQC) has defined some of the policy recommendations:

- **Measure What Matters** - Be clear about what students must achieve and have the data to ensure that all students are on track to succeed

**• Make Data Use Possible** - Provide teachers and leaders the flexibility, training, and support they need to answer their questions and take action

**• Be Transparent & Earn Trust** - Ensure that every community understands how its schools and students are doing, why data is valuable, and how it is protected and used

**• Guarantee Access & Protect Privacy** - Provide teachers and parents timely information on their students and make sure it is kept safe

These recommendations would bridge some of the immediate information gaps. Promoting policies for data literacy is a step towards getting the entire data story and ensuring education justice.

**Conclusion**

Telling the data story is not optional, it is required. Educators, parents, and advocates can promote educational justice by making their requests known and having conversations about the next steps. The main characters in the data stories are the students we serve. They all deserve the best available narrative, not fragments of a disjointed, subjective story where the main character is hopeless. We have the tools. Obtaining, understanding and working the data moves the needle and writes a story of success for our learners.

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This writing between my daughter and me probably looks quite familiar to you. Most likely, you have engaged in this type of writing many times over the last few years. Though it might not resemble the type of writing that left your fingers aching, required many trips to the pencil sharpener or came back to you with red marks indicating a multitude of mistakes, it is writing nonetheless—writing that has been changed by technology.

New technologies have been altering writing for thousands of years. Whether it was the invention of a reed stylus, papyrus or the printing press, technology has constantly changed why we write, how we write and how we learn to write. While each of these technologies, and many more, hold unique importance in the evolution of writing, it can be argued that recent technologies have made the greatest impact. In consideration of the many changes technology has brought to our writing lives outside the classroom, educators are tasked with the need to examine what implications this presents for in-class practices. However, before embarking on this examination, let us reflect on some of the ways recent technology has changed writing.

To begin, consider recent advancements in word processing, text messaging and speech to text tools. These technologies have made it possible for us to produce text at a rapid pace—more so than any other time in history. The ease in which these technologies allow text to be produced has thus led to greater quantities of writing being published—both in print and digital formats.

As greater quantities of writing are produced, technology has also led to a
Technology has constantly changed why we write, how we write and how we learn to write.

shift in what we consider writing. Take for example the text conversation between my daughter and me, or perhaps your favorite blog. Most likely, this text conversation or blog contains text; but perhaps, the writer also added additional modes such as videos, audio clips or images borrowed from another source. Through the use of these modes, the writer may take you, the reader, on a journey that starts out like a typical print-based experience. However, by accessing the modes mentioned, you might find yourself somewhere entirely new that is not consistent with where a book or passage might end. It is through these advancements in technology that spaces have widened for writers to explore diverse ways to communicate their ideas, thoughts and knowledge, and for readers to make sense of this information.

While technology has influenced writing and therefor the writer, we would be remiss if we did not consider the impact technology, specifically the internet, has also had on the reader. As writing has diversified and become easier to produce, any type of writing by any author can be published to a limitless audience, leaving readers with seemingly endless options. With an influx of writing available at our fingertips, readers must utilize high-level reading skills and strategies that support filtering through extensive amounts of text - all while determining legitimacy, accuracy, intentions and points of view.

Additionally, the writer and reader must learn to apply the underlying rules for the dynamic conversation today’s writing often brings about. In other words, no longer is writing a one-way journey, beginning with the writer and eventually ending with the reader. Instead, much of today’s
writing has become an on-going, purposeful conversation that is not bound by time or distance. Examples of this can be witnessed in the hundreds of texts, social media posts and emails sent and received daily.

Evidence of how recent technologies have changed writing is abundant. However, while writing has greatly changed in our everyday lives, this change has not always transferred to today’s classroom. Instead, the teaching of writing continues to place higher value on practices and experiences that result in academic outcomes instead of real-world outcomes. While academic-based experiences and outcomes are necessary and important, it is also critical that we value the change technology has had on writing. In turn, we must provide students with opportunities to experience the types of writing they will most often engage in outside the classroom. It is this type of writing that will define today’s writers and determine their success as communicators once they leave the classroom.

Fortunately, schools are uniquely positioned to support students in becoming the types of writers today’s world demands. To do so, classrooms must continue to honor traditional writing experiences while meeting set standards, but also balance those experiences with ones that new technologies have brought about. To get started with balancing these experiences in the classroom, it is suggested that districts adopt a set of values grounded not only in time-honored beliefs, but also in beliefs that have been brought about by change. Defining a set of values helps to support cohesiveness across schools, grade levels and classrooms while providing a united direction. Examples of values for 21st century writing instruction are as follows:

**Suggested Values for 21st Century Writing Instruction**

- Value the types of writing that occur digitally. For example, writing for social media and blogs, texting and emailing.
- Value the dynamic conversation that writing can bring about. Encourage students to respond back and forth about offline and online writing. Model how this type of dynamic conversation can change ideas, thoughts and final pieces.
- Value varied audiences. In-school writing is often seen by those in-school. Consider writing for authentic, varied audiences outside the classroom.
- Value multimodalities in writing as a way to enhance ideas, knowledge and storytelling.
- Value the skills needed to legitimize the influx of writing students are exposed to – both offline and online.

While these values serve as examples, it is recommended that district leadership engage teams in constructing agreed-upon values that can be readily adopted by all staff. Adopting a set of values that are brought about by change is not always easy. It requires taking an honest look at what is happening in each classroom and analyzing what is needed in order to ensure the new values transfer to instruction. To do so, guided support, modeling, collaboration and time are critical. Through this process, educators will be positioned to adopt instructional practices and implement classroom experiences that honor the types of writing that occur in the classroom and outside the classroom. When this occurs, today’s students will be better prepared for the changes technology brings.

As an experienced educator and literacy specialist, Jennifer believes in the expertise of the teacher and the power of literacy. In her role as Director, Professional Learning Services at Learning A-Z, Jennifer’s mission is to empower educators with the knowledge, resources and research that can help every student reach his or her fullest potential. Jennifer is currently earning her PhD in Curriculum Instruction and Literacy from Kent State University.
Moreover, as employers increase their use of technology, workers need higher levels of education. From 2000 to 2015, nearly half the manufacturing jobs that did not require a high school diploma had disappeared, while the number of manufacturing jobs that required a master’s degree rose by a third. We are, in the words of Nobel Prize-winning economist Jan Tinbergen, engaged in a race between education and technology.

Predictably, there is no shortage of solutions being offered to address this challenge, but unfortunately, most of the ideas currently pursued in the United States will have little if any impact on student achievement.

Currently, according to the results of the latest round of international tests, over half a million American students leave school each year without the literacy they need to participate effectively in society, and more than 700,000 lack the math skills to make even the most basic financial decisions.
Why vouchers and charter schools won’t do much, if anything: At the federal and state level, many reformers have argued for expanding school choice through educational vouchers or the creation of charter schools. However, this approach is neither workable nor effective for the following reasons:

• The average quality of education provided by private schools is actually lower than in public schools;
• The best private schools have little interest in increasing the number of students they educate; and
• While charter schools have improved sharply in recent years, they are still, on average, hardly any more effective than traditional public schools.

More importantly, even if charter schools expand at the current rate, adding approximately 250,000 places each year, and even if these new charter schools are as good as today’s top charter schools, the net effect across the U.S. will be an extra three weeks learning by 2058.

Other reformers have pointed out that the most effective teachers are three or four times as productive as the least effective—and several policies have sought to improve the quality of our teachers through a variety of mechanisms. One study looked at what would happen in Florida if every teacher in the lowest performing 25 percent over a two-year period was replaced with an average teacher. The average effect would only be an extra three days of learning per year.

Some have argued that we should focus on the other end of the scale and pay the most effective teachers more, but here too, the evidence is disappointing. Most studies of differentiated compensation have either been abandoned before completion or have found little or no impact on student achievement. Those that have measurably increased student achievement, such as the IMPACT scheme in the District of Columbia, are far too expensive for most districts to emulate.

Several states, such as Florida, have sought to improve student achievement through class-size reduction programs. While such programs can be effective, they are expensive to implement, and often have unintended consequences. When a school hires additional teachers who are as good as those already in the schools, class size reduction programs can be effective. However, in less-affluent districts that are challenged with teacher recruitment and retention, then class-size reduction can actually lower student achievement.

Nevertheless, even where good teachers are in plentiful supply, class-size reduction is rarely a sensible policy, not because it doesn’t work, but because schools can do better things with the money, and too often, this is not taken into account in choosing potential ways of improving.

Making Decisions Based on Achievement-ROI

In education, policymakers often talk about doing “what works,” but this is the wrong question. Instead, we should be asking how much additional achievement we will get, how much it will cost, and whether an initiative can be successfully implemented.

When we do this, we find that many reforms currently being pursued, such as grit, growth mindset, social and emotional learning, personalized learning, and educational neuroscience, are likely to have small benefits. In some cases, this does not matter too much. For instance, growth mindset interventions may have only a small impact on student achievement, but since they do not take much time, they may be worthwhile.

However, when we look at the cost-benefit trade-off and the feasibility of implementation, there are two initiatives that are clearly more cost-effective: increasing teacher skill and building a school curriculum on a foundation of knowledge, rather than skills.

Committing to Continuous Improvement

The question of whether good teachers are born or made is as old as education itself, and for many years, the evidence—such as it was—pointed to teacher talent as being more important than training or experience. Right now, a good teacher is more effective in her first year than an average teacher will be after twenty years in the classroom. Most teachers improve rapidly in their first few years in the classroom, but after that, improvement slows or stops entirely.

This doesn’t mean that teachers cannot improve more than they are now. As the work of K. Anders Ericsson shows, elite levels of performance are much more a matter of practice than talent in most fields of human endeavor. Talented individuals have a head start to be sure, but after a year or two, what matters more is how hard they are working at getting better. And in most fields, ten years of focused, disciplined effort—what Ericsson calls “deliberate practice”—makes individuals as good as the very best.

I often ask principals how good their school would be if they could fill every teaching job in the building with their choice of any teacher in the county, and most conclude they would have an exceptional school. In response, I point out that they can have that school, in ten years’ time, if they build it themselves.

What this requires, then, is that every teacher accepts two things:

1) The need to get better, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better, and when teachers do their job better, their students will be healthier, live longer, and contribute more to society; and

2) The need to get better at the things that the best available evidence shows have the biggest impact on student achievement.
Right now, this is classroom formative assessment—teachers continuously finding out what their students are learning and making real-time adjustments to their instruction to better meet their students’ learning needs.

**Skill is Content, and Content is Skill**

The other thing that schools need to focus on is putting knowledge back into the curriculum. In recent years, teachers have been focusing more on teaching students skills, rather than content. The logic is attractive. If we just teach our students to think critically, then they can use such skills wherever such skills are needed. Similar arguments are made for collaboration, communication, creativity and problem-solving, often grouped together as “21st-Century skills” (an odd name when you think about it, because these capabilities were pretty useful in the 17th Century).

However, the more important point is that these “skills” aren’t really skills at all, but collections of skills that bear superficial similarities. If you ask historians and mathematicians what they mean by “critical thinking,” they are likely to say very similar things. This leads many people to conclude that “critical thinking” is a skill, but it isn’t. Critical thinking is different in every subject. We know this because no amount of training students to think critically in history has any impact on their ability to think critically in mathematics. As E.D. Hirsch Jr. pointed out, “Skill is content and content is skill.”

In reading instruction, we get our students to practice “getting the main idea of a paragraph” as if it were a generalizable skill, but it isn’t. Once you can decode—turn letters into sounds—what matters is how much you know about the subject in the text.

In mathematics, we assume that the best way for students to learn to solve problems is, well, to solve problems, but, at least for novices, it isn’t. Getting students to complete worked examples is far more effective.

In science, we get our students to complete investigations in the laboratory, so they can find things out for themselves. While understanding how science produces knowledge is important, the most important goal of science instruction is to equip students with the knowledge that science has produced. Students do better in science when we stop trying to teach thinking skills and give them more powerful ideas to think with. As Australian psychologist John Sweller says, “Novices need to use thinking skills. Experts use knowledge.”

**Creating Schools that Truly Build Knowledge**

The two changes I have described above will cost no more than what we are doing now. Although nearly all states require teachers to undertake professional development, it’s often delivered as a poorly focused process of knowledge acquisition. We need to treat teacher professional development as a process of habit change, helping teachers increase student engagement in their classrooms, and responding in a more agile way to their needs.

We also need to think of our curricula as devices for building knowledge in our students. Many contemporary writers suggest that textbooks are somehow old hat, and that what we really need to do is to find ways of helping teachers, schools, and districts to share learning materials online. The problem is that a collection of learning materials is no more a curriculum than a pile of bricks is a house. What our students need are carefully organized, sequential, structured introductions to school subjects—in other words, textbooks.

With every teacher committing to continuous, career-long professional development focused on classroom practice, and a curriculum that is designed to build knowledge in our students, we really can create the schools our children need.

(Author’s Note: Supporting evidence for the claims in this article can be found the book, Creating the Schools Our Children Need: Why What We’re Doing Now Won’t Help Much (And What We Can Do Instead).

Dr. Dylan Wiliam’s most recent publication, Creating the Schools Our Children Need: Why What We’re Doing Now Won’t Help Much (And What We Can Do Instead), analyzes the approaches that American schools have taken to improve student achievement, and shows why they are unlikely to succeed. Wiliam is also the author of Leadership for Teacher Learning and, with Siobhán Leahy, Embedding Formative Assessment, published by LSI. Wiliam is professor emeritus of educational assessment at UCL Institute of Education (IOE), London, UK.

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If you work in the district curriculum office, this statement may be what keeps you up at night: **Districts and schools have worked diligently to implement** the College and Career Standards.

From my own journey, I know how difficult it can be to truly implement the Core Shifts, and I know it is even more difficult to recognize whether your curriculum is properly aligned.

In fact, according to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, only seven percent of Florida classrooms observed had instruction which was fully aligned to the Florida standards, with 26 percent partially aligned, and 67 percent not meeting the full intent and rigor of the standards. Yet, upwards of 70 percent of teachers and school leaders believe their school is prepared to or has already made the shift to the standards.

Further, research and findings from studies like School Supports for Teachers’ Implementation of School Standards, Kaufman and Tsai, and EDNET’s State of the K-12 Market Reports indicate a perception gap in the implementation of rigorous standards.

**Trying to Fit a Square Peg into a Round Hole**

When I worked in a district office, I myself experienced this perception gap. I studied the Core Shifts, attended workshops, and attempted to implement the shifts into curriculum development. I thought I completely understood the shifts because they didn’t seem difficult from a surface level. Like many curriculum developers, I attempted to retrofit the standards and shifts into my existing mental model for reading instruction. What makes College and Career Standards different?

**ELA/Literacy**
2. Evidence: Ground reading, writing, and speaking in evidence from text, both literary and informational.
3. Knowledge: Build knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

**Mathematics**
1. Focus strongly where the standards focus.
2. Coherence: Think across grades and link to major topics within grades.
3. Rigor: In major topics, pursue conceptual understanding, procedural skill and fluency, and application with equal intensity.
What I didn’t realize at the time was the complexity of the shifts at the daily implementation level, and the number of pieces that must fit together to create an aligned system.

Instead of trying to fit a square peg into a round hole, I needed to change the hole itself. The College and Career Readiness Standards call for us to deconstruct our teaching practices and use new approaches, but initially, I didn’t have the concrete strategies or research base to develop a new approach. No doubt, many districts share my past struggles, and after nearly 10 years of implementation, many still use the term “the new standards.”

**What’s Getting in the Way**

While curriculum teams, instructional coaches and teachers work hard to implement College and Career Standards, there is little evidence their curricula is being implemented as intended.

In my work around the country with district and curriculum offices, three factors appear to get in the way:
1. Curriculum materials;
2. The way curriculum is provided to teachers and the ease of use for teachers; and
3. Evidence of implementation in the classroom

The first issue is the curriculum materials. Many teachers are building and rebuilding their own curriculums using ad hoc systems and varying resources. This finding is corroborated by an EdNet study on where teachers go for their resources — 97 percent use Google, 85 percent use Pinterest, 79 percent use Teachers Pay Teachers, and 39 percent use EngageNY.

Many teachers seek out their own resources and create their own curriculums because of the second factor: ease of use of curriculum materials. I find that many teachers who use the provided curriculum are overwhelmed in a whirlwind of different documents. The result is that teachers attempt to fit together the puzzle pieces of the standards, shifts and practices.

For example, each grade level has 40 to 50 math standards, three math shifts and eight Standards for mathematical practices. Teachers also need to factor in where each student is in their learning, who needs extra support and who needs to be challenged.

Teachers typically schedule 45 minutes or less each day for lesson-planning, but EdNet found that teachers were spending an average of seven hours a week searching for resources and five hours per week creating their own materials.

**Allow the Core Shifts to Become the Foundation**

The curricula provided to teachers must be more user-friendly. Think of teachers as “customers.” Instead of giving them surface-level lists of the Core Shifts and practices, empower them to fully understand how the shifts and the standards work together in the classroom. Teachers will ultimately become critical consumers.

To do this, the Core Shifts cannot be simply a factor in curriculum development, they need to become the foundation of all curriculum work.

Instead of retrofitting the standards to our existing curriculum structures, use the shifts to re-map the approach to curriculum development. The shifts are the research behind the standards. Without the shifts, we will not get to the full intent and rigor of the standards.

The good news is that alignment will increase when curriculum is rebuilt with the Core Shifts as the basis. Start by fully understanding the complexity of the Core Shifts, then embed the shifts into a specific daily lesson planning process. Your curriculum will be aligned, and you will know it.

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7 Reasons to Attend Graduate School

By Dr. Meghan Ferraro
Maybe you are still on the hunt for that perfect job, maybe you have just secured your first teaching position, or maybe yet, you are a veteran teacher with many years of classroom experience. Graduate school has crossed your mind, but you have yet to make a commitment. You are still wondering, “Is it really worth it?” It can be a daunting task, deciding whether to return to graduate school, but the value of advancing your degree can reap many benefits beyond the actual certificate. So why should you start working on your master’s degree now?

**Reason #1 – To Secure a Teaching Position**
Adding on a specialty area will only enhance your resume, making you more employable. Our country is currently experiencing nationwide teacher shortages across disciplines, but particularly in areas such as special education, world languages, reading and English as a second language (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). By enrolling in a graduate program that also allows you to obtain a new certificate or licensure will open more doors for job opportunities.

**Reason #2 – For Financial Incentives**
Depending on your state and/or school of employment, you may be eligible for a pay increase once you obtain your master’s degree. Furthermore, there may be opportunities for tuition reimbursement as you pursue your degree. It is important to check with your local school to determine what financial benefits are offered for advanced graduate coursework.

**Reason #3 – To Satisfy Continuing Education Credit Hours**
Although it varies state-to-state, engaging in professional development opportunities through workshops, trainings, or coursework is often required to maintain licensure. If it is required to earn continuing education hours, why not earn a master’s degree at the same time.

**Reason #4 – To Remain Current with Evidence-Based Teaching Practices**
Beyond licensure maintenance or recertification, enrolling in graduate school will help you remain current with the most efficacious teaching strategies and techniques. Graduate school will enhance your skills whether a novice teacher or veteran teacher. New research is continually being published to provide evidence to support various classroom management strategies, academic interventions, and behavioral interventions. Remaining up-to-date with current best practices will contribute to your success as a teacher, and ultimately to the academic and behavioral success of your students.

**Reason #5 – To Make a Career Change**
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in a different capacity. The world of education has a wide array of job opportunities beyond the traditional teacher role. School psychologists, reading specialists, school counselors, principals, social workers and behavior specialists are just a few of the many professionals that comprise the education world. Graduate school is your path to a new career endeavor.

**Reason #6 – To Develop an Area of expertise**

There is no better way to develop an area of expertise than through graduate school. Perhaps your passion is working with students with autism; an advanced degree in behavior management or applied behavior analysis may be your track. Perhaps teaching children to read and studying the most effective reading techniques is your area of interest; an advanced degree in reading would be an appropriate avenue. Whether your niche is behavior, reading, curriculum, or early childhood education — to name a few — there is a graduate program out there that will fit your interests.

**Reason #7 – For Personal and Professional Growth**

Although a vast amount of knowledge is gained through the completion of a graduate program, there are many benefits to finishing a program that extend beyond increases in knowledge. Networks are established, friends are made, skills are enhanced and confidence is gained.

Deciding to pursue an advanced degree may not be an easy task; financial costs, family commitments, and work responsibilities should all be taken in to consideration when making a final decision. However, once you decide to further your education, regardless of the reason(s), you will forever be thankful for the knowledge, skills, and recognition that accompany that master’s degree.

Dr. Meghan Ferraro is an assistant professor and the graduate program head for special education in the Department of Counseling, School Psychology, and Special Education. She is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist, as well as a Pennsylvania Certified Elementary Teacher, Special Education Teacher, and School Psychologist. She has over 10 years’ experience working in the public school system as both an educator and school psychologist. Dr. Ferraro earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary and Special Education from Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania and her master’s degree in Educational Psychology, Educational Specialist’s Degree in School Psychology, and Doctoral Degree in School Psychology from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

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LANDMARK COLLEGE: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TEACHING STUDENTS WHO LEARN DIFFERENTLY

While many colleges offer special programs for students with learning disabilities (LD) and other learning challenges, Landmark College is one of the only accredited colleges in the United States designed exclusively for students who learn differently, including students with learning disabilities (such as dyslexia), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

For almost 40 years, our combination of research-based learning strategies and academic support has proved successful in preparing students for the rigors of college-level work. As the field of learning disabilities and differences expanded, our approach to working with students has grown more varied, but always with a constant unyielding mission to provide best practices for all.

The Landmark College Difference

Landmark College offers the same range of student services found at any college — from counseling and health services to student life and athletics. The difference is that these professionals, like our faculty and academic advisors, bring specific expertise in, and a passion for, working with students who learn differently.

Working together, we help students discover their path as confident, empowered and independent learners. We integrate our innovative learning strategies into everything we do.

Academic Advising

In addition to classes, students in their first year participate in weekly academic advising sessions while engaged with the advising curriculum. As students progress in their coursework, they become increasingly independent and meet with their advisor less frequently. Students pursuing their bachelor's degree work with degree specific advisors. The academic advisor is central to the system which supports individual student performance.

Centers for Academic Support

Landmark College’s Centers for Academic Support offer unparalleled support to students who learn differently, at no additional charge. The Drake Center for Academic Support is the first place students turn for help with reading, writing, and study skills. Academic support centers within individual departments offer drop-in support and one-on-one scheduled appointments with Landmark College faculty.

Counseling & Health

Counseling Services are available to provide support to students dealing with stress and other personal, social, or academic difficulties. Health Services offers support for physical issues.

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The office of Educational Technology Services helps students take advantage of the

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**Executive Function Coaching**

Through the office of Coaching Services, Landmark College’s Professional Certified Coaches work with students who have a variety of learning profiles and struggle with executive functioning.

**Integrated Services for Students with Autism**

Students with autism who are academically prepared for college may still face significant challenges navigating the social curriculum and adjusting to the more fluid routine of the college student. Landmark College recognizes the need to provide additional programming to assist students with autism to meet their college goals. Our integrated services model for ASD support services provides a structured living and learning environment that combines an effective pedagogical approach with tailored social and other programmatic supports.

**Library**

The Landmark College Library offers walk-in assistance as well as one-on-one appointments with students to assist them with their research projects and with...
developing information literacy. The library building offers a welcoming space conducive to individual and small-group study, as well as resources to support students’ curricular and extra-curricular needs and interests.

Undergraduate Degrees and Curriculum

Originally founded as a two-year college, Landmark College began offering four-year degrees in 2014. We now offer an array of baccalaureate and associate degrees, with optional minors and concentrations.

Landmark College offers a diverse selection of courses in anthropology, English, business, communications, humanities, philosophy, psychology, history, literature, math, science, foreign languages, theater, video, music, art, physical education and other disciplines.

For all entering students, the curriculum sequence begins with skills-development courses, designed to address the key areas of writing, reading, communication and study skills. Self-management, as well as the development of self-understanding and self-advocacy, are also important parts of this first-semester curriculum.

Initial courses are offered at non-credit and credit levels. This allows students to be placed in classes where they are able to succeed, from the start. Due to our rigorous academic standards, more than 50 percent of incoming students begin in non-credit courses, with most moving into credit courses after one or two semesters.

Student Life

Landmark College has clubs, sports, activities, and events including theater productions, coffeehouse performances, open mic nights, and dance parties, to name a few. Whatever your interests, you’re likely to find others who share them. And whether you love history, art, sports, or nature, our Putney location gives you the chance to pursue your passion. Our campus shuttle services make it easy to get to area shops, ski resorts, and other nearby sites.

The Strauch Family Student Center is the heart of student life at Landmark College. Whether you want to grab a bite to eat at the Fireside Cafe, buy Landmark College gear at the Bookstore, meet up with friends, or get your game on in the Game Room, the Student Center is the place to do it. There are also several resources located in the Student Center including Health Services, Counseling Services, and Student Affairs. Student mailboxes are also located in the Student Center.

Visit Our Campus

Landmark College offers several open houses on Saturdays each semester. You can also schedule a visit with our Admissions office any week day during regular business hours by calling 802-387-6718 or emailing admissions@landmark.edu.

Saturday Open Houses
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Daniel and his team at Competency Based Education Solutions have developed a variety of training and coaching supports for teachers, school and district leaders to make the shift from time-based systems to those that are driven by personalized learning. Daniel trains teachers and staff in the core tenets of personalized learning: shared vision, leadership, personal mastery and continuous improvement.

There are a number of trainings offered to districts as they build their capacity and sustainability for the continued growth and achievement of all students. These trainings start by building a shared vision and move through culture and into instructional strategies. The progression of trainings addresses the culture and content of competency-based educational systems reform at both the macro and micro levels. For more information, visit www.cbesolution.com

Mac Bogert received his Masters of Education from the University of Virginia and worked as a Teacher Specialist for Anne Arundel County Schools providing staff development services before founding AZA Learning in 1994. He provides custom design, innovative training and interactive collaboration to 180 organizations nationwide. Mac will provide custom focused learning sessions for your district, with emphasis on clarity, safety and power-sharing. Advanced leadership skills are the difference between a good organization and a great organization. Give your district every advantage. Learn more at www.azalearning.com

After working as a high school principal, district school improvement specialist and district assessment director, Angela Stewart founded Stewart Educational Consulting in 2013 with an emphasis on strategic planning. Strategic planning projects are not one and done efforts. Methodologies must be personalized to the school districts’ history, objectives/goals, and capacity. A well-designed plan is a living document; successful planning depends on the engagement by district and school level leadership. This practice cannot be relegated to consultants alone. Through thought-provoking questions, candid discussions, a rigorous look at data and challenging conventional thinking, a district can assure the development of results-driven initiatives. For more information, call (484)538-4017
Professional development for faculty is critical to their success both in the classroom and in their scholarly pursuits. In general, professional development activities are an important part of any career. Professional development opportunities provide professionals with strategies and examples of how to grow as a person and advance their careers in a positive direction. Networking with others in the field, getting new and innovative ideas, self-reflection and re-thinking of previous methods, and improving communication skills are just a few of the ways professionals can grow and develop. Attending academic conferences is one way in which faculty can develop professionally and have these types of experiences.

Why attend conferences? Why are they useful?

There are many reasons that faculty should attend academic conferences. Gaining knowledge, presenting their research results and staying current in the field are, of course, primary reasons that many attend. However, there are a variety of reasons that faculty should attend conferences as a professional development tool.

**Tips on Gaining Professional Development from Attending a Conference**

Attending a conference can be a professionally rewarding experience. Following these strategic tips will help to ensure that you make the most of the opportunity.

- Prepare yourself in advance. Go to the website and review the program for the conference, as well as the list of speakers. Make a strategic plan to attend the sessions of most benefit to you. If there is a presenter that you would like to meet in person or visit with, you may want to contact them in advance to see if that can be arranged.
- Stay at the hotel where the conference is being held. This will ensure that you have the most opportunity to interact with others attending the conference and the presenters. Networking and looking for opportunities for future collaborations is a critical aspect of the conference experience. The relationships that you build with other attendees may prove to be as valuable as the information you get from the sessions themselves. Social gatherings, dinners and other collegial aspects of the conference are excellent ways to develop these relationships.
- Work to build your knowledge base. Attend some sessions that are not directly related to your field. You might be surprised at the connections you discover or the new interests that arise.
- Be on the lookout for learning opportunities not directly related to the content of the presentations, such as information about new technologies, curricular applications, potential funding/grant sources, trends in the profession and so on.
- Do not be afraid to talk to others about your research. This is an excellent opportunity to get feedback, ask for advice, discuss frustrations and learn from others. The other attendees are like-minded faculty in your field and therefore, their insights may be valuable.
- If a researcher or presenter has a particular topic of genuine interest to you or you have questions, make the effort to speak to them personally if possible. These interactions can enlighten you, motivate you, and potentially open future doors. Do not be afraid to introduce yourself, but using a mutual acquaintance for introductions is also acceptable.
- Remember — getting the most of your conference experience may require extra effort and may require stepping out of your comfort zone, but the potential benefits and value to your career are worth it!

2019 Conference Planner

October 2018
EdSurge Fusion: October 2 – 4, 2018 in San Francisco, CA
National Forum on Character (Character.org): October 4 – 7, 2018 in Washington, DC
NSTA Regional Conference (National Science Teachers Association): October 11 – 13, 2018 in Reno, NV
Close It Summit: October 16– 17, 2018 in Austin, TX
AMLE Annual Conference for Middle Level Education (Association for Middle Level Education): October 25 – 27, 2018 in Orlando, FL

November 2018
SETDA Leadership Summit & Education Forum: November 4 – 7, 2018 in Arlington, VA
EDspaces: The Future of Educational Facilities (Education Market Association): November 7 – 9, 2018 in Tampa, FL
NAEYC Annual Conference (National Association for the Education of Young Children): November 14 – 17, 2018 in Washington, DC
NSTA Regional Conference (National Science Teachers Association): November 15 – 17, 2018 in National Harbor, MD
NCTE Annual Convention (National Council of Teachers of English): November 15 – 18, 2018 in Houston, TX
ACTFL Annual Convention & World Languages Expo (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages): November 16 – 18, 2018 in New Orleans, LA
NSTA Regional Conference (National Science Teachers Association): November 29 – December 1, 2018 in Charlotte, NC
Reimagine Education Conference & Awards: November 29 – 30, 2018 in San Francisco, CA
NCSS Annual Conference (National Council for the Social Studies): November 30 – December 2, 2018 in Chicago, IL

January 2019
AHA Annual Meeting (American Historical Association): January 3 – 6, 2019 in Chicago, IL

February 2019
TCEA: February 4 – 8, 2019 in San Antonio, TX
National Conference on Education (American Association of School Administrators): February 14 – 16, 2019 in Los Angeles, CA
ATE Annual Meeting (Association of Teacher Educators): February 15 – 19, 2019 in Atlanta, GA
AACTE Annual Meeting (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education): February 22 – February 24, 2019 in Louisville, KY

March 2019
SXSWedu: March 3 – 7, 2019 in Austin, TX
TESOL International Convention & English Language Expo: March 12 – 15, 2019 in Atlanta, GA
NCHE Convention & Expo (National Council for History Education): March 14 – 16, 2019 in Washington, DC
ASCD Empower Annual Conference (Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development): March 16 – 18, 2019 in Chicago, IL
NSBA Annual Conference (National School Boards Association): March 30 – April 1, 2019 in Philadelphia, PA

April 2019
CoSN Annual Conference: April 1–4, 2019 in Portland, OR
AERA Annual Meeting (American Educational Research Association): April 5– 9, 2018 in Toronto, Canada
ASU + GSV Summit: April 8 – 10, 2019 in San Diego, CA
NSTA National Conference (National Science Teachers Association): April 11 – 14, 2019 in St. Louis, MO
NCEA Convention & Expo (National Catholic Educational Association): April 23 – 25, 2019 in Chicago, IL

May 2019
STUDENT TRAVEL
The Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame

Score a touchdown with your students by taking them on a trip to The Chick-fil-A College Football Hall of Fame this school year! Our 45-yard indoor playing field and over 50 state-of-the-art interactive exhibits make the top-rated Hall of Fame the perfect place to engage your students and experience the greatness of the game.

Guests receive a personalized experience from the moment they walk in the door. Kick off your visit by registering your personalized All-Access Pass, selecting your favorite school and lighting that school’s helmet on our 3-story Helmet Wall. We have over 775 colleges and universities represented on our Helmet Wall, presented by Southwest Airlines.

From there, your students can test their football skills at the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl Skill Zone. Kick a field goal through the uprights of our regulation goal post, run an agility drill, catch a diving pass in the end zone and take the quarterback challenge, all on our indoor playing field. The fun doesn’t stop when you leave the field. In fact, it is just getting started! Head to the second floor for 5 unique galleries featuring multimedia, experiential and historical exhibits. Your students will be immersed in a 52-foot interactive media wall, show off their swagger and passion with Fight Song Karaoke, call a legendary play and pick their favorite team to win the game at the ESPN College GameDay Desk. Our award-winning RFID-enabled All-Access Pass is the key to unlocking all the fun AND taking all the experiences home to download and share those special memories!

Wrap up your visit on the third floor where the greatest players and coaches are immortalized in the Hall of Fame. The Hall captures the stories and cements the legacies of almost 1,000 legendary college football players and coaches who broke records and won our hearts. Featuring permanent, etched-glass “blades” that represent each class inducted since 1951, The Hall of Fame honors the rich tradition of the game. Guests are also treated to a personalized, in-depth experience through augmented reality displays that share stats, photos and video highlights from their favorite players and schools, taking the fan experience to a new level.

Combine the entire live Hall experience with our FREE STEAM curriculum – a Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics and Science program (T.E.A.M.S.™), using the topic of sport along with the interactive experiences of the Hall. Your students will have so much fun they won’t even know they’re learning!

Conveniently located in downtown Atlanta near Centennial Olympic Park and directly connected to the Omni Hotel at CNN Center and the Georgia World Congress Center, the Hall is a five-minute walk to other amazing attractions like the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, CNN Center, Imagine It! Children’s Museum, Skyview and The National Center for Civil and Human Rights.

For more information, contact Group Sales at groups@cfbhall.com or (404) 880-4841.
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Located at the Lorraine Motel, the assassination site of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the National Civil Rights Museum chronicles key episodes of the American Civil Rights Movement, examines today's global civil and human rights issues, provokes thoughtful debate and serves as a catalyst for social positive change. The National Civil Rights Museum is the only museum devoted to a comprehensive overview of the American Civil Rights Movement from 1619 to the present.

The Lorraine Motel was forever etched in America's collective memory with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, but even before that fateful day, the property had a fascinating history in its own right. In 1945, black businessman Walter Bailey purchased the hotel and renamed it the Lorraine after his wife Loree and the popular jazz song, "Sweet Lorraine." The motel became a destination for blacks and appeared in the Negro Motorists Green Book or "Green Guide," which identified establishments that welcomed black travelers when Jim Crow restrictions offered limited options for services and lodging.

By 1982, the Lorraine Motel was a foreclosed property. A group of prominent Memphians formed the Martin Luther King Memorial Foundation to save the Lorraine. In December 1982, the Foundation purchased the Lorraine at auction for $144,000. Eventually, enough funds from public and private sectors were raised to build a museum within the Lorraine Motel and an official groundbreaking was held in 1987. On September 28, 1991, the museum opened its doors to visitors.

The Museum is a private 501 (c) (3). The historic Lorraine Motel building is operated under a lease agreement with the State of Tennessee with oversight of the State of Tennessee Museum system. It relies on financial support from admissions, memberships, museum shop sales, facilities usage, and private donations. The museum receives no ongoing annual funding from city, county or federal governments.

The museum campus has three buildings, two of which have over 52,800 square feet of permanent exhibition space. Located on the grounds are a courtyard with promenade park, administrative office building, two museum stores, library, classroom, guest lounge, multipurpose event room, theatre and changing gallery. It includes the building where James Earl Ray allegedly fired the shot that killed Dr. King, with prosecution evidence and conspiracy theory displays. In 2008, the museum launched a $40 million capital and endowment campaign, of which $28 million was for major renovation and $12 million was for museum endowment. The renovation of the exhibitions in the historic Lorraine Motel was completed April 2014.

A Smithsonian Affiliate, the museum is accredited by the Alliance of American Museums, a founding member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, and a member of several historical and museum associations. The museum has received the TripExpert's Choice Award (top two percent among travel publications) and Best of Memphis Award. It has also been awarded TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Top 5% of U.S. Museum, USA Today's Top 10 Best American Iconic Attractions; Top 10 Best Historical Spots in the U.S. by TLC's Family Travel; Must See by the Age of 15 by Budget Travel and Kids; Top 10 American Treasures by USA Today; and Best Memphis Attraction by the Commercial Appeal and the Memphis Business Journal.

The museum's average annual attendance is 350,000, of which 90,000 are students. Over 77 percent of the museum's visitors live over 120 miles away. With 80 percent of its guests visiting for the first time, the museum continues to be an economic driver by attracting new visitors to the historic site and to Memphis.

The National Civil Rights Museum's Freedom Award is bestowed annually on individuals who have fought for freedom, justice, and equality in America and around the world. The museum's signature event, the Freedom Award is a three-part occasion with a Student Forum in the morning, and a Pre-Show Gala and Awards Ceremony that evening.

The King Day Celebration each January celebrates the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the national holiday. Each April 4th is a program of remembrance commemorating Dr. King's death. The museum has engaged younger audiences through its annual Ruby Bridges Reading Festival, Drop the Mic Poetry Slam and the Night at the Lorraine events as well as its Small but Mighty summer story time and educational outreach programs.

During the 50th anniversary year of Dr. King's death, the museum worked to help the world reflect without lingering on the past, and propel forward with "MLK50: Where Do We Go from Here?" To affect a commemoration of this magnitude, the museum engaged many community partners locally and nationally. The Commemoration culminated April 2-4 with a two-day symposium, a Day of Remembrance, the Commemoration Ceremony with worldwide bell tolling at 6:01p.m. — the moment Dr. King was shot — and an Evening of Storytelling that brought together civil rights icons and New Movement Makers in a national dialogue about the Movement then and now.

Museum President Terri Lee Freeman described MLK50 as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to draw direct motivation from the past and present vanguards of the ongoing fight for the rights of all citizens. "MLK50 is not intended to be a simple look back at the past; April 4th is just the beginning; we want to continue the momentum, build on Dr. King's legacy, and fully actualize his platforms of peace, justice, and equity on April 5th and beyond." For more information about the museum you may call 901-521-9699.
THE POWER of PLACE.

More than a museum, a public square. There is power in experience.

More than exhibits, lessons. There is power in knowledge.

More than events, opportunities. There is power in connection.

More than history, today and tomorrow. There is power in moving forward.

More than a destination, a journey. There is power in purpose.

SEE. LEARN. ENGAGE. ACT.
The Carolina Renaissance Festival is a cornucopia of sights, sounds and experiences, bringing to life the ambiance of an early European village celebration. The Festival will open on three special weekdays to accommodate students and teachers who wish to enjoy a very distinctive field trip opportunity. Costumed characters delight audiences with staged presentations, village artisans provide craft demonstrations and living history troops, such as The Queen’s Court, bring the 16th century to life. Fourteen stages are scheduled with music, dance and comedy acts every half hour. Craft demonstrations are on-going throughout the day. A major festival feature is the re-creation of jousting tournaments with knights in armor performing on horseback in the Queen’s Tournament Arena. Our Student Days Program was created to highlight the educational aspects of the Festival and to give school groups a chance to join the fun.

Student Day Study Guide
Visit our website, carolina.renfestinfo.com and download the Student Day Study Guide containing helpful information for your classroom.

Our student day field trip dates are:
Tuesday, October 23 – Elementary and Middle
Wednesday, October 24 - Middle
Thursday, October 25 – Middle and High

The Carolina Renaissance Festival began in 1994, and offers its visitors an opportunity to step back in time to a magical, enchanting fantasy land that has been created to represent an authentic European village.

The Festival’s educational viability is due to the wide array of unique presentations that are available to students. The Festival features over 200 performers, representing various entertainments of the time – including jugglers, knights in armor, jousting, ropewalkers, dancers, villagers, peasants, historical characters and a variety of musicians. Over 100 artisans fill the village, working in mediums such as glass blowing, pottery, leather work, blacksmithing, sculpture, and candle making, just to name a few. The crafts and entertainment combine with thematic games and foods to create a glimpse of marketplace celebrations and life in the 16th century.

The Village
The village of the Carolina Renaissance Festival is a theatrical facsimile of a 16th century European village. The storyline is: The Queen is touring England with her court. On this beautiful day, the Royal Family has come to visit the small village of Fairhaven.

Villagers, crafts-people, musicians, performing troupes and food vendors have gathered together to create a marketplace Festival. The village is radiant with color and celebration rules the day. Why, even a Jousting Tournament will take place to honor the Royal Family.

Our Renaissance Festival is a re-creation of the celebrations that took place when a King visited
a village in his Realm. The Royal Family is not based on actual historical personages.

Medieval vs. Renaissance

The Renaissance affected different aspects of life in England at different times. The humanistic approach to life started in the 1470’s, whereas the parliamentary renaissance did not happen until the 1530’s. To simplify matters, here are some examples of the differences between Medieval and Renaissance viewpoints.

MEDIEVAL

• Collectivism mentality, guilds were strong
• Pre-occupations with the soul and death.
• Feudalism
• In wars, knights were rarely killed; foot soldiers made up the bulk of the fatalities
• Church in England; the Pope was involved with its politics
• Parliament’s primary usage was to grant funds to the King

RENAISSANCE

• Exaltation of the individual
• Appreciation of life; art, dance and music blossomed
• Nationalism
• Gunpowder was used in warfare; it killed knights and foot soldiers alike. It did not kill by class
• Church of England; England became a sovereign state
• Parliament was utilized to enact laws that helped enforce government policy
• Food and Drink

People of this day knew nothing about sanitation — they’d never heard of germs, nobody had ever seen one! The water was dangerously polluted, so most people drank a very low alcohol brew called “small beer.” Much milk was consumed, especially skim and buttermilk — cream was needed for other things. Ale was consumed on special occasions and only the royalty and the very wealthy drank wine. In this time, people thought that the proper foods for humans were meat, bread, dairy, eggs and a few varieties of fruit. Meats were preserved with salt, sugar or spices, but meat, which we would consider spoiled, would be gratefully eaten. Usually, meat came from elderly animals and was tough, so no one expected the best cuts. In spite of these drawbacks, Elizabethans are still famous for their skillful use of herbs, spices and their slow stewing methods. But only the very rich could afford meat regularly in their diets and they considered vegetables, which grow from the earth, to be beneath them.

Many were even suspected of producing ill humors. Peasants couldn’t afford to be picky. Their diets consisted MAINLY of vegetables, plus lots of eggs and cheese, which they referred to as “white meat.”

In spite of economic differences, peasants were the better nourished of the two classes. These are just a few things you will learn when you download the study guide and visit the festival. For more information visit www.carolina.renfestinfo.com.
The colonial Virginia-era “Citie” of Henricus began as a military fort in the early fall of 1611 when 300 men and boys sailed 80 miles upriver from the first permanent English colony of Jamestown, debarking at a site high above the James River. They planned to develop a more “healthie” site for colonization than was Jamestown, and perhaps to replace it as the colonial capital, which had been plagued by poor sanitary conditions, brackish water, governing and labor problems, starvation and attacks on the community by local natives.

Henricus was situated 40 feet above the river, had fresh water springs and fewer mosquitos; the colonists brought with them a new form of government, designed originally by Sir Thomas Dale at Jamestown, that relied on dictatorial or “martial lawe” designed to help the colony survive. Originally built as an upriver militia outpost, it would eventually morph into an economic project with a more liberal government -- a “representative” government -- a money-making tobacco trade, the beginnings of private land ownership and the first integrated “colledge” designed to educate both English and Indian children. Pocahontas would be converted and educated into English ways at this site and would later (probably at a different site) marry tobacco planter John Rolfe. This marriage helped inaugurate a period of “peace” between the two cultures that would end with the 1622 Indian uprising. By then, colonization had spread beyond the colony as tobacco plantations spread up and down the James River. While the Charter for the Virginia Company at Henricus was withdrawn by King James – ordering the colonists back to Jamestown -- the plantations continued on and eventually expanded.

Today, Henricus Historical Park sits on or near the original site of the Citie of Henricus. While the original site has not been located, a re-created Citie and Powhatan village have been built through the use of primary source documentation including journal entries, maps and drawings and by archaeology done at Jamestown.

Using period materials and techniques, fourteen colonial buildings and an Indian village have been built, forming a backdrop to our Pre-K – 12 education programs. Period-dressed Native and English interpreters bring the site to life through demonstrations of house building, agriculture, military drill, Powhatan hunting and fishing, and inter-cultural activities such as Indian to English trade.

For younger children, our People of the River: Powhatan Indian, Success of the Citie: Henricus, 1611 – 22 and Mapping the James River programs emphasize the comparable and contrasting methods that each culture used to survive in this Eastern Woodlands environment. Older children compare and contrast governments, security, economics, religion and education through our Colonial Cultures of the James River, Virginia Governments and the Two Lives of Pocahontas programs. The 17th Century Sciences and Cultures in Contact: Archaeology programs help students track 17th century advancements in science and technology that would help make North American colonization possible.

We also provide teachers with primary sources, DVDs, historical consulting and Project- and presentations and loans of reproduction artifacts for Problem- and Project-Based Learning (PBL) activities.

Henricus Historical Park is located ~20 miles southeast of Richmond in today’s community of Chester. Jointly run by the Counties of Henrico and Chester and by the Henricus Foundation, we work closely with colleges and universities, museums, the Virginia Indian community and regional businesses. Together, they help Henricus provide a myriad of historical, educational and cultural resources for residents and visitors of all ages and interests.
Kentucky Kingdom and Hurricane Bay is a 63-acre theme park in Louisville, Kentucky with more than 70 rides and attractions, including five thrilling roller coasters, lots of thrill rides and family classics, and a large selection of children’s rides. The Hurricane Bay water park boasts two wave pools, two rivers, two children’s activity pools, a water coaster, and oodles of water slides. Whether you have a need for speed or prefer drifting peacefully along the lazy river, Kentucky Kingdom has something for everyone. Relax in the shade as you watch one of our entertaining shows and browse our retail shops for the perfect souvenir. And what would a trip to a theme park be without some amazing eats? You can choose from our flatbread pizza, delicious burgers (including a black bean burger for vegetarians), tacos and nachos, hand-dipped ice cream, and dozens of other treats.

To top off all this fun, we’ve got some special offers for school groups.

EDUCATION IN MOTION

What better way to learn about Newton’s laws than to live them while riding a world-class roller coaster? After all, an education in motion stays in motion - and sticks with you!

An Education in Motion field trip to Kentucky Kingdom will engage your students with STEM-focused activities in a unique setting, giving them an unforgettable experience that brings science to life. Our website offers downloadable workbooks with math, science, and art lessons for every grade level, all based on the rides and attractions at the park. All workbook activities are teacher-approved and cover many of the Next Generations Science Standards topics.

If you’re looking for a way to reward your students for a great school year, look no farther! Education in Motion covers all the bases: it’s fun, educational, and affordable. Ticket prices start as low as $19.95 and vary according to group size and date.

SCHOOL DAYS

Kentucky Kingdom is open exclusively on certain days in May for school groups who reserve their spot in advance. In 2019, these dates are May 16, 17, 23, and 24. The cost of a ticket is only $19.95 per person and every tenth ticket is free!

On School Days, Kentucky Kingdom is open from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. and select attractions in Hurricane Bay are open from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

SECOND DAY FREE FOR SCHOOLS OUTSIDE KENTUCKY

Schools outside of Kentucky can take advantage of our special offer for out-of-state groups: two days at the park for the price of one! After your first day’s visit, you are entitled to return for free on the following day and you receive free soft drinks on both days - an unbeatable value! Ticket prices start as low as $19.95 and vary according to group size and date.

Visit our website for more information or to make reservations: https://www.kentuckykingdom.com/groups/education-in-motion/
schooldays@kentuckykingdom.com
History’s All Around You in Clarksville, Tenn

Clarksville, Tennessee is first and foremost a river city. The Cumberland and Red Rivers merge in the heart of the town, very near where the city was founded in 1784, 12 years before Tennessee became the nation’s 16th state. Today, a fully-developed Cumberland RiverWalk adorns this significant juncture, and an enclosed RiverCenter illustrates Clarksville’s history from that vantage point beginning with pre-settlement days through modern times.

The Customs House Museum & Cultural Center encompasses 50,000 square feet that includes an 1898, Gothic building, as well as a 1996 expansion. The Center features rotating and permanent exhibits of general history and art, along with an explorer’s gallery and massive model train exhibit. A large “Becoming Clarksville” exhibit shows and tells fascinating stories about the history of Fort Campbell, Dunbar Cave, Clarksville’s river development, along with some of the city’s legendary people who rose to the pinnacle of their respective fields like Olympic Gold Medalist Wilma Rudolph, the first woman from the United States to receive three gold medals in a single Olympic Games.

Clarksville’s rich military history spans from the Revolutionary War era through modern conflicts. The remarkably well-preserved Fort Defiance Park & Interpretive Center, just across the river from downtown, is located on a 200-foot bluff over the Cumberland. Constructed as a defensive fort in 1861 by Confederate troops to control the river approach to Clarksville, the Center hosts multiple reenactment and educational events throughout the year that bring history alive for the young and old alike. Annual Events include a surrender reenactment in February, Sevier Days in September and Christmas in Occupied Clarksville in December.

Dunbar Cave, at over eight miles in length, is part of a 144-acre state park, the cave’s archaeological markings and excavations revealed that the cave has been used for thousands of years. The entrance to Dunbar Cave is 58 degrees year-round which was a popular attraction during the summer months and by the 1930s, the cave became a hotspot for local bands and other entertainment. In 1948, country music legend Roy Acuff bought the property and staged his Saturday Night Radio Dance Broadcast from the site. Events and programs are held frequently, including guided cave tours, history days, wildlife and wildflower hikes tours, butterfly and hummingbird festival, and more.

A short drive northwest of Nashville along I-24, Clarksville’s central location makes a convenient destination for students (or any traveler!) looking for history, education, outdoor adventure, good food, and outstanding cultural opportunities. Customize your trip at visitclarksvilletn.com with our online itinerary builder, or download the new VisitClarksvilleTN app. Of course, the Visit Clarksville staff is available to help as well. Call us at 800-530-2487 or email info@visitclarksvilletn.com.
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On Dec. 1, 1955, the act of one courageous woman sparked a movement that brought change not only to the city of Montgomery, Alabama but throughout the United States.

Rosa Parks, often referred to as the mother of the Civil Rights Movement, refused to relinquish her seat on a Montgomery city bus to a white male. Her subsequent arrest at the intersection of Montgomery and Lee streets in downtown Montgomery led to the 382-day boycott of Montgomery buses by African Americans.

Today, Troy University’s Rosa Parks Museum stands on the spot of Mrs. Parks’ arrest. Located on the University’s Montgomery Campus, the Museum opened on Dec. 1, 2000, with the mission of preserving and interpreting the story and lasting legacy of Mrs. Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott for future generations.

Constructed on the site of the former Empire Theater, the Museum has become a major landmark in the revitalization of downtown Montgomery and features a permanent exhibit chronicling Rosa Parks’ arrest and the subsequent bus boycott, a children’s wing called the “Cleveland Avenue Time Machine,” an exhibit hall, archives, an auditorium, a gift shop and a conference room.

Visitors enter the museum through the Charles Cahn Baum and Family Atrium, dedicated April 22, 2017, which is home to an information desk, a bust and display of various illustrations of Mrs. Parks, and a life-size bronze sculpture of Mrs. Parks seated on a bus bench created for the Museum by renowned sculptor Erik Blome of Chicago.

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Learn about the woman who became a movement.

More than sixty years ago, Rosa Parks’ simple act of bravery became an important symbol of the Civil Rights Movement. Today, you can step back in time and experience the sights and sounds that forever changed our country. Troy University’s Rosa Parks Museum is a state-of-the-art, interactive facility that honors one of America’s most beloved women. Visit today and learn all about this freedom warrior firsthand.

For ticket information and hours, visit troy.edu/rosaparks.

© 2018 Troy University

The permanent, interpretive exhibit features six distinct areas that tell the story of Rosa Parks’ arrest and the accomplishments of the men and women involved in the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. Artifacts include a restored 1955 station wagon, a replica of the public bus on which Mrs. Parks was sitting on the day of her arrest and original historic documents of that era.

Known as the “Cleveland Avenue Time Machine,” the children’s wing features a 20-minute virtual trip through time on a replica of the Cleveland Avenue bus where Mrs. Parks was arrested. Using special lighting, seven-projector video, audio and fog effects, the “Time Machine” takes visitors back in time, covering historical events through the Jim Crow Era up to the modern day Civil Rights movement.

In addition, the Museum regularly hosts traveling exhibits in its gallery, which is free to visitors during normal business hours. The traveling exhibits along with special programming such as a summer day camp for children, community forums and an annual Juneteenth celebration offer thought-provoking links between past and present human rights issues.

The museum is located at 252 Montgomery Street in Montgomery, and its hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is $5.50 for children under 12 and $7.50 for visitors 12 and up. Tours of both the Museum and the Children’s wing are $14 for adults and $10 for children. For information, contact the Museum at 334-241-8615 or visit the website at troy.edu/rosaparks.

*Exclusive school field trip pricing available. Dolly provides a FREE LUNCH to all students visiting on a weekday field trip. Plus, book at least 2 weeks in advance & receive 1 FREE student admission and 1 FREE teacher season pass with every 15 paid admissions! Visit Dollywood.com/SchoolFieldTrips or call 1-888-428-6789 to learn more.
As summer slips away, cooler temperatures and colorful foliage takes its place—a sure sign of autumn splendor! A train ride is a unique way to take in that fantastic fall color.

Located in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, Potomac Eagle Scenic Railroad is less than three hours from Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Washington, DC. Close enough for a day trip, yet far enough away to escape the hustle and bustle of the every day.

Your journey begins at Wappocomo Station, situated next to a charming homestead and a sprawling view of the mountains. Enjoy the sounds of vintage diesels as they lead you through beautiful pastures and farms dating back to the 1700s. As you wind along the South Branch of the Potomac River, you’ll enter a visually striking gorge known as the Trough. One of the most scenic spots along the South Branch, the Trough is home to American bald eagles.

Our Trough Trip, a three-hour round-trip to see bald eagles, is offered every day, October 1-28. On weekdays, departures are 1pm. On Saturdays and Sundays, two departures are offered: 10am and 2:30pm, except Sunday.
October 28, the last day of the season, there is one departure, at 1pm.

Two classes of service are offered on our excursions: Club and Coach. Club includes a 3-course meal, complemented with Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad china. These beautifully restored lounge cars offer loveseats with tables and are climate-controlled. Reservations required; entree chosen at time of reservation.

Coach is great for families or groups, as an affordable (yet still comfortable) seating option on the train. These 1920s era coaches have cushioned, high-back, bench-style seats, with a reversible back so passengers can face in either direction the train is moving. Windows may be opened.

These October Trough Trips book quickly so be sure to make reservations soon. Reservations can be made online at potomaceagle.info/buytickets or by calling 304-424-0736.
New Orleans is a city of allure. Generations have been enchanted by its deep culture and rich traditions. The character of the historic French Quarter, the noble Faubourg Tremé, and the breathtaking Garden District make walking tours a popular and affordable way for visitors to enjoy the city. French Quarter Phantoms is New Orleans’ premier walking tour company. Offering a variety of unique, entertaining, and historical tour options year round; making French Quarter Phantoms the perfect choice for any traveler.

French Quarter Phantoms’ Master Storytellers have been described as, “the strangest bunch of real historians you’ll ever have the pleasure of spending time with!” What is important to you is important to us: quality content and reliable, fun, education. This guides us with a passion for making sure our guests have a great experience. Our tours are highly recommended by members of the New Orleans Concierge Association; our Ghost and Vampire tour was voted New Orleans’ #1 Haunted Tour 2009 – 2017 and honored to be ranked with TripAdvisor as one of the Top Ten Ghost Tours in the World! https://www.tripadvisor.com/TripNews-a_ctr.ghosttoursEN

French Quarter Phantoms’ Ghost & Vampire Tour is our signature tour. Haunted by phantoms and the looming mysteries of past tragedies, the French Quarter is a place where the spirits of the dead find that death is only the beginning. Master Storytellers guide groups through darkened streets for a tour filled with the horror and frights that only history could provide. This tour is filled with blood drinking vampires and the specters of the past like Delphine LaLaurie. We’ll thrill guests with hearty laughs and a chill up their spine, without a pinch like at a haunted house. Appropriate for all ages, this is our most popular tour.

St. Louis Cemetery #1, eerily majestic even during the daytime, is the oldest active cemetery in the New Orleans. Continued to be used today, it is the final resting places of historical figures like Homer Plessey and will be the resting place of actors like Nicholas Cage. Guests will enjoy tales of Voodoo as we visit the final resting place of the infamous Queen of Voodoo, Marie Laveau; and will be spell-bound by the unique funeral traditions, from the process of interring the body to our unique jazz funerals. This above ground cemetery also

In The French Quarter, Every BODY has a Story to Tell!

By Aaron Lirette
provides excellent photo opportunities!

Tour Tremé takes you into the heart and soul of a real New Orleans neighborhood. Our third oldest neighborhood, Tremé is the first location of a permanent neighborhood of African Americans in the United States. Rich in African-American history and Mardi Gras Indian traditions, many great Jazz musicians have called Tremé home. Considered one of the birthplaces of the Civil Rights Movement, it was a meeting place for important figures like Mahalia Jackson and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The Faubourg Tremé is no joke and our Master Storytellers will lead guests through tribulations like slavery, civil rights, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The Music of New Orleans Tour is for those that just can't help, but get let foot loose! Come join us as we stroll through the birthplace of jazz, Congo Square and Faubourg Tremé. Here guests will listen and learn to the songs and figures that makes New Orleans the "birthplace of American music". It's almost like the spirits of Louis Armstrong, Fats Domino, and Ernie K. Doe speak for themselves through their songs. And, with our Master Storytellers guests will learn about these curious figures and their roots in the Big Easy.

Our Garden District tour is like walking through a time capsule. Beautiful southern mansions, ranging from Greek Revival to Queen Anne, dominate this old historic neighborhood. Hear the fascinating history of the “American Sector” and the divide between the Catholic Creoles their new Protestant American neighbors. Celebrities homes such as Sandra Bullock, John Goodman, Archie Manning, and Anne Rice are just some of the homes you will see on this tour. This tour includes a walk into Lafayette Cemetery featured in the Anne Rice books and the Originals television series.

Finally, for ADULTS ONLY, there is the Saints and Sinners tour. Guests will be splitting their sides as our Master Storytellers lambast them with the seedier stories of French Quarter debacles. Whether it’s talking drinks like the Sazerac or Hurricane, the red lights of Storyville, or the true Saint-To-Be Henriette DeLille; the Saints and Sinners tour is for those who like to live on the wild side.

Owner Cindi Richardson works with you to create the perfect event for your group; custom tour times and starting locations are available, as well as group discounts! Whether touring St. Louis Cemetery #1, enjoying tales of Saints & Sinners, taking an inside look at the Faubourg Tremé or relishing a Ghost and Vampire Tour – Every BODY has a story to tell! www.FrenchQuarterPhantoms.com
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