

AASA
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

School Administrator

JANUARY 2014

ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND COMMENTARY FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS



Instructional Rounds

*Group observations of teaching practice,
then diagnosis and plans of action*

PLUS

Control of Board Meetings, p10

Monitoring Off-Campus Behavior, p9

Picking Athletics Over Academics, pp14

Profile: David Pennington, p51



aasaconnect

www.aasaconnect.com

Where School Leaders

Link to Success

AASA is a membership organization devoted to you.

AASA, The School Superintendents Association, advocates for the highest quality public education for all students, and develops and supports school system leaders.

AASA Connect provides a platform for two-way dialogue specific to superintendents.

Rely on AASA Connect to keep you up to date with school system leaders at all levels, experts, resources and best practices.

NOT A MEMBER YET?

Most districts will pay for your AASA membership as part of your employment contract.



Join today and get connected!



Resource Library

One-of-a-kind digital resources specific to superintendents

The Ethical Educator

Share a scenario and get expert opinions

Discussion Forums

Swap solutions and resources with educators nationwide

“Connect with Dan”

Featuring AASA Executive Director Dan Domenech

Strategies & Stories

Success stories and a shared knowledge base

And More!

Check out this invaluable information you can find on AASACConnect.com.
Join AASA online at www.aasa.org/membership. For assistance, contact
AASA Member Services at 703.528.0700 or www.aasa.org/join.aspx.



Build a School Change Lives

This winter, some 50 volunteers will depart for a Lifetouch Memory Mission[®] to the Dominican Republic, giving hope to children they have never met. The volunteers, including superintendents, principals and PTA members, will build a school for the children of this impoverished, mountaintop village. Since 2000, Lifetouch employees have traveled to destinations around the world to spend a week in intensive volunteer service.

Learn more at lifetouchmemorymission.com.





SchoolAdministrator

JANUARY 2014 • NUMBER 1 VOL. 71

20 Targeting Improvement: Instructional Rounds

BY COLLEEN GILLARD

Not unlike physician training, this model emphasizes collegial observations of the teacher in the classroom, followed by diagnosis and a plan of action.

24 Facilitators, networks, budgets

26 Getting the Most Out of Rounds

BY THOMAS FOWLER-FINN

The author works with schools on an improvement process based on group observations targeting classroom practice, not the person.

28 Rachel Goldberg: Speaking a common language

30 Differentiating rounds from walk-throughs

33 Additional resources

34 Teachers at the Center of Improvement

BY LEE TEITEL

School-based instructional rounds in a Connecticut district engage teachers as classroom observers, leading to adjustments in their instructional practices.

36 William Silver: Nesting district, school needs

38 Inside rounds: A joint growth exercise

40 Beyond Rounds To Build Supervisory Skills

BY STEVE S. MYERS AND DAVID L. GOEHNER

Superintendents in an intermediate agency in Washington formed an instructional rounds network to improve their management direction of principals.

42 Twin limelights for one county



School Administrator (ISSN 0036-6439) is a benefit of membership in AASA, The School Superintendents Association, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Telephone: 703-875-0772. Fax: 703-841-1543. Annual membership dues in the association are \$436 (active members), of which \$110 covers a subscription to *School Administrator*. *School Administrator* is published monthly except July. Send address changes to AASA, Membership Division, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Copyright 2014 by AASA. All rights reserved. Printed in USA.

“Great leaders know what comes next and are prepared to act accordingly. Never thinking of the checker piece in their hand but the move to come.” PAGE 7

FRONTLINE

6 STARTING POINT

Our monthly analysis of an ethical dilemma proves to be a popular read.

6 STATE OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Doctoral Holders

Trend lines about those earning Ed.D. or Ph.D. degrees.

7 BEST OF THE BLOGS

Five quotable excerpts from top superintendent blogs.



8 ETHICAL EDUCATOR

The Flexing of a Benefactor's Strong Arm

A prominent community member contributes significantly to the district, then seeks special treatment. Our panel lends the analysis.

9 LEGAL BRIEF

Disciplining Students for Off-Campus Conduct

BY DAVID B. RUBIN

Well-intentioned efforts to ensure safe behavior may exceed the school district's authority.

10 BOARD-SAVVY SUPERINTENDENT

Who Owns the Floor at Board Meetings?

BY NICHOLAS D. CARUSO JR.

Managing the public comment period is a matter of proper control.

11 FOCUS: COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Partnering Carefully With Advocacy Groups

BY TOM SALTER

Be mindful of that controversial plank lurking in the platform of a potential outside partner.

12 FOCUS: FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Energy Efficiencies in a Building Project

BY MARK HANSON

A few strategies for thinking green when a school district considers renovations or construction.

14 MY VIEW

Poor Sports

BY MICHAEL MUGITS

Where's the discussion of priorities when interscholastic sports draw a pass from the same financial threats that pinch academics?

16 MY VIEW

I Want Google and Apple Clamoring for Our Students

BY JAN E. CHRISTENSEN

A Silicon Valley superintendent's lament about the opportunity gap facing her students for lack of equitable support of public schooling.

52



RESOURCES

44 BOOK REVIEWS

► *The Infrastructure of Accountability: Data Use and the Transformation of American Education*

► *The Muses Go to School: Conversations About the Necessity of Arts in Education*

Also, AASA member Steve Jenkins on co-writing *Conflicts in Culture: Strategies to Understand and Resolve the Issues* (R&L Education, 2013)

45 ABSTRACT

Executive Leadership Teams

A recent doctoral study examined superintendents' inner circles.

AASA INSIGHT

47 PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Outside Partners in Tough Times

BY AMY F. SICHEL

Experiences of the author's district in cultivating financial support, sans commercial content.

48 EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Encouraging Signs at Our Women's Forum

BY DANIEL A. DOMENECH

Positive vibes in the air as women make strides in the ranks of education leadership.

50 PEOPLE WATCH

A monthly rundown of AASA members making career moves nationwide.

51 PROFILE

David K. Pennington

BY LIZ GRIFFIN

AASA's incoming president brings quiet, analytical leadership to the helm in Ponca City, Okla.

PLUS

4 READER REPLY

52 LEADERSHIP LITE

In Richard Colvin's article "Undone by the Media" (September 2013) about the problems over implementing reform in the San Diego Unified School District, I noted a reference to the district's communications office as "**REACTIVE RATHER THAN PRO-ACTIVE.**"

Further, the superintendent was reported to be "line-editing all of his own press releases." Colvin reported that the district had an "**INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE A COHERENT REFORM MESSAGE**" that "plagued ... the superintendent ... throughout the seven years of his superintendency." Early in the article, reference was made to "major foundations who invested tens of millions of dollars to support the efforts of the ... superintendent."

It appears from this account that the staff thought local news media would carry the message the school district was pushing and that **THE SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD WERE SHOCKED WHEN THAT DID NOT HAPPEN.** It appears the district leadership and the board did not initiate an aggressive communication program.

ALBERT E. HOLLIDAY
RETIRED, EDITOR,
JOURNAL OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY RELATIONS,
CAMP HILL, PA.

Read an extra letter this month at www.aasa.org/SAletters.aspx.

A Complex Web

Torch Lytle and Harris Sokoloff really capture the competing demands and expectations of the job of superintendent in their article "A Complex Web" (September 2013). The tone of the article was compelling, in that it sounded as if it was written by someone who has actually lived it and not simply studied it.

There are two other dimensions I would humbly add to their analysis:

(1) working with the emotional content of this enterprise — after all, in

the end we are talking about children, and for most parents, their kids are their most precious jewels and the embodiment of their own dreams; and

(2) dealing with the occasional crisis that comes out of nowhere, such as when we discovered the two alleged Boston Marathon bombers were recent graduates of Cambridge Rindge & Latin School.

Perhaps other jobs carry the complexity that the authors describe, but few of them get carried out in such a public setting as the school superintendency.

JEFFREY M. YOUNG
SUPERINTENDENT,
CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Wisdom on 'Dysfunction'

While thumbing through my copy of the October issue, I spotted in the title of an article the two most common words in many of our vocabularies lately: organizational dysfunction. Naturally, I was drawn to read it and was reassured that we have leaders who care to share.

Kimberly Moritz, author of a My View column ("How Do You Uncover Organizational Dysfunction?"), particularly impressed me with her positivism. She wrote: "... there are far more dedicated, well-meaning, quiet and outstanding employees in any school organization than there are bad performers." She went on to describe the effect that mentors, such as SUNY College at Fredonia's Janeil Rey, had on her professional development as a fledgling educator. Quite frankly, in all her references, Moritz shows what makes an education leader great: She is reflective and involved.

Anybody who's been in the field a few years has to readily recognize the wisdom in her words. Those who are newer can avoid a few problems by just following her advice and example.

DONALD A. OGILVIE
DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT,
ERIE 1 BOCES,
WEST SENECA, N.Y.

LETTERS SHOULD be addressed to: Editor, *School Administrator*, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Fax: 703-841-1543 E-mail: magazine@aasa.org

EDITOR
Jay P. Goldman

MANAGING EDITOR
Liz Griffin

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Katie Regan

DESIGN/PRODUCTION
Melissa Schmidt, AURAS Design

PRINTING
Lifetouch National School Studios Inc.

HOW TO REACH US

EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS: Query letters and articles relating to school system leadership are welcome. Author guidelines and an editorial calendar are available on the magazine's website.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR
1615 Duke St.

Alexandria, VA 22314

Tel: 703-875-0772; Fax: 703-841-1543

E-mail: magazine@aasa.org

Website: www.aasa.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Letters may be submitted to the editor for consideration. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: AASA members can report changes of address by phone (703-875-0748), fax (703-841-1543) or e-mail (info@aasa.org).

BACK ISSUES: Single copies are \$10 for AASA members and \$11 for nonmembers. Bulk rates are available. Orders must be prepaid. To order, call 703-875-0772.

ARTICLE ARCHIVES: Past issues can be accessed at www.aasa.org. Articles are also available through these document services: EBSCO (www.epnet.com), ProQuest (www.proquest.com) or Cengage (www.gale.com). Microfilm and microfiche are available from ProQuest (800-521-0600).

REPRINTS AND PERMISSIONS: Quality reprints of articles can be ordered in quantities of 25 or more. To order, call 703-875-0772. Requests for permission to reproduce or distribute copies of an article for academic or professional purposes should be submitted in writing to the editor.

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES: For media kits and advertising information, contact Brett Goldfine, commercial sales manager, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, Calif. Tel: 805-410-7143.

The views expressed in School Administrator do not necessarily reflect AASA policy nor does acceptance of advertising imply AASA endorsement.

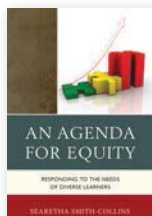


MISSION STATEMENT: AASA, The School Superintendents Association, advocates for the highest quality public education for all students, and develops and supports school system leaders.

Six New AASA Books for School Leaders

Check out these titles!

The American Association of School Administrators regularly co-publishes new books on critical topics in education for superintendents, principals, other school administrators, and school board members.



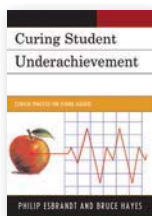
An Agenda for Equity Responding to the Needs of Diverse Learners

Searetha Smith-Collins
Rowman & Littlefield Education

Using Response to Intervention as an innovative model, *An Agenda for Equity* analyzes the ability of recent educational

reforms for increasing enduring, equitable effectiveness and improving conditions for teaching and learning for both teachers and students.

\$70.00 hardback • \$25.95 paperback • \$24.99 eBook



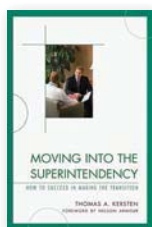
Curing Student Underachievement Clinical Practice for School Leaders

Philip Esbrandt and Bruce Hayes
Rowman & Littlefield

This book introduces practicing leaders and leaders-in-training to the protocols of clinical practice. The authors find that clinical

practice identifies the root causes rather than the symptoms of problems, focusing valuable time, resource, and energy on prescriptions with greater promise for improved performance health. The concepts of diagnosis, prescription, and prognosis establish a foundation for improved planning and problem-solving.

\$75.00 hardback • \$36.95 paperback • \$35.99 eBook



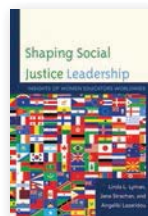
Moving into the Superintendency How to Succeed in Making the Transition

Thomas A. Kersten
Rowman & Littlefield Education

This book provides novice superintendents with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in their new roles. Thomas Kersten, a highly experienced school administrator,

shares the most practical and useful strategies that will help new superintendents optimize their early successes.

\$22.95 paperback • \$21.99 eBook

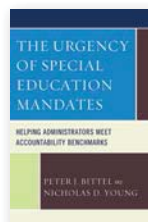


Shaping Social Justice Leadership Insights of Women Educators Worldwide

Linda L. Lyman; Jane Strachan and Angeliki Lazaridou
Rowman & Littlefield Education

This book contains evocative portraits of twenty-three women educators and leaders from around the world whose actions are shaping social justice leadership. Each carefully crafted portrait highlights an aspect of a chapter theme, followed by practical insights. The chapters develop a range of cultural comparisons, illustrate imperatives for social justice leadership, and examine values, skills, resilience, leadership pathways and actions.

\$90.00 hardback • \$34.95 paperback • \$33.99 eBook



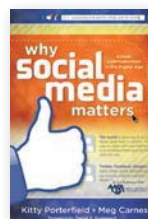
The Urgency of Special Education Mandates

Helping Administrators Meet Accountability Benchmarks

Peter J. Bittel and Nicholas P. Young
Rowman & Littlefield Education

Seasoned educators share their expertise in a wide range of important subjects that collectively promote an understanding of how to transform special education programs and service delivery in public school settings. The authors cover a variety of useful topics in special education, ranging from finances, monitoring the assignment of paraprofessionals, and transportation, to legal considerations and methods of promoting parent engagement.

\$45.00 hardback • \$23.95 paperback • \$22.99 eBook



Why Social Media Matters School Communication in the Digital Age

Kitty Porterfield & Meg Carnes
Solution Tree

Here's everything you need to know to begin building a social media platform that nurtures relationships and garners support from your key stakeholders, including step-by-step instructions on how to use three of today's most popular tools for social media: Twitter, Facebook, and blogs. Written by two school communication veterans, this book focuses on the why as well as the how of effective school-community communication in today's world.

\$19.95 paper

AASA co-published books can be ordered directly from the publishers lists. For more about AASA co-published titles, visit www.aasa.org/books.aspx.

STARTING POINT

The Dissection of Dilemmas

ONE OF THE MORE gratifying findings to emerge from our magazine's comprehensive readership study last summer was the notice being given to several new sections introduced only a year earlier.

Readers identified Ethical Educator as one of their favorite monthly columns. It provides a window into some of the thorniest dilemmas confronting K-12 education leaders. Dilemmas, by definition, defy easy answers, and the scenarios that we present each month — all drawn from real circumstances somewhere — challenge even the savviest, most principled of school leaders.

From the start of the ethics column, we've benefited from an outstanding panel of commentators, each of whom offers his or her analysis of each case and recommended action. Rarely do the views of all four

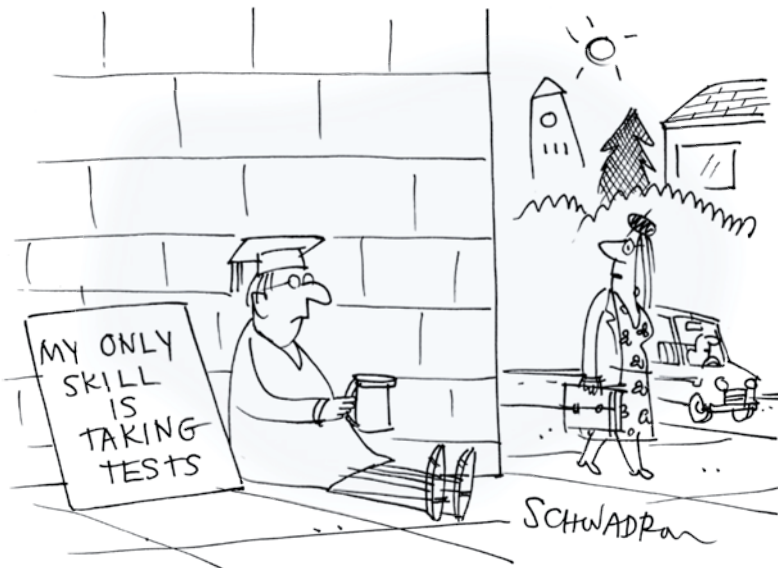
neatly align in Ethical Educator, and the unabridged versions appearing on the magazine's website further define the often-divided views.

You can find identifications for the lineup of ethics panelists at the bottom of each column. With this issue, we welcome aboard a former superintendent, Mark Hyatt, now president and CEO of the Character Education Partnership, and thank our departing panelist, Karl Hertz, a former president of AASA, for his year-long contributions.

We're always looking to add to our schedule of scenarios, so I'd welcome hearing from readers with suggested cases.

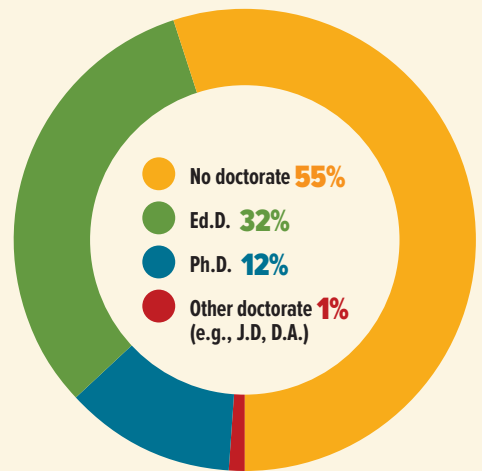


JAY P. GOLDMAN
 EDITOR, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR
 VOICE: 703-875-0745
 E-MAIL: JGOLDMAN@AASA.ORG



STATE OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Doctoral Holders



After years of gains in the number of superintendents holding doctoral degrees, the most recent AASA study of superintendents nationwide showed no increase during the past decade.

Roughly 45 percent of superintendents today hold either an Ed.D. or a Ph.D. By comparison, in 1971, about 29 percent reported having earned a doctorate.

Several factors may contribute to the lack of gains. The increase in internal promotions to the superintendency has placed less emphasis on academic credentials. Also at work: Changes in academic preparation have lessened licensing requirements in some states and alternative paths allow noneducators to become superintendents.

Larger school districts are more likely to have doctoral holders at the top. Nearly 53 percent of superintendents in districts with more than 25,000 pupils reported having a doctorate, while only 14 percent of those leading districts with fewer than 300 pupils had the degree.

SOURCE OF DATA: "THE AMERICAN SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT: 2010 DECENNIAL STUDY" (2011) PUBLISHED BY ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD EDUCATION AND CO-SPONSORED BY AASA AND PEARSON. ANALYSIS BY THEODORE J. KOWALSKI, STUDY LEAD AUTHOR AND PROFESSOR OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON.



“Today I attended a conference on education law. It was one of those ‘Here are all the new laws schools have to comply with’ sessions, filled with new ‘Thou shalt ...’ and ‘Do not even think about ...’ statements, designed to help school administrators navigate the evermore complicated maze of requirements, restrictions and other directives that fill our days with uncertainty. ...”

From “School Law” by Bob Lupo (superintendent, Norridge, Ill.) on his blog, *The Rebel Yell*

“I can think of twenty different ways to lead the state education department differently, and I need to stop keeping quiet about that. ... I am going to create a plan to be used if the opportunity presents itself. No more standing by!”

From “Game On!” by Christopher R. Brown (superintendent, Camillus, N.Y.) on his blog, *Notes From the Superintendent*

“Great leaders know what comes next and they are prepared to act accordingly. Never thinking of the checker piece in their hand but the move to come.”

From “Leadership Lessons From Gettysburg” by David Gentile (superintendent, Millville, N.J.) on his blog, *A Supts Blog; Where The Road to Excellence is Always Under Construction*

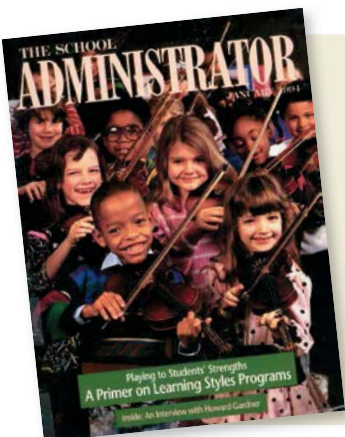
Read the full postings of these and other members’ blogs at www.aasa.org/SAblogs.aspx.

“Disabilities often mean ‘doing things differently.’ Having recently been temporarily ‘not able’ after a fall from a ladder, I suddenly found myself appreciating the handicap accessibility buttons on doors and the ability to drive with one half of my body. ...”

From “National Disability Employer’s Awareness Month” by Jeanne Collins (superintendent, Burlington, Vt.) on her *BSD Superintendent’s Blog*

“There haven’t been any snow days since I started tweeting, but you can bet it will be one of the first places you will be able to find out about that.”

From “Information at Your Fingertips: 140 Characters or Less” by David McGehee (superintendent, Lee’s Summit, Mo.) on his *Superintendent’s Blog*



FLASHBACK JANUARY 1994

The magazine’s cover story provided a primer on learning styles programs to address student preferences. The coverage included a Q&A with Howard Gardner of Harvard on multiple intelligences and a feature about an Indianapolis school that adopted Gardner’s seven areas of intelligence. ... AASA President Robert Fox’s column was titled “Violence Threatens the Learning Environment.” ... A pair of letters to the editor addressed the magazine’s coverage (September 1993) of the relevancy of regional accrediting bodies. ... Advertisers included the Center for Applications of Psychological Type and Silent Witness Enterprises, maker of a security camera. ... The People page announced job moves by Libia Gil and Art Stellar. ... Education Secretary Terrel Bell contributed the back-page Viewpoint.

The Flexing of a Benefactor's Strong Arm

SCENARIO: A prominent community member who contributes significantly to the local education foundation is dropping broad hints to the superintendent that she wants her daughter admitted next year to the school district's selective high school, which has entrance criteria. Occasionally, parents have requested favors during meetings, and the superintendent has obliged, but these did not involve apparent attempts to strong-arm. Should you give additional consideration to the daughter's application?



MARK HYATT: During my tenure leading a highly selective Colorado charter school, we had a waiting list of over

4,000. Competition was intense, so leadership put very strict rules and procedures in place for weighing admissions. But that didn't keep some parents from offering me money, ski trips, sports tickets — in exchange for admitting their child ahead of others. On the opposite end of the spectrum, others opted for intimidation, threatening lawsuits if Junior was rejected.

Fortunately, the detailed policies, processes and procedures made it easy for my office to disengage from all the lobbying.

PAULA MIRK: You should not give additional consideration to the daughter's application if the only reasons for doing so are the parents' prominence and their significant contributions. With any "apparent attempt to strong-arm," a red flag is in order, and further steps should be examined very carefully, perhaps using the "front page test." If the superintendent agrees to discuss the daughter's admission and this is reported on the newspaper's front page tomorrow, how will the superintendent defend the action?

It's hard to imagine an acceptable reason for the meeting as stated, so such

a meeting should not take place. Their daughter's application should be subjected to the same process as everybody else's, and let the chips fall where they may. The superintendent might even consider appealing to the parents to understand that such a meeting could hurt their daughter's chances instead of improving them.

SHELLEY BERMAN: Admission to the district's selective high school must be based on consistent application of the entrance criteria and a fair process for selecting entrants. Allowing individuals to use their influence to purchase seats through donations would undermine the integrity of the school and the confidence of the public. It would set in motion a cascade of requests based on political influence and financial means.

If the superintendent makes it a practice to meet with interested parents, those meetings should simply be a discussion of the entrance criteria, the school's curricular program and the academic expectations of students.

Selective high schools often have a built-in bias toward students possessing the cultural capital that accompanies higher socioeconomic status. The district should track the demographics of the selective student population to determine whether it reflects the racial and socioeconomic diver-

sity of the district as a whole and make adjustments to its programs and policies to ensure diversity.

ROY DEXHEIMER: The superintendent has established a precedent of acceding to parental requests for entrance to the selective high school — a questionable practice! However, if the girl in question does meet previous standards for intervention, she does not deserve to be denied entrance because her parent is a boor. Admit her, but create a paper trail to the parent indicating that she has been admitted solely for her qualifications and not because of his intervention.

Each month, *School Administrator* draws on actual circumstances to raise an ethical decision-making dilemma in K-12 education. Our distinguished panelists provide their own resolutions to each dilemma. Do you have a suggestion for a dilemma to be considered? Send it to: magazine@aasa.org.

The Ethical Educator panel consists of **SHELLEY BERMAN**, superintendent, Eugene, Ore.; **ROY DEXHEIMER**, retired BOCES superintendent and former college vice president, Ithaca, N.Y.; **MARK HYATT**, president, Character Education Partnership, Washington, D.C.; and **PAULA MIRK**, director of education, Institute for Global Ethics, Rockport, Maine.

See the panelists' full analyses of this case and read the AASA Code of Ethics at www.aasa.org/SAethics.aspx.

Disciplining Students for Off-Campus Conduct

HOW FAR CAN school officials go to discipline students for off-campus behavior? In New Jersey, where I practice, the issue arises most often in the context of 24/7 “good conduct” policies, harassment under our state’s beefed-up anti-bullying legislation or online bashing of school staff.

A recent case from our state appeals court shows how well-intentioned efforts to keep students healthy and safe can run aground when they exceed limitations imposed by law.

The Ramapo Indian Hills Regional High School District in northern New Jersey required students involved in sports, clubs and other extracurricular activities to obey a code of good behavior at all times, on and off campus, and to refrain from any unlawful conduct outside of school.

On a legal challenge brought by a student and her family, the court found the policy exceeded the district’s authority because state regulations limited consequences for off-campus behavior to actions that “materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school.” A desire to curb at-risk behavior or to inculcate standards of decency in students’ personal lives outside of school wasn’t enough to save the policy.

Disruptive Behavior

New Jersey is not alone in curbing school authorities’ jurisdiction over students’ off-campus conduct. Most states require some sort of nexus, a demonstrable effect on good order at school, and do not allow school districts to enforce their own standards of morality or wholesomeness on students’ personal lives after hours.

This is especially so when the behavior does not involve conduct per se but disruptive or offensive communications potentially protected by the First Amendment. In its landmark 1969 decision *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected school officials’ attempts to discipline students for wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam War, recognizing that “[s]tudents in school, as well as out of school, are ‘persons’ under our Constitution. They are possessed of fundamental rights which the State must respect, just as they themselves must respect their obligations to the State.”

When students express their opinions on matters of general public concern, even when those opinions may be controversial or hurtful to others, school officials may impose discipline only when there is a palpable threat of substantial disruption to the orderly operation of the school. As later court decisions have confirmed, that goes double for off-campus expressive activity that filters its way back into the school environment.

Public Humiliation

A recurring scenario in our federal case law lately is the student who creates a phony page in the name of the school principal on a social networking site such as Facebook, complete with an unflattering or profanity-laced “profile” calculated to achieve maximum humiliation for the unfortunate staff member involved.

Because this activity occurs off campus, does not typically involve the use of any school technology and, though outrageously disrespectful, does not involve any threat of violence or disruption to school operations, it is difficult to rein in without violating students’ First Amendment rights as recognized by many of our federal courts. Staff members often are left to pursue claims on their own under the law of defamation or invasion of privacy.

For bad behavior not involving free expression protected by our federal courts’ interpretation of the First Amendment, determining whether discipline for an off-campus incident conforms to state “nexus” restrictions will continue to entail a subjective case-by-case analysis. But states have the prerogative to loosen those restrictions tomorrow if moved to do so, which begs the underlying policy question: What is the proper role of school districts in students’ lives?

To some, it’s simply to teach the three Rs. For others, public schools have become, by design or default, a social service agency responsible for feeding, babysitting, counseling, medicating and surrogate parenting our children. How much schools should “own” off-campus behavior must be considered against the backdrop of this larger debate, and school administrators, as stakeholders in this discussion, should press state legislatures and regulatory agencies to adopt guidelines that reflect the value judgments of the local community.

“A recurring scenario in our federal case law lately is the student who creates **A PHONY PAGE IN THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL** on a social networking site such as Facebook, complete with an unflattering or profanity-laced ‘profile’ ... ”



DAVID RUBIN is an attorney practicing education law in Metuchen, N.J. E-mail: rubinlaw@att.net. Twitter: @dbresqj

“You certainly can expect staff NOT TO COMMUNICATE WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC during the school day unless it is work-related, but after hours a staff member is out of your jurisdiction.”



NICK CARUSO is senior staff associate for field service and coordinator of technology with the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education in Wethersfield, Conn. E-mail: ncaruso@cabe.org. Twitter: @gibsonjunkie

Who Owns the Floor at Board Meetings?

DURING THE PUBLIC COMMENT period of a school board meeting, a district employee, concerned with community activism against a building proposal, said she believed the anti-referendum momentum was fueled by racism. An audience member (spouse of a board member) who was part of the anti-referendum movement shouted out, calling the teacher an obscenity.

Immediately afterwards, the superintendent sent a letter to the offending member of the public requesting she refrain from using coarse language, that she apologize to the staff member and that she no longer would be allowed to address any school district employee except through the superintendent's office. Failure to comply could lead to a ban from future school board meetings.

The anti-referendum group immediately responded with a statement requesting the staff member be held accountable for “insulting” community members.

Banning Offenders

This story raises several questions. First, the superintendent took it upon herself to discipline the offending person and offer an ultimatum. Exacerbating this, the individual in question was a board member's spouse. The superintendent also threatened to ban the person from future board meetings and school grounds and ordered her not to approach staff members.

A final issue was whether the staff member had the right to comment during a public meeting.

While statutes differ among states, I don't know of any place where the superintendent has the authority to send such a letter. The board of education is the corporate entity holding a legal meeting in its governance role. The superintendent should discuss this issue with the board chair and remind him of the obligation to control the meeting. In many states, a person who disrupts a public meeting can be forcibly removed (via police, preferably). Of course, I would recommend extreme action only in an unusual case. Often, a judicious use of the gavel by the chair is enough to stop this in its tracks.

The superintendent enforces board policy. She should review board policies and bylaws

regarding public participation and meeting norms to see whether those policies are enforced fairly. If not, she needs to ask the board chair to make sure he knows the laws and how to best enforce them at meetings. The chair is responsible for meeting control, not the superintendent.

In my state, you cannot permanently ban someone from a public meeting or a public place. Most states presumably have similar rules. You have the right to expect certain behaviors of public visitors at a school or meeting but must treat all equally. You can restrict access to school property only as much as you would any other citizen. Attendees can be removed if they become disruptive, but doing so may cause more serious problems. I suspect if the errant member of the public had been admonished by the chair, it would have sufficed.

Expectations for public access to schools should be incorporated in your policy manual. I also recommend these policies be run past the board attorney before enacting anything. Some states' laws may preclude an action of this sort.

Legally Entitled

I also can't see where you can keep a citizen from approaching a staff member. You certainly can expect staff not to communicate with members of the public during the school day unless it is work-related, but after hours a staff member is out of your jurisdiction. If a person harassed them outside of work, they would have legal rights to explore on their own behalf.

The superintendent did raise the question of the teacher's public comment, including the comments about racism in the community, with the board attorney and was told the teacher had not violated any policies through her speech and no discipline was warranted.

Lastly, in this case it appears the board member whose wife made the improper outburst did not get involved personally in the situation. If he had, I'd strongly recommend the superintendent work with the board chair to ensure the board member did not improperly interfere with your work. The superintendent's employer is the board (not the chair) and issues involving your working conditions are a board problem.

Partnering Carefully With Advocacy Groups



AS A SUPERINTENDENT, you undoubtedly have many well-meaning individuals enter your office with a cure. These advocates are fighting a disorder that may be an educational ill,

such as literacy, or a societal malady, such as childhood obesity.

As a rule, advocates with organized groups have their hearts in the right place. They are passionate and focused on a worthy cause. Many feel as if they are on a holy mission, if not ordained by God, certainly held high by what they see as basic human rights. Often, they don't understand how anyone sound of mind could disagree with their point of view. If you refuse their help, you could make an enemy that might work against you when you need public support. If you accept their help without setting boundaries, you could end up wrestling public-opinion alligators in the deep end of the pond.

Some requests are no-brainers. Warriors against cancer and heart disease and those fighting to increase child and adult literacy and graduation rates are welcome.

But what about those advocacy groups that might have planks in their platforms that are controversial? Do you allow a group that stands against emotional and sexual maltreatment of children but also views corporal punishment (a legal recourse in some states to correct bad behavior) as a form of abuse into your schools? Do you partner with a nonprofit organization that feeds the hungry but also publicly supports women's rights to abortions? What do you do when a group you *mostly* agree with comes knocking on your school district's door for an endorsement or collaboration?

Respecting Boundaries

Joe Krumm, who directs community and government relations for the North Clackamas School District in Milwaukie, Ore., works with various organizations that want to help kids while promoting their own agendas. He says it is possible to work with groups that support the public schools without "moving into areas that go over the line or make our parents or staff nervous."

Krumm recalls a time when faith-based organizations used their work at schools to promote their beliefs in exchange for providing worthwhile services. His district found ways to work together without crossing the line of church and state. One situation began with community supporters cleaning up campuses on the weekends, then moved to a discussion about the problem of some children lacking proper nutrition on weekends.

This led to the creation of a program called Backpack Buddies where churches and other organizations provide students with food for over the weekend. The program operates in 20 schools and provides food to about 800 children to carry home in their backpacks every Friday. The students and the community recognize who the sponsors are, but no proselytizing takes place.

"Our children get what they need, and the churches fulfill at least part of their missions," Krumm says.

He also works with political advocacy groups that sometimes press beyond what school districts are comfortable promoting. "We have to make sure that the groups we work with are first interested in helping our schools and our students and that our association with the group won't put us in the hot seat because of their actions or stances that fall outside of our policies and our work," Krumm says.

Fringe Interests

In the Salem-Keizer Public Schools in Salem, Ore., Jay Remy, the director of communications and community relations, has collaborated with community-based organizations that are not in complete harmony with the district. Located in the state capital, Salem-Keizer fields requests from groups seeking the district's endorsement for education causes being considered in the Oregon legislature.

"We have national, state and local groups we work with where we are not 100 percent in alignment," says Remy. "We have to consider their requests issue by issue."

Some groups promoting something on the fringe of education seek a partnership with the district, which poses a challenge.

"We can't get too far afield on issues that are not directly related to K-12," he adds. "It is important to have partnerships where both sides win. It is tricky to walk the line, but you have to set the expectations before a project so no one is disappointed. I don't want to discourage people from working with outside organizations, but you have to protect the interests of your district."

When working with advocacy groups, the key is to be open and honest about your concerns. Explain not only the issues but the reasons behind them. All sides should understand the boundaries. The "why" is as important as the "what." If those on the other side of the table understand the reasons for your concerns, they are less likely to cross the line, keeping you both out of the deep end of the pond.

TOM SALTER is senior communication officer in the Montgomery Public Schools in Montgomery, Ala. E-mail: Tom.Salter@mps.k12.al.us. Twitter: @N34976

Energy Efficiencies in a Building Project



WHEN SCHOOL DISTRICTS consider a major renovation or new construction project, the project team often is focused on the functional needs and desired aesthetics. It also

should be looking for ways to maximize energy efficiency and achieve cost savings.

Consider the following strategies to build energy efficiency into your project and save money.

► **Use energy modeling during the design stages.** During design, the

project team must consider variables such as the building's orientation and form; insulation in the roof, walls and foundation; windows, daylighting and lighting; and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems, including the control system. These are the building blocks that will help determine future energy performance.

Energy modeling uses computer simulations to estimate the energy costs of a building over time. Incorporating the information from the modeling into the design process helps the school district and its design team better understand how energy-efficiency design features

can be incorporated and how much energy savings might be realized. Energy modeling can guide decisions in the planning and design phases for both remodeling and new construction projects.

Energy modeling provides district administrators and maintenance/facility directors with useful information they can present to key stakeholders during planning and design. Modeling also is useful after construction to determine if the facility's actual performance is meeting or exceeding the original expectations.

In the construction of River Crest Elementary School in Hudson, Wis., and Northland Pines High School in



LEADERSHIP *in motion*

AASA supports superintendents with education-focused programs, services and solutions that enhance your leadership skills and transform your communities. Members receive convenient, affordable access to the diverse resources needed to move your district forward.

TO LEARN MORE AND JOIN, VISIT:
www.aasa.org/membership

AASA
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

Eagle River, Wis., energy modeling was used to inform decisions about school design and to help find ways to reduce project construction costs while delivering exceptional performance. For example, energy modeling was used to reduce the size and cost of the chiller at Northland Pines and improve lighting design. The school's energy use was monitored and compared to model estimates to verify performance. Actual energy costs have been even slightly lower than anticipated in both schools.

► **Expect energy efficiencies without higher construction costs.**

Many building buyers, including school districts, don't ask their design and construction partners to provide high-performance, green buildings at conventional cost. Perhaps it is because of the myth that green construction must cost more.

In 2008, River Crest Elementary was designed and built for a total project cost of \$166/square foot, which included design, site work, construction, equipment, fixtures, furnishings and LEED for Schools Gold certification for the 93,450-square foot facility. That cost was 29 percent below the average construction cost for public elementary schools built in Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota that year. A similarly sized elementary school was built at the same time in another school district just 15 miles away, yet at \$129/square foot for the construction portion only of total project cost, River Crest beat the construction cost for the comparison school, which was built using traditional construction methods, by \$30/square foot.

Districts should not hesitate to request high-performance green buildings at conventional cost. The 5,500-student Hudson School District in northwest Wisconsin enjoyed lower first (initial construction) costs and is benefiting from long-term

operational costs that are lower than anticipated.

► **Use commissioning to deliver performance.** Commissioning is a systematic quality-assurance process to ensure that building systems are constructed and operate according to the owner's design intent and operational needs. It begins at the earliest phases of design, but its results become more apparent after construction is complete. Think of a commissioning agent as a swing coach professional golfers use to keep at the top of their game. The commissioning agent helps ensure that school districts achieve the design and performance they paid for.

Although some believe commissioning is an unnecessary additional cost, experience shows that it provides great value to school districts in terms of ongoing operational cost savings. For example, five months into operation, the commissioning agent for Northland Pines recognized that the building was not operating at peak performance. He discovered

that two of the four energy recovery units were not operating at the proper speed. Two wires were crossed at the factory; consequently, several sensors were giving inaccurate readings. The wiring was switched and the facility's performance was heightened in line with model expectations.

Green and Affordable

Large school projects are like precision race cars — custom-designed and constructed for maximum performance. And like precision race cars, they need a quality-control process to ensure the facility operates as planned and that facility managers are well-trained to operate the new or remodeled building.

At the same time, building owners need not sacrifice performance for cost. Districts should ask for energy-efficient green buildings with an affordable price tag.

MARK HANSON is director of sustainable services for Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction in Appleton, Wis. E-mail: mhanson@hoffman.net. Twitter: @HoffmanPDC

AASA Job Bulletin

Recruit Top K-12 Leaders With Online Classified Ads

The online AASA Job Bulletin offers 24-hour access to posting and viewing the hottest administrative K-12 jobs.

Use the **AASA JOB BULLETIN** to fill your vacancies today! Log on to www.aasa.org/jobs.aspx for details on how to submit an ad.

MEMBER AD RATES		
Time period	Single job posting	Plus secondary exposure via K12 Job Board Network
30 days	\$350	\$600
60 days	\$550	\$800
90 days	\$750	\$1,000



Poor Sports

LET ME PREFACE this commentary with a qualifier: I really enjoy sports, as both a participant and a spectator. I earned varsity letters in three high school sports and played collegiate soccer. My son and daughter both competed in intercollegiate athletics, as well, and one of my sisters twice was honored as the nation's top high school cross-country coach.

With that as a backdrop, let's look at the perspective of sports in our society in the final stretch of another tumultuous National Football League season and yet another school year in which school budgets have been battered by declining revenue.

Despite being a lifelong, loyal fan

of the Detroit Lions, I have to wonder about the juxtaposition of the salary of their All-Pro wide receiver, Calvin Johnson, with the annual pay of a typical public school teacher. Johnson recently signed an eight-year contract worth \$150 million, which equates to approximately \$19 million per year. According to the National Education Association, the average salary for public school teachers nationwide in 2011-12 was \$55,418. In other words, Calvin Johnson's annual contract equals the yearly pay of 342 teachers.

Fiscal Priorities

Two noteworthy articles that crossed my desk in the past year offered an

interesting vantage point on the financial confluence of education and sports. These led me to reflect on our priorities.

Catherine Rampell's 2012 post on *The New York Times*' Economix blog, "Does It Pay to Become a Teacher?" describes a comparative analysis of average teacher salaries to the average salary of other college-educated workers in America with the following question. "So tell me: Given the opportunity costs of becoming a teacher instead of using your college degree to enter another, more remunerative field, are the psychic rewards of teaching great enough to convince America's best and brightest

Article Retrieval

Trying to track down an article that appeared in our pages?

AASA'S WEBSITE ARCHIVES ALL ARTICLES published in *School Administrator* since 1997.

To search, go to www.aasa.org and type in a keyword or author's name.

SchoolAdministrator
ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND COMMENTARY FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS



to become educators?”

Just about the same time, I read an article on the ESPN website about a new high school athletic facility that opened this way: “Call it the palace of high school football: A gleaming \$60 million facility with seats for 18,000 roaring fans, a 38-foot wide high-definition video screen, corporate sponsors and a towering upper deck. Welcome to the new home of Eagles football.”

The article details the christening of the new stadium built by the school district in the burgeoning Dallas suburb of Allen.

Additionally, my views on our misplaced fascination with competitive school sports are influenced by what I’ve learned from three foreign exchange students hosted by my wife and me over the years. These students, from three different countries, were surprised to discover that sports were considered an integral part of the school program. They explained the focus of their respective schools was much more oriented to academics.

Costly Athletics

We operate in a different reality in my region in upstate New York, where public schools are facing serious financial challenges. One superintendent was quoted in our local daily newspaper lamenting how the significant decrease in state aid to education is leaving his school system on the brink of running out of funds.

Coincidentally, the New York State Education Department issued a notice reminding school districts they could not be considered financially insolvent as long as they continued to fund nonmandated programs. Chief among such nonmandated programs is athletics. This was a reminder that the primary purpose of public education is to focus on teaching and learning, and resources should be allocated accordingly.

The school district led by the superintendent concerned about finances has a long history of excellence in interscholastic sports, and while they have recently trimmed

some of their athletic programs, the district maintains a robust array of varsity and junior varsity sports.

I find it ironic that the state education department continues to provide funding for capital projects approved by school communities for such items as artificial playing surfaces on athletic fields that typically exceed \$1 million to install.

A Mixed Message

Why am I ranting? It’s not just the obscene multiyear contracts awarded to professional athletes. It’s not just because in too many public school districts, interscholastic sports remain immune from the same financial threats that have pinched academics, and it’s not just because the tradition of sports (and their mascots) has stymied attempts of school districts to avoid fiscal fatali-

ties through cost-efficient mergers. What troubles me is that the issue of conflicting priorities and competing interests for scarce resources eludes serious public discussion over school budget priorities.

I fully acknowledge and understand the findings of public opinion surveys that indicate that the grade point average of students involved in extracurricular activities is higher than those not involved in such programs. But imagine what we could do for the achievement level of struggling learners by investing the funds we routinely allocate to extracurricular athletic activities in alternative instructional programs.

MICHAEL MUGITS is superintendent of Green Island Union Free School District in Green Island, N.Y. E-mail: mmugits@hotmail.com. Twitter: @mmugits

We Love Letters!

School Administrator **WELCOMES**
COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS FROM
READERS about the articles and
columns that appear in our pages.

Send your letters to: Editor,
School Administrator,
1615 Duke St., Alexandria,
VA 22314. Or via e-mail:
magazine@aasa.org

SchoolAdministrator
ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND COMMENTARY FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS



I Want Google and Apple Clamoring for Our Students

STUDENTS IN MY K-8 school district live in the shadow of Silicon Valley, in one of the wealthiest counties in the United States. Engineers and highly skilled workers move here from all over the world to work for Google, Apple, Facebook and other high-tech companies. Local companies offer some of the highest wages anywhere, and these employers can't find enough qualified local workers to fill the jobs.

I want the students in my school system to work at these companies when they grow up. But I fear for their futures if we don't change the basic inequity in school funding that exists today.

Nearly three-fourths of the students in Redwood City schools are Latino, nearly half are English language learners, and about two-thirds qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. We have had more success than many districts in closing the achievement gap, but my students still face an opportunity gap when they enter high school, apply to colleges and look for jobs. One reason is that funding for public schools — here in California and around the nation — is not distributed equitably.

Disparate Upbringings

When students from my K-8 district get to high school, they sit next

to students in algebra or biology or English who had \$50,000 to \$100,000 more invested in their K-8 public school education, not to mention additional opportunities provided by their parents: private tutoring, travel, music lessons and more access to technology at home. Redwood City is the lowest funded of eight elementary districts that feed into our local high school district. The highest spends more than \$17,000 per student per year; we spend less than \$9,000 — and that includes all federal and state money earmarked to meet the greater personal needs of students learning English and living in poverty. Many

Do You Itch to Write?

School Administrator is **ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT** for feature articles, guest columns, and humor items — anything pertaining to the work of school district administrators.

For complete details, check out our author guidelines at www.aasa.org.

It was a dark and stormy board meeting...



SchoolAdministrator
ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND COMMENTARY FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS

of our students get less monetary support at home and need more at school, yet much less is spent on their education.

Some of the inequity faced by my students stems from our state's arcane school-funding system. In California, some school districts are funded by the state, and others are funded by local property tax. Districts with the highest property values and the lowest number of students end up with many more dollars per student per year. Voters in these higher-funded communities also tend to approve ballot initiatives that bring further resources to local schools.

California is not the only state where public school funding inequity exists. A 2012 report by the Center for American Progress, "The Stealth Inequities of School Funding," explores the reasons for school-funding inequity and identifies the 15 states with the largest gaps in funding between the highest-poverty and the lowest-poverty school districts. Even New Jersey and Ohio, the two states with the most equitable funding, struggle to distribute evenly fiscal resources.

California recently passed a Local Control Funding Formula to provide more financial support to local districts serving a significant population of English language learners and students in poverty. The new formula changes the way that categorical funding is distributed. It will provide some relief to school districts, such as Redwood City, over many years, but does not significantly increase K-12 spending overall and does not change the imbalance in base funding. It will not erase inequity.

After years of budget cutting in California, our district won't even get back to 2007-08 funding levels for another seven years, let alone catch up to our higher-funded neighbors.

Full-Service Support

We know what it takes to help students in poverty succeed — services well beyond a six- to seven-hour school day, including high-quality after-school care, preschool for all students, extensive summer school,

“Funding alone cannot erase the opportunity gap in our country, but money wisely invested in PROVIDING OUR NEEDIEST STUDENTS WITH THE SUPPORT THEY NEED to learn English, to complete homework on time, to play outside and to get comfortable with 21st-century technology can close or narrow the opportunity gap.”

access to personal technology, sports and enrichment programs, and health and mental health services for families.

The most successful traditional public schools and charter schools in the country offer all of the above, and these schools provide extensive support to students from early in the morning until late in the evening.

In Redwood City, six of our 16 schools are full-service community schools that offer extended-day learning opportunities for students and a full-range of support services to families. One school offers an evening meal program, an evening homework drop-in center, adult English classes, adult computer literacy classes and parent/family education programs. These services are financed through grants, including the California Department of Education's After School Education and Safety Program, and leverage resources made possible by a partnership among our elementary district, the high school district, the city, the county, local health care organizations and a local university. Academic proficiency has soared at these schools in the last 10 years, and I wish every student in our district had access to community school services.

We tell our teachers, "Equity is not treating every student the same; it is giving all students what they need to succeed." Funding alone cannot erase the opportunity gap in our country, but money wisely invested in providing our neediest students with the support they need to learn English, to complete homework on time, to play outside and to get comfortable with 21st-century technology can

close or narrow the opportunity gap. With funding focused on meeting the true needs of students, we can build a corps of well-educated, highly skilled workers that Google, Apple and Facebook will clamor to hire in 10 or 20 years.

JAN CHRISTENSEN is superintendent of Redwood City School District in Redwood City, Calif. E-mail: jchristensen@rcsdk8.net. Naomi Hunter, Redwood's director of communications, assisted in preparing this column.



Southeastern Cities of the
Salt Lake Valley

Superintendent

Application:
www.canyonsdistrict.org/supersearch
Deadline: March 3, 2014 5:00 P.M.

Competitive Salary and Benefits

Contact: Rickie McCandless
Rickie.mccandless@canyonsdistrict.org
801-826-5121



NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

PRESENTED BY:



FEBRUARY 13-15, 2014

Music City Center
Nashville's brand-new
Convention Center

evolve YOUR PERSPECTIVE



The only national event designed exclusively for school superintendents:

- ✓ Hear the most influential education leaders in the United States address the most critical topics that you're facing as a public school educator.
- ✓ Learn how other educators are providing the highest quality public education for their students.
- ✓ Network with thousands of successful superintendents and share best practices.
- ✓ Visit the NCE Marketplace to compare hundreds of services and products under one roof.
- ✓ Earn a total of 15 CEUs for your participation.



The AASA conference thoroughly **exceeded my expectations**.
The sessions were engaging, timely and exceptionally informative.
The opportunities to network were valuable.

JEFF HINMAN
Superintendent, Tremont, Ill.

THOUGHT LEADER SESSIONS

Two dozen of acclaimed Thought Leaders share inspiration and crucial insights

For a list of visionary General Session speakers, visit www.aasa.org/nce

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13

10 - 11am

Taking Charge of School Leadership: How Districts Can Build Capacity To Develop and Support Effective School Leaders

Irma Zardoya, CEO & President, NYC Leadership Academy

11:15am - 12:15pm

From Accountability to Informing Instruction: The Real Power of Data

Dan Domenech, Executive Director, AASA

Vera Turner, Project Manager Closing the Gap, AASA

Keith Krueger, CEO, Consortium for School Networking

Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Founder and Executive Director, Data Quality Campaign

Mark Edwards, Superintendent, Mooresville Graded Public School District

2 - 3pm

What's Trending: The Evolution of Social Media in Politics

Nicco Mele, Author, *The End of Big: How the Internet Makes David the New Goliath*, Faculty, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

2 - 3pm

Leading for Effective Teaching: How School Systems Can Support Principal Success

Michael Copland, Senior Program Officer, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Josh Edelman, Senior Program Officer, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Stephen Fink, Executive Director, University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership

Max Silverman, Associate Director, University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

8 - 9am

Are Public Schools Irretrievably Broken? Are Charters the Only Answer?

David Kirp, James D. Marver Professor of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley

8 - 9am

Superintendents Leading on School Climate and School Discipline Reform

Moderator:

Bryan Joffe, Project Director, Youth Development & Education, AASA

Presenters:

Ramona Bishop, Superintendent, Vallejo Unified School District

Sharon Contreras, Superintendent, Syracuse City School District

Dan Domenech, Executive Director, AASA

Michael Thompson, Director, Council of State Governments' Justice Center

11:15am - 12:15pm

Why? — Understanding Your Focus To Improve Student Outcomes

Jeffrey Charbonneau, 2013 National Teacher of the Year, National Teacher of the Year Program

12:45 - 1:45pm

Every Child Every Day: A Framework for Leadership in the Digital World

Mark Edwards, Superintendent, Mooresville Graded School District

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

9:15 - 10:15am

Superintendent/School Board Relations, A Discussion with the AASA and NSBA Executive Directors

Dan Domenech, Executive Director, AASA

Tom Gentzel, Executive Director, NSBA

9:15 - 10:15am

Ensuring Principal Effectiveness: A District Priority

Glenn Pethel, Assistant Superintendent of Leadership Development, Gwinnett County Public Schools

Alvin Wilbanks, Superintendent, Gwinnett County Public Schools

SAVE TIME AND MONEY ON SITE. REGISTER TODAY AT

www.aasa.org/nce

TARGETING IMPROVEMENT:

Instructional Rounds

Similar to physician training, this new model emphasizes collegial classroom observations, diagnosis and a plan of action

BY COLLEEN GILLARD

When Mark Odsather moved into the superintendency of the Pleasant View Elementary School District in California's San Joaquin Valley four years ago with a mission to turn around one of the state's most impoverished and low-achieving districts, his first visit was to the lower school's kindergarten.

Watching the young pupils answer

yes/no questions to the story the teacher had just read, he noted the group of mostly English language learners didn't have much to say. And it wasn't just the kindergarten class — none of the children in the school seemed to be talking in class.

Across the country in Connecticut, students in affluent Farmington's high-achieving school district were struggling with a different problem — answering open-ended questions. "They couldn't really explain the con-

cepts or their thinking," said Superintendent Kathy Greider.

And in Melbourne, Australia, when Katherine Henderson, director of schools in the Western Metropolitan Region, visited some of the region's 150 schools to ask about their rock-bottom performance, she was told by teachers that she "didn't understand," that with such dire backgrounds of poverty, neglect and/or language troubles, "these kids just can't learn."



A Defensive Culture

Now, a few years later, the picture looks much improved in all three school districts. Despite different pedagogical problems in widely disparate settings, all three have been helped by an innovative and fast-growing program that improves teaching and learning by focusing on transforming the leadership culture among school and district educators.

Called instructional rounds, the approach is modeled after the

training doctors receive in medical rounds. In hospitals, groups of doctors and residents visit patients to observe and collect and review data to diagnose and then recommend a plan of action. As a collegial model for communal growth and continuous self-improvement, the process serves doctors well — something the developer of instructional rounds, Richard Elmore of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, found inspiring and distinctively helpful for

a profession famous for the isolation of its teachers.

Like the medical version, instructional rounds has groups of educators (central-office to building-level staff) visiting classrooms in each other's schools to observe and take notes around a particular problem of practice. The group (or network, in rounds parlance) then analyzes the collected evidence to find meaningful patterns before suggesting remedial action.

Despite offering prescriptive help to the schools in question, the work's overall ambition is to bring school improvement to scale districtwide. Key to this involves changing the often-defensive culture and professional practice of the network members themselves.

Rounds is designed to correct something Elmore describes as “a profession without a practice.” For historical reasons having to do with the way it evolved from one-room classrooms, teaching lacks the rigor of many disciplines.

“Rounds professionalizes the process of defining problems and problem solving,” says Stefanie Reinhorn, a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education who works as a facilitator with school teams that come to Harvard to learn about instructional rounds. The highly technical steps in instructional rounds help “force professionals to act like professionals,” she adds, “through forcing conversation to focus laser-like on student learning.”

Observation and self-scrutiny can

be hard and scary. “It takes courage,” says Reinhorn, a former instructional coach in the Boston Public Schools, “to bare your problems to your colleagues,” even if rounds protocols require observers to be objective and nonjudgmental. “Rounds really has nothing to do with teacher evaluation — something that is basically disconnected from actually learning about what is going wrong in the classroom.”

Instead, classroom observers concentrate on a predefined problem of practice (lack of rigor in the classroom, for example) in the core learning experience. This is what Elmore calls the “instructional core,” the actions of teacher and student in the presence of content.

Research shows that “educational leadership best succeeds as shared leadership that exploits the collective wisdom of the staff,” says Dennis Buzzelli, former superintendent in Tallmadge, Ohio, who works as a school improvement consultant and rounds facilitator in Akron. Instructional rounds, he adds, asks educa-

tors to talk about and establish a common understanding of what good teaching and learning look like.

A Rural Network

Rural districts don't get a lot of outside attention in terms of school improvement efforts, says Odsather, who doubles as superintendent and principal of the 560-student, K-8 Pleasant View district in the farmlands of the California Central Valley. About 93 percent of the Pleasant View students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, and 80 percent are Hispanic with an equal number of English language learners. Turnover is so high that 80 percent of those who begin in kindergarten leave before 8th grade. Some neighborhoods are plagued by gang violence.

What really upset Odsather upon arrival in Pleasant View, though, was the quality of education students were receiving. “Rural schools are easily forgotten,” says the veteran educator, who came from an upscale Seattle suburb, Bellevue, Wash., and grew up alongside the children of Microsoft millionaires.

“The kids here are no different from the ones I was raised with — only they're treated differently,” Odsather says. “Not much is expected of children of migrant farm workers.”

In casting about for improvement tools, he read the initial Harvard Education Press book on instructional rounds published in 2009. “When I started, my mind was just melting,” he says. “I was confused by how the concepts led to school improvement, but intrigued by the idea of identifying and calibrating what high-quality education might look like. I liked the idea of rigorous and collegial self-reflection. To reach for professionalism based on honesty and transparency really appealed to me.”

Odsather contacted peers across the region, mainly superintendents from districts with similar demographics, to form a six-district (five K-8, one K-12) network spread 200 miles across the San Joaquin Valley.

Kathy Greider (right), superintendent in Farmington, Conn., records notes during an instructional rounds visit to classrooms in her district.





Math specialist Christina Garrity reports on the patterns she and her colleagues uncovered during an instructional rounds visit in the Farmington, Conn., district.

“The first thing we learned in trying to develop problems of practice was that we were too passive,” he explains. “We weren’t truly focusing on the things we valued, like raising expectations. Recognizing this was a huge help.” The superintendents began meeting three times a year before moving to monthly gatherings. Classroom observation visits in Odsather’s district focused on why the young students weren’t talking. What the leaders learned was the classrooms lacked opportunities for conversation.

The Next Level

What to do about it — or developing the next level of work, in rounds terminology — was more challenging. Pleasant View ran training for the leadership team on addressing the deficiencies in instruction. But deeply embedded institutional practices are difficult to change. “I’ll be honest,” Odsather concedes, “I had staff leave rather than change how they ran their classrooms.”

Adds Reinhorn, the facilitator at

“It turned out many worried about losing control of the classroom if the kids work in groups. BUT IT TURNED OUT THE KIDS WERE MUCH HAPPIER with hands-on, group projects. Classroom management was less of a problem than before.”

Harvard: “Fixing is often more an issue than investigating the problem. This is when lateral accountability within networks becomes important.” In this regard, Odsather’s fellow superintendents offered critical help with advice and feedback.

Odsather worked with his small staff to create norms and strategic structures around project-based lesson planning. The aim was to stimu-

late student conversations, leading to higher levels of critical thinking.

“One of our first staff conversations was to talk frankly about our hopes and fears,” he says. “It turned out many worried about losing control of the classroom if the kids work in groups. But it turned out the kids were much happier with hands-on, group projects. Classroom management was less of a problem than before.”

In the revamped kindergartens, youngsters in groups of four took turns talking about story prompts. Meanwhile, 8th graders began discussing their work around rubrics that clarified standards of excellence.

Odsather met with his two schools’ leadership teams for two hours each week. More importantly, teachers’ schedules were upended to give them 45 minutes before class daily for joint lesson planning. In emphasizing structures to help realize change, faculty set norms to improve meeting efficiency with expectations for punctuality, productivity, transparency through peer

observation and positive feedback. They then created their own teacher evaluation systems around ongoing improvement.

Now, three years into the process, Odsather claims the information collected during rounds and the networked adult learning has guided him in how to improve teacher skills and knowledge, while reorganizing the school day to empower teacher collaboration to better support teaching and learning in the classroom.

“Rounds has invigorated my staff to become owners of their craft — to find the tools to be successful in creating classrooms that encourage kids to solve problems, think critically and creatively, as well as communicate their ideas clearly and articulately,” says Odsather. “Our expectations have soared. We had a high gang population and graffiti problems when I

arrived. Now, we no longer have the fights and discipline problems we once had. Teachers say we have given the kids their innocence back.”

Farmington Network

In its ninth year of instructional rounds, Farmington’s school district of 4,000 students and seven schools is a mature example of a district well into the application of instructional rounds.

Farmington began this work in response to discovering that while their high school students may have been acing college-entrance exams, they remained unable to explain their thinking. Assistant Superintendent Kim Wynne says these students, whom she calls “high-achieving, passive learners,” had great knowledge recall but failed at critical thinking.

When the district discovered

Elmore’s newly developed theory of school improvement, Farmington moved forward with just one network, the District Leadership Council, composed of central-office staff, the school business manager and the district’s seven principals and assistant principals. Jointly, they visited classrooms in a different school every six to eight weeks.

But they quickly found changes to raise critical thinking skills would not be possible without reaching deeper into the classroom. So, the Farmington leadership expanded its networks to include teachers, with each school running its own network.

Enthusiastic teachers formed their own networks organized around core subjects, enlisting subject-area instructors at all schools (including the high school department chair) to meet in this subject-based, multi-

Facilitators, Networks and Budgets

THE ROUNDS PROCESS OFTEN BEGINS with a superintendent concerned about how to bring changes in instructional practices to the schools in the district. Given the complicated nature of the work, school districts in recent years have sent representatives to Harvard’s Graduate School of Education for a five-day training institute to get district teams started on the use of instructional rounds.

In this training, they learn about the relevance and functioning of facilitators, networks and budgets.

► **FACILITATORS.** This highly technical work cannot proceed without a trained network facilitator to provide intensive network training and guidance. Facilitators are critical in the launch period and early years, but they intentionally are phased out as network members become increasingly able to handle the rounds process themselves.

Farmington, Conn.’s transition to self-direction, for example, had principals rotate the role of facilitation, with each rounds visit led by the principal of the previous school visited.

Facilitators can be hired outside the district as external consultants, or trained

individuals from within can be brought in. Sometimes there are advantages to using both — a paired team in which one offers insider knowledge, while the other provides an outsider’s independent perspective. (Thomas Fowler-Finn’s new book, *Leading Instructional Rounds in Education*, addresses this topic.)

► **NETWORKS.** These come in all shapes and sizes and generally reflect the needs of their school systems as dictated by problems of practice. Networks can be as massive as multidistrict networks of 45 people and as small as a handful of educators from one school.

A districtwide network may include key central-office personnel, such as the superintendent, assistant superintendent, finance officer, union head, as well as principals and teacher leaders.

Multidistrict networks can be composed strictly of superintendents whose classroom observations around the instructional core might lead them to rethink organizational issues, such as budgeting, support staff or pedagogical direction.

Districtwide networks might focus on problems of leadership; principal networks

could concentrate their observations on their role as instructional leaders; and school-based networks might target issues of instruction.

► **BUDGETS.** Stefanie Reinhorn, who works as a facilitator with school teams that come to Harvard to learn about instructional rounds, describes rounds’ budgets as “context specific.” That means teacher-intensive networks are generally more expensive due to needs of classroom coverage when the regular teacher is observing elsewhere, while networks of principals who use each other as facilitators may face little additional expense, beyond the commitment of time.

Hiring outside facilitators is a cost districts can cover with Title I funds. Nonetheless, Reinhorn says, superintendents should not underestimate the likelihood of additional expense as problems are uncovered along the way. Correcting school or districtwide practices can involve reshuffling budget allocations to hire someone to help with data analysis or provide instructional coaching or paying for extra professional development around something such as project-based learning.

— COLLEEN GILLARD

grade, vertical network twice a year. To create more independent learners in English language arts, the instructional rounds network examined whether providing writing scaffolds, graphic organizers and sentence starters made students overly dependent on teacher guidance, Superintendent Kathy Greider says.

At the high school, student representatives who were added to the network suggested the curriculum would be more interesting if it were made more relevant to their lives. "Today, we are seeing ownership of school improvement from students to (the) central office," says Wynne, the assistant superintendent.

While raising achievement results is the ultimate goal, Farmington's leaders say they evaluated their success in terms of improved student engagement. "This, we assess through noting [whether the students or the teachers are] asking questions in the classroom, as well as in the answers students have about what they are learning and why," Greider says. "To our gratification, they increasingly have answers."

Victoria's Surge

In the 77,000-student region she leads in Victoria on Australia's southeastern coast, Katherine Henderson was tired of hearing accounts of teachers doubting the ability of students to learn. She set out to ensure every child would succeed.

It took five years, but by 2012, her region of considerable poverty and a large immigrant population moved from ranking last among the state's nine regions on every measure of statewide testing to third. The upward change was so dramatic, the state Department of Education built a case study around the work.

"No school can improve without good leadership," she says. "Sure, I could have dismissed all 150 principals and started over, but I had the tools with rounds to improve schools through improving the current leadership."

After launching the work with Harvard's Elmore on-site,



During a debriefing session of instructional rounds in California's Pleasant View Elementary School District, Superintendent Mark Odsather (center) explains how to use pieces of evidence to identify instructional patterns.

she recruited as rounds facilitator Thomas Fowler-Finn, former superintendent in Cambridge, Mass., to provide ongoing guidance. They divided the region into seven networks of 16-22 schools each and began network training by dissecting current educational research to raise understanding of what good educational practice looks like.

"Early on, there was tremendous anxiety among staff over a sense of exposure, especially when principals were presented with irrefutable evidence about teaching and learning problems in their classrooms," Henderson says. "We had colleagues who had socialized together but never discussed their mutual practice," who suddenly were asked to move beyond camaraderie to brutally appraise each other's and their own teaching practices.

The teachers learned they couldn't assume any one of them had a professional knowledge base, Henderson adds. "But over time, as they began to trust the dedication of their colleagues to mutual improvement, they were better able to face the challenges."

Henderson described it as fascinating work. "We had classrooms where teaching was excellent but which still weren't succeeding because what really matters is what the children are saying and doing. We ended up with a coherent and shared focus across the region. It was very, very satisfying and exciting to bring people from very different professional levels and lift them up together."

Summing Up

Odsather, the superintendent in his fourth year leading California's Pleasant View schools, captures the instructional rounds experience this way: "I often think of Richard Elmore saying, 'You hire people on their ability to learn, not on the basis of a resume. Now when I interview people, I ask about their greatest weaknesses as a teacher and what they're doing about it. I'm really interested in their thoughts on how to improve their practice.' ■

COLLEEN GILLARD is a freelance writer based in Cambridge, Mass. E-mail: colleen.gillard@gmail.com. Twitter: @colleen_gillard



Getting the Most Out of **ROUNDS**

An instructional improvement process based on group observations that targets the classroom practice, not the person

BY THOMAS FOWLER-FINN

When the assistant superintendent for instruction, a midcareer professional new to her position, picked me up at my hotel on a mid-August morning for our first meeting about implementing instructional rounds in her district, she was almost apologetic about the professional practices of some of her staff.

The instructional leadership of many principals (originally hired for a job different from what now is required) was lacking, she explained, and student test scores in her large, urban district reflected this. They needed to

radically improve, and soon.

The school district had hired me to facilitate four school rounds visits, one per month, beginning in September. These two August days would be dedicated to establishing the network and preparing members for the upcoming school visits. Once we reached the meeting site and gathered armfuls of supplies, she hesitated before leaning forward with an expression of embarrassment and whispered, “I hope I still have a job after this. I’m the one who recommended instructional rounds to the superintendent.”

A Shared Purpose

Instructional rounds is a dynamic process that involves significant professional time and financial support. It requires thoughtful and faithful implementation to effect productive outcomes. The results are reliably transformative when executed as intended.

Before I began work as a rounds facilitator and consultant, I was superintendent for close to six years in the Cambridge, Mass., Public Schools. When I arrived in that troubled, 6,700-student district, school and district administrators long had recognized the need for extensive professional development for our instructional leadership teams if we were going to improve poor student test scores across the district.

One of my first actions on this journey was to convene a meeting of central-office leadership and principals to view a video clip of a classroom lesson. Each educator was asked to confidentially rate the teaching on a scale of one to 10, from poor to expert. After tallying the results, we discovered their ratings included every number with absolutely no consensus. The group then turned to me and asked for the correct rating.

I told them the exercise wasn't about a rating score. Instead, it was more a question of whether we can call ourselves education professionals when we cannot agree on even the most basic standards of what excellent teaching and learning look like.

This gathering took place in 2003-04,

Speaking a Common Language on Evaluation in Elizabeth

BY RACHEL GOLDBERG

The administrators file into the school library. Balancing their morning coffee and notepads, they head to their assigned team's table. The school's principal stands to introduce her problem of practice: In what ways and to what extent are students engaged in their learning through the use of classroom discussions?

Four or five times each year, identified schools across our school district host their instructional rounds network for a day dedicated to examining school-level practice. Each network is broken up into six or eight teams of educators, which may include teachers, school leaders, central-office administrators, cabinet members and the superintendent.

Before visiting the classrooms, the teams discuss the observation strategies they will use and then stream out, ready to visit classrooms in the K-8 school to collect evidence related to the instruction they will watch carefully. Four classroom visits later, the teams return to the library. They write down pieces of evidence they collected from the classroom observations, identify what they learned about classroom discussions in the school, debate the patterns they discover, share their findings with the school leaders and draft suggestions to

improve the quality of questioning at the school and district level.

Every participant is engaged in a thoughtful discussion about teaching and learning. This is what makes instructional rounds so different from any other professional learning experience in the 24,900-student Elizabeth, N.J., Public Schools.

A Common Language

In 2009, Elizabeth's then-superintendent, Pablo Muñoz, was introduced to instructional rounds through the Panasonic Foundation and the New Jersey Network of Superintendents. Muñoz's vision for the district required the development of a common language around instruction for central-office and school leaders, and he felt that instructional rounds could be a critical tool. He also understood that in order for it to be effective, the district needed to follow the model with fidelity and make use of the feedback at every level.

As such, leadership networks — involving about 175 participants, from teacher leaders and principals through the superintendent — were phased in over three years, facilitated by Thomas Fowler-Finn, an external consultant and author of the 2013 title *Leading Instructional Rounds*

in Education. Participation by Elizabeth's education leaders was non-negotiable.

Four years later, more than 175 district, site-level and teacher leaders have been trained to work together, observing classrooms, analyzing evidence related to teaching and learning, identifying patterns of practice and developing next levels of work at the school and district levels. What's resulted? More informed decisions in human resources, stronger curricula, focused instructional leadership, stronger teacher practice and higher student achievement.

Shortly after the first network formed, the district realized that developing a common language around instruction would not be a simple task. Leaders were asked to re-focus their attention away from the teacher, to what students were doing and saying. As we identified patterns in schools and across the district, leaders at every level looked deeper into how their work affects instruction.

For Melissa Leite, the third-year principal at Robert Morris School 18, instructional rounds has shaped her leadership. "My IR findings give me a blueprint for what I want to do in my school," she says. "The feedback coming from the IR visits impact which way our [professional learning

before the first book on instructional rounds had been written. But Richard Elmore, professor of education at Harvard University, had an office close by and said he was willing to work with us. Before we signed on to work with Elmore's team, we examined several professional development programs and talked with other districts. This is something I suggest all district decision makers do — particularly if they are considering instructional rounds.

As a group, you benefit from shared reading about instructional rounds and visiting school districts using rounds before signing on. Top-down control runs counter to the distributed leadership required in rounds work. Potential participants need to know what they are getting into, including time commitments, individual

“Top-down control runs counter to the distributed leadership required in rounds work. POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEY ARE GETTING INTO, including time commitments, individual roles and responsibilities and the accountabilities built into the process.”

roles and responsibilities and the accountabilities built into the process. You need agreement around the feasibility and purpose for engaging in rounds and a shared understanding and commitment to what it takes. If there is strong resistance by school leaders, it is better not to forge ahead.

communities] will go, what we are choosing for [professional development] and where I will focus my feedback.”

In year three of instructional rounds in Elizabeth, a network of teacher leaders received training and soon became some of the most enthusiastic participants. Tutor-interventionist Marvelis Perreira describes her experience this way: “As a teacher participating, we are looking through the eyes of the administrator. It gives us the critical perspective necessary to approach our practice differently.”

Perreira adds: “When you go into a classroom, there are two moments — one where you see what is happening and start thinking how you would change it; the other is when you walk into the classroom and you think, ‘Wow, I want to do this in my classroom.’”

Linked With Evaluation

When the New Jersey Department of Education announced a pilot program for teacher evaluation in 2011, the Elizabeth Public Schools was in a unique position to participate. While still working to build a common language around instruction, and despite concerns about the instructional rounds work conflicting with new evaluation language, we believed the initiatives would complement one another.

Data collected after the first year of implementation proved Muñoz's instincts true. The administrators' evaluations had a strong relationship to student achievement. In many cases, the evaluation data were consistent with student performance — the

most important indicator of evaluators' understanding of the relationship between teaching and student achievement.

Many site administrators credit instructional rounds with providing a process for them to adequately describe and understand instruction and learning, and to reliably evaluate their teachers. Leite, whose school has 46 teachers, finds that instructional rounds, professional development and evaluation go hand in hand.

“It has been an eye-opening experience and changed the way I understand observations,” she says. “After IR, my note taking changed. Previously, I focused on what the teacher was doing and missed some other important things. Because of IR, I began talking to the students and asking the type of probing questions that really tell me what is really happening in the classroom.”

In terms of teacher evaluations, Leite says she discovered what was the ultimate measure of accountability. “Historically, we felt if we didn't see the teacher teaching, you couldn't do an observation. Now I get my best feedback about the teacher's performance when I study what the students are doing,” she says.

In year four of instructional rounds, the teacher leaders and school administrator networks merged, allowing for joint discussion about effective practice from different perspectives. Perreira says she found this critical, allowing her to better understand the administrator's challenges in evaluating staff.

“The principals are better at evaluating because in their building they have

previous relationships,” she says. “When they visit other schools and classrooms, it gives them an understanding of practice without the bias. They take that back to their schools.”

A Feedback Loop

Instructional rounds, combined with teacher-evaluation data and student-growth data, have created a feedback loop that guides discussions and planning across our district. Principals are using these data to place teachers based on their strengths and to identify professional development opportunities that relate to distinct areas for growth. Teachers are taking ownership of their practice, consciously bridging content knowledge with teaching.

Elizabeth's interim superintendent, Olga Hugelmeyer (who assumed the role in the fall when Muñoz moved into the superintendency in Passaic, N.J.), views this work as key to the district's development. She is looking to instructional rounds for the critical feedback that will move the district forward.



RACHEL GOLDBERG is director of staff development in the Elizabeth Public Schools in Elizabeth, N.J. E-mail: goldbera@elizabeth.k12.nj.us. Twitter: @rachelgoldberg

In Cambridge, we decided that instructional rounds was the best option to help us develop a common language and agree on our definition of effective teaching and learning. In Cambridge's district of competitive open enrollment (there are no neighborhood schools), there are endless examples of different and isolated, private practice. For this reason, we particularly found compelling the idea of building a leadership network culture and strategies based on shared practices.

As a side note, it is important to recognize rounds work integrates well with ongoing system-level strategies for improving instruction and student learning. When instructional rounds is regarded as an independent venture, it is likely to be ineffective and short-lived.

Committed to Action

All districts and networks differ. I worked with one suburban district where students scored among the highest in the state. Nonetheless, the superintendent recognized the students lacked conceptual understanding, particularly in mathematics. Students went to college fearful of taking math courses because they didn't understand the subject.

The superintendent initiated instructional rounds to investigate and improve math teaching and learning, prekindergarten through 12th

grade. After two years and eight school-rounds visits, the evidence collected revealed much about the lack of student acquisition of mathematical concepts. Despite this, however, not all schools acted on what they were learning through the rounds process.

Rounds work in this district became short-circuited in part by a few educators who believed there was no need to change because their students performed so well on standardized tests. Too many administrators and teachers saw themselves as independent experts and did not value network recommendations. Some simply lacked the courage to act in the face of resistance from their peers. So, in the end, school and district personnel failed to agree on and take improvement action systemwide, particularly at the high school level. The network eventually was disbanded.

Determination to invest in a systemwide collegial culture of shared practice and a disposition to promote continuous professional growth are critical to rounds-work preparation. As such, selecting the right network membership as well as clarifying the purpose of participation, can help dictate the eventual success of the instructional rounds.

Some districts, such as Elizabeth, N.J., begin with central-office leaders, including the teachers association president and a few principals,

Differentiating Instructional Rounds From Walk-throughs

During my 38-year career, 24 of those as a superintendent, I have been involved in endless walk-throughs to coach individual teachers and completed what feels like close to a million evaluations. The problem with walk-throughs is well beyond the fact that teachers' associations take issue with them as hidden systems of evaluation — an assertion with merit, as the implications for teacher compliance are unmistakable.

The issue is really more that such a one-teacher-at-a-time approach to school improvement, at scale, is doomed to failure.

Instructional rounds differs significantly from walk-throughs in that its focus is on the practice and not the person and is as much about the learning of the network's educational leadership as it is about the improvement of student learning.

An Objective Picture

In 2005, while superintendent in Cambridge, Mass., I contracted with Richard Elmore, a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, to help us launch a leadership network to begin a more substantive investigation of school improvement through a new approach called instructional rounds.

As a group of 32 school and district educators, we observed more than 20 classrooms in our first elementary school, with the goal of recording comprehensive, specific and nonjudgmental observations on the school's chosen problem of student learning: How are student voices reflected in the questions, discussion, explanation, thinking and processing? Educators at this school believed their 420 students would learn more by taking greater responsibility for their work.

Even as superintendent in our Cambridge Leadership Network, I assumed equal standing alongside principals, the teachers association president and other school and district members. In rounds networks, titles and personal agendas are left at the door. Rounds is about building a culture in which we model the collaboration and problem solving we expect from our students. Collegial problem solving and shared responsibility around problems of practice anchored in systemwide goals are what make rounds work unique.

Central-office staff, principals and teacher-leader network members work jointly to build a new culture with a common language through shared perspectives and a practice focused on the classroom's instructional core. The instructional core is defined as the interaction of the teacher's skills and understanding,

but then grow in successive years to include all principals, academic coaches and teacher leaders by expanding to multiple networks. In selecting members, choices should not be based on job performance, but rather on whether they view themselves as linked to other network members in the work of improving the instructional core of the classroom. (See related story, page 30.)

A foundation once asked me to work with a network comprised primarily of principals, teachers, parents and other community stakeholders. In this case, while the participants may have learned a great deal about the instructional core without a broader representation of district personnel, they were powerless to take the necessary follow-up actions. Likewise, a network that finds its teaching heavily influenced by the content of district assessments and pacing guides may be stymied to effect change unless those responsible for the documents are a part of the network.

Getting Started

Superintendents often have a dual role in the rounds process. As an initiator and hiring authority of a network facilitator and as a member of a network, they are simultaneously boss and peer.

As the convening authority, the superintendent



John Mellody (left), vice principal of Dr. Albert Einstein Academy School, and Michael Robel, an instructional coach, examine teaching patterns gleaned from a classroom visit in Elizabeth, N.J.

ent must be a minder of the network, by monitoring progress and moving the work forward, all the while keeping in mind that network goals reflect broader system-level improvement strategies. In selecting a rounds facilitator, superintendents should seek someone who has

student engagement and the level and complexity of content in the context of the work students do.

Network members strive to provide an objective picture of the patterns — events or actions repeated in a majority of classrooms observed — of teaching and learning. The network generates recommendations based on these patterns.

Rounds is descriptive and inferential. It depends in large part upon gathering information from students through discussion and observation of their work. It focuses on discerning patterns of interactions within the instructional core by being especially alert to what students make, do, say or write.

Not a Walk-through

When we found it difficult to record objective notes, our network discussed using a checklist of model practices in classrooms to simplify note-taking and increase efficiency. But we had to reject this idea, as

we realized it focused on assessing an individual teacher's practice. That was something we recognized was not going to help us with our larger mission. In fact, in rounds, no single teacher receives feedback or is identified. Rounds is not about assessing individual teacher practice. Instead, its purpose is to identify much larger school and districtwide patterns of practice.

Rounds is not a remedial process. Network members instead strive to provide an objective picture of patterns of teaching and learning. The network generates recommendations for school-level improvement based on these patterns. Schools, in turn, regard the network's recommendations for action as creative options to consider when they decide upon their own course of continuous improvement.

After several rounds are held, system-wide patterns of practice often emerge. These patterns lead the network to

consider organizational changes to support all school improvement efforts.

A District Transformed

Our work in instructional rounds proved powerfully effective. The Cambridge Public Schools had been cited by the state's Office of Educational Quality and Accountability for low test scores the year before I was hired. Within a four-year period, scores demonstrated progress greater than the state agency had seen anywhere else.

Praise from the state agency's executive director emphasized the district's changed leadership culture on student learning: "The environment and culture of the Cambridge Public Schools have been transformed from a confederation of separate schools to a unified system, one that insures that the needs of all children, from those with learning difficulties to those with aptitude above and beyond their grade level, are being met."

— THOMAS FOWLER-FINN



Thomas Fowler-Finn (center), author of *Leading Instructional Rounds in Education*, consults with district administrators in Elizabeth, N.J., as they review evidence gathered during an instructional rounds visit.

had experience with adult learning and consensus building, as well as training in the specific protocols used in the rounds process. The protocols provide critical discipline and structure to the work, guiding network interactions in a safe learning environment of open, honest dialogue and questioning.

Meanwhile, participants should understand the expectations regarding their time and role in a successful project. Participants should agree on and take responsibility for norms to guide network operation and individual behavior. This means requiring each other to adhere to the norms, remain faithful to the protocols and push for productivity of the work.

Responsible for Action

Results depend on what network members do, individually and collectively, with what is learned through instructional rounds. They need to remember that this is not a test-score improvement program, even though, depending on goals and how the process is used, rounds can and often does contribute to test-score gains.

For host schools to invest in instructional rounds, they must have a sense of managing the process for their own purposes. If not, host

schools are likely to be skeptical and unenthusiastic, if not unwilling to use the findings. For this reason, a network's classroom observations are based on problems of student learning chosen by the school itself. These problems of practice are based on answering what problem of student learning the school would find most helpful to know more about.

In turn, schools have an obligation to engage in a true inquiry with the network's help, choosing problems of learning for which they do not have answers and that arise out of objective performance data such as state tests and other sources. Problems of practice focus observations on productive questions of importance to student learning in the school and systemwide. These problems are the nexus of instructional leadership and professional growth. The more the problems of practice connect to school improvement plans and system-level strategies and goals, the more the participants and the district get from rounds work.

This compact between the host school and its observers develops through trust over time. In one case, a school identified a concern that student writing lacked analytical thinking. As the network provided pertinent informa-

tion derived from classroom observations, the school slowly recognized its problems were more pervasive and complex and actually stemmed from a broader school pedagogical approach.

Accountability for Results

After a rounds visit, schools expect networks to deliver objective feedback and creative options to help each school improve student learning. Reciprocally, networks expect schools to take action on network findings and report progress to the network in the near term and over time.

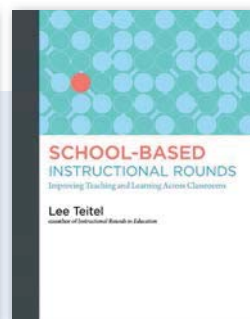
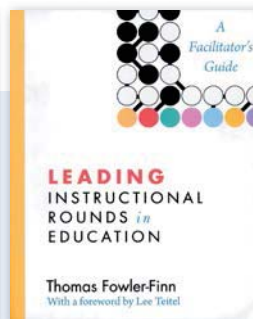
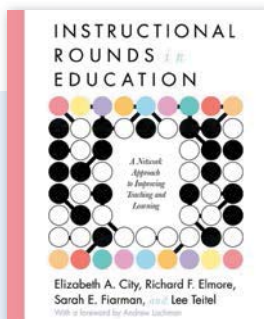
Both school and network members learn from the school's implementation of the next level of work. The network will want to know which findings were helpful, which were not and how they could be more helpful in the future. One host school principal reported at a network meeting what his school had decided to do next and why they had put aside several of the network recommendations. His final comment was that his school could have benefited from more direct and detailed feedback, in an appeal to the network members not to hold back their thoughts. This is what drives practice forward and what networks always hope to experience.

Accountability is essential and extends to daily work activities. Every network member is asked to create a document committing to action. These statements, called a theory of action, express each individual's intended improvement-of-learning strategies, including the steps she or he will take and anticipated measurable results.

The purpose and expectation for these declarations should be clear from the start. The degree to which these are integrated into self-reflection and districtwide learning goes a long way toward determining the institution's commitment to organizational change. In this regard, it is what happens after a school hosts a visit that makes all the difference.

Improving learning at scale in any school district is challenging work that requires an unwavering commitment to thoughtful and creative action. Instructional rounds opens the possibility for that to happen. Significant improvement is possible. What you get out of rounds is up to you. ■

THOMAS FOWLER-FINN is founder and director of Instructional Rounds Plus in Medford, Mass., and the author of *Leading Instructional Rounds In Education: A Facilitator's Guide* (Harvard Education Press, 2013). E-mail: tfowlerfin@aol.com



Additional Resources

The authors who contributed to this issue suggest these materials would be informative to a school leader interested in instructional rounds.

Articles

- ▶ “Changing Peer Support for Superintendents” by Lee Teitel, *School Administrator*, June 2009, www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=1998
- ▶ “Improving Teaching and Learning through Instructional Rounds” by Lee Teitel, *Harvard Education Letter*, May/June 2009, <http://hepg.org/hel/article/157>
- ▶ “Peer Visits and Revisits in the Superintendency” by Lee Teitel, *School Administrator*, November 2010, www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=16804
- ▶ “Professional Networks and School Improvement” by Richard Elmore, *School Administrator*, April 2007, www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=6812

Books/Reports

- ▶ *Data Wise* edited by Kathryn Parker Boudett, Elizabeth A. City and Richard J. Murnane (Harvard Education Press, 2013), for a step-by-step guide to using assessment results to develop problems of practice for network rounds work.
- ▶ “Instructional Rounds: A Great Idea with Potentially Great Outcomes (Seminar Series 206)” by Thomas Fowler-Finn (Centre for Strategic Education, July 2011), a brief exposition of the rounds process and reactions of participants.
- ▶ *Instructional Rounds in Action* by John E. Roberts (Harvard Education Press, 2012), analysis of how instructional rounds can work on the ground.
- ▶ *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning* by Elizabeth A. City, et al. (Harvard Education Press, 2009), an overview of the theory and practice of instructional rounds.
- ▶ *Leading Instructional Rounds in Education: A Facilitator's Guide* by Thomas Fowler-Finn (Harvard Education Press, 2013), a concrete depiction of how instructional rounds networks are created and conducted.
- ▶ *School-Based Instructional Rounds* by Lee Teitel (Harvard Education Press, 2013), a school-based picture of instructional rounds.
- ▶ *Secondary Lenses on Learning Facilitator's Kit* by Catherine Miles Grant et al. (Corwin Press, 2009), an exploration of research on the instructional core and videos of exemplary teaching.

ing and Learning by Elizabeth A. City, et al. (Harvard Education Press, 2009), an overview of the theory and practice of instructional rounds.

▶ *Leading Instructional Rounds in Education: A Facilitator's Guide* by Thomas Fowler-Finn (Harvard Education Press, 2013), a concrete depiction of how instructional rounds networks are created and conducted.

▶ *School-Based Instructional Rounds* by Lee Teitel (Harvard Education Press, 2013), a school-based picture of instructional rounds.

▶ *Secondary Lenses on Learning Facilitator's Kit* by Catherine Miles Grant et al. (Corwin Press, 2009), an exploration of research on the instructional core and videos of exemplary teaching.

Websites

- ▶ Annenberg Media Learner offers free videos of classroom action. www.learner.org
- ▶ Harvard Graduate School of Education is running a spring 2014 workshop. www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe/programs/prek-12/portfolio/instructional-rounds.html
- ▶ Instructional Rounds Plus provides a brief explanation of the process and further links. www.instructionalrounds.com
- ▶ TIMSS Video has 53 public-use video lessons, including translations into English, collected for the TIMSS studies through a joint project of Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and UCLA. <http://timssvideo.com>



Teachers *at the* Center *of* Improvement

School-based instructional rounds in a Connecticut district engages teachers as classroom observers, leading to instructional adjustments

BY LEE TEITEL

Bill Silver had been superintendent of Killingly Public Schools in Danielson, Conn., for three years before he discovered, somewhat serendipitously, how school-based instructional rounds could make big contributions to the systemic improvement work he was trying to do in his small, rural, high-poverty school district in northeast Connecticut.

It was 2008, and Silver recently had joined the Connecticut Superintendents' Network, which had developed an instructional rounds practice in which 12 superintendents would rotate visits to a school in a member's dis-

trict every other month to focus on a problem of instructional practice. He found the visit from his peers useful in focusing on classroom improvement and decided, as had most of the superintendents in the network, to launch in-district rounds, where his central-office staff would join principals from other schools for two visits a year to each of Killingly's five schools.

At the time, Marilyn Oat was in her fourth year as principal at Killingly Memorial School, which she described as being the elementary school "on the poor side of town" and not as successful with its students as she and the teachers wanted. She had volunteered her school for an

initial superintendent network visit, and she and her staff saw positive aspects in Silver's decision to follow up with in-district rounds.

But over the following year, they kept feeling as if something was missing. "We would debrief, and it felt like there was an elephant in the room," Oat said during an interview in December 2011. "What wasn't being said needed to be said, and what was being said was from the land of politeness."

Oat and her teacher leaders asked two fundamental design questions. The first shifted the focus of rounds: "Instead of looking *at* the teachers, what if we looked *with* the teachers at the students" and what they were learning?

"Instead of having a team of outside observers from the superintendent network visit once every few years or administrators from within the district visit twice a year, what if there were much more frequent observations by teachers and others from *inside* the school?"

The second question shifted the observers and frequency of rounds. Instead of having a team of outside observers from the superintendent network visit once every few years or administrators from within the district visit twice a year, what if there were much more frequent observations by teachers and others from *inside* the school?

Significant Variations

Over the next year, with the support of Silver, Oat and her team used these two design questions as a springboard for innovations of instructional practice. The school remained faithful to the core instructional rounds ideas of focusing on a problem of practice tied to broader school and district actions, collecting specific nonjudgmental data through classroom observations and using those data to drive improvement-oriented "next level of work" discussions. But Killingly Memorial School added important variations.

The grade-level teams split in two, with, for example, half of the 3rd-grade teachers visiting the other half one week, then trading places the following week and, ultimately, using grade-level team meetings to digest the findings from their rounds visits. The teachers made commitments to each

A Strategy for Nesting School and District Needs

BY WILLIAM M. SILVER

In an education world driven by accountability, mostly defined by results on standardized tests, how do you know as a superintendent that district improvement efforts are making a difference in the classroom lives of children? For me, a big part of the answer was found through the instructional rounds process.

Even in a midsized district (2,800 students preK-12 in five schools), maintaining consistency and coherence in districtwide and school-based improvement efforts can be a challenge. How do you monitor fidelity of implementation at the school and classroom level while respecting the professionalism of the teaching staff? How do you break down the isolation of typical classroom practice? How do you ensure principals and teachers are delivering on commitments? How do you overcome the knowing/doing gap?

In Danielson, Conn., where I previously

served as superintendent for eight years, we created improvement plans with a parallel structure at the district and school levels, and our working metaphor was nested Russian dolls. We focused on a small number of key issues: critical literacy, rigor of the instructional task and student engagement.

Balanced Feedback

The notion of nested Russian dolls allowed us to see how to "nest" our district instructional rounds into our developing practice of school-based instructional rounds. In a typical network or district instructional rounds process, schools are visited once or twice a year (or less), and teachers are "walked on" — not true participants in the process or discussions that lead to next-level-of-work suggestions.

This can help one see school system growth and promote system learning, but to the teachers and the school that host the visit, the summary shared with practitioners

and the suggestions for the next level of work can feel prescriptive — and at a grain size too large to be useful.

Balancing feedback that is practical at the school and teacher levels with the systems view that instructional rounds provides is tricky. The design insights of the late Marilyn Oat, Memorial School principal in the Killingly district, provided the conceptual breakthroughs we needed to develop an effective nested rounds practice. She started school-based instructional rounds with teachers inside the school as an extension of ongoing grade-level and data teams. This provided opportunities for two other crucial conditions — developing teacher agency and leadership and providing opportunities for genuine dialogue among central-office staff, principals and teachers. By nesting district instructional rounds inside the school-based instructional rounds schedule, we could provide useful information to all levels of the organization.

other about the improvements that they, as a team, wished to implement. The cycle was repeated every seven or eight weeks and within the first year led to quantifiable gains in the assessment metric used by the district for instructional rigor as well as subsequent gains by students on state tests.

Impressed with these gains, the superintendent directed each school in the district to develop its own version of school-based rounds and modified the use of district or cross-school rounds to better coordinate and calibrate the school-based work. He sent a clear message that not all models needed to look the same as the Killingly Memorial School but that all schools needed a custom-designed approach for the particular school.

In December 2010, Silver brought together administrators and teacher leaders from each of the five schools (along with the union president) to observe or participate in a school-based rounds and then develop individual school-based models. By May 2011, all Killingly schools had launched custom-designed, school-based rounds. The mixed teacher/administrator teams met twice the next year — once to visit and reflect upon the high school's rounds model and once to make refinements, calibrate their plans for growth over the coming year,

and talk with central-office staff about how district-based rounds should change to best support and complement their school-based work.

Impact at School

In cross-school district rounds, districts increasingly include teachers on rounds visit teams, yet the most common role played by teachers is to be observed.

In school-based rounds, many more teachers are engaged in all aspects of the process — observing, analyzing and making suggestions for improvement. School-based rounds offer Killingly Memorial and its sister schools other benefits, notably greater shared context, immediacy and frequency.

► **SHARED CONTEXT.** In comparison to outsiders who are just visiting the school for one day, teacher observers in Killingly know the subject and lesson plan intimately (and are likely to have helped develop it at the grade-level team meeting and may be teaching it the following day). Many of them have taught the children they are observing, allowing a much deeper look at student learning in the classroom.

► **IMMEDIACY.** While cross-site rounds networks often focus on medium- and long-term districtwide

Equals in the Process

As a superintendent, the nesting of a district process inside a school-based process gave me the chance to sit as an equal with teachers and administrators across the district to share observations of classroom practice, look for patterns and develop next steps.

With everyone focused on the problem of practice selected by the observed teachers and working with the evidence from the classroom visit, no one is an expert and hierarchical rank in the district is not a factor. This also helped teachers appreciate the challenges of instruction at all levels. How often does a high school teacher spend quality time watching a 3rd-grade teacher at work?

School-based instructional rounds also improved communication across school levels. For example, teachers from our preK building went on rounds in the kindergartens in each elementary school.



Finally, the frequency of school-based instructional rounds (six to 20 times per year) compared to district or network instructional rounds (at most two times per year) provided a wealth of data for principals to reflect on the efficacy of their change efforts. Teachers could see their colleagues for what they truly were in the classroom, not as they imagined them to be

Bill Silver, former superintendent of Killingly Public Schools in Danielson, Conn., and Marilyn Oat, then-principal of Killingly Memorial School, with Killingly students.

or the way they represented themselves to others. This enabled teachers to engage in significant self-reflection, individually and collectively, and yielded agency to seek team- and school-based solutions to problems of instructional practice.

I found the investment of time and resources in creating a nested instructional rounds practice well worth it. I plan on training my first cadre of administrators and teachers in instructional rounds this spring in my new district.

BILL SILVER is superintendent of the Liberty Central Schools in Liberty, N.Y. E-mail: wsilver@libertyk12.org

improvement, school-based rounds focus on immediate improvements. In Killingly, teachers who are observed by their colleagues get specific feedback on classroom practices before the end of the visit day. When the team decides to implement a different instructional approach, it usually is put into place immediately. In fact, the observation itself may drive changes in practice. As one Killingly teacher put it, “Since I know observers will be asking the students what they are doing and why, I make sure that all, even the 6-year-olds, know what they are working on and why.”

► **FREQUENCY.** The short cycle of observation and analysis encourages experimentation and team learning, as in “We see a pattern in our collective practice where we are stuck; let’s try a different approach and see if it has the impact that we want at our next observation.” Furthermore, the frequency

and internal nature of the rounds has led to a sense of collective ownership of improvement work by the teachers. A grade-level team is identifying its own problem of practice, observing its members, analyzing the observations and then making its own suggestions for what it could do to improve. Teachers start relying on each other as sources of improved practices and also start holding each other accountable in different ways for following up on their agreed-on improvements.

On the other hand, these benefits come with potential pitfalls. Perhaps teachers who know each other well and have congenial relations will be too polite to really learn about improving practice with one another. Too much local context might lead observers to miss important things that an outsider

Inside Rounds: Joint Growth for Teachers

THERE IS AN AIR OF EXCITEMENT and anticipation, but also of some familiarity with an ongoing process, as the five 4th-grade teachers at a school in Danielson, Conn., jointly review their protocols and focus for next week’s instructional rounds visit.

“OK ladies, who’s walking and who’s being walked on?” Kate, a teacher at the school for 22 years, asks cheerfully. Her colleague Meg smiles at the “walked on” comment — a bit of insider humor reflecting the initial anxiety many teachers felt when instructional rounds was introduced in their school district two years earlier.

The teachers need just 10 minutes to settle on who will be teaching and who will be observing with the principal, the reading and special education resource teachers, a 3rd-grade teacher and a 2nd-grade teacher. After selecting roles, the team continues to discuss the lesson plans for the day of the observation as well as the week leading up to that day.

Their current student data drive this conversation. Between a quarter to a third of their students are not scoring “proficient” on most recent state tests for 4th graders. Kate reminds the team of the focus of this year’s instructional rounds. The 4th-grade team suspects that student tasks may not be aligned to the intent of the lesson and students may not be

engaged in rigorous learning opportunities that use higher-order thinking. They want the observers to collect information on the readers’ workshops they will see to help answer two focused questions:

- What is the intent for *student learning*, and what is the evidence that student tasks lead to this?
- What are the *higher-order thinking skills* students are using, and what is the student evidence of this?

Professional Excitement

The teachers know on the morning of the observation the principal will meet with the “walking team” for 10 minutes to debrief about the protocols and what they will observe that day. It is here they review the problem of practice the team has chosen. Each team will observe a teacher for 15 minutes, then collect data on the specific questions using tools that have been calibrated and shared within the school. They will spend an hour summarizing what they observed and the specific evidence they collected.

After observing, the walkers will return to their other work, and at the end of the day, the 4th-grade team will reconvene to share the data and discuss what they, as a team, will do about it.



Lee Teitel

Meg, in her ninth year of teaching, still gets nervous when anyone comes into her classroom, but she is excited about the visit and what the team will learn.

“It is not just a one-shot affair,” she tells an observer, “but we keep cycling back to it. What we learn today will connect to what we see next week, when I get to walk and see the other half of the team. It also ties to the data teamwork we are doing, looking at formative assessment and to the rounds cycle we did two months ago, working on the same problem of practice.

“The best part,” she adds, “is that we know that whatever ideas we want to try out that will help us make a closer connection between rigorous student tasks, and the intent of the lesson will be supported and connected to the rest of our professional development.”

— LEE TEITEL

would notice. Individual teachers in individual schools, working in isolation, may turn rounds into an observational approach, not an improvement strategy rooted in a coherent school and district theory of action.

A Nested System

Recognizing these benefits and aware of the potential pitfalls, Superintendent Silver knew the district had to be nimble to maximize one and minimize the other. Throughout the process of going to scale — moving from having one school engaged in school-based instructional rounds to having all of them involved — Silver always was clear that district-based rounds would continue but might be modified to better complement the school-based work and might be reduced in frequency so educators would not be “rounded” out. In fact, the frequency was reduced from 10 a year (two per school), when it started, to five a year.

As school-based rounds ramped up in Killingly, district-based (cross-school) rounds evolved to focus on ensuring the relative isolation of school-based rounds did not undercut the school and district improvement efforts. One purpose was calibration — to make sure observers were consistent in how they assessed rigor on a district-developed instrument and to ensure core principles of rounds were being applied with fidelity to the model.

Another goal was to make sure that outside perspectives and ideas regularly came into each school, to help with school learning and prevent the kind of egg-crate isolation that can stymie school improvement efforts.

To help all these processes work well together, Killingly developed a form of “nested rounds.” In the second year of school-based and district-based rounds, staff members at Killingly Memorial School organized themselves so the school-based rounds were scheduled first, allowing them to piggyback the district visits onto existing school-based rounds. That way, the district rounds (or the rare event of superintendents rounds) look like an expanded version of school-based rounds, and principals can think strategically about when to use outsiders to provide additional feedback or otherwise enhance a visit.

A key part of “nested rounds” is ensuring that school system learning and school-to-school learning take place in ways that contribute to coherence and not lead to fragmentation. This aspect is enhanced by having system leaders on these visits pay attention to what common issues are showing up across the schools. It also reminds schools of their interdependence, that they are part of one system; and it enables educators in one school to see what is happening with their prospective students or with their graduates by looking at other points in the system (e.g., elementary, middle, high school). Killingly also



Harvard’s Richard Elmore (center), credited with developing the concept of instructional rounds, visits with students at Parramatta Marist High School in Australia’s Catholic Diocese of Parramatta, where he provided feedback to educators on instructional practices.

has tried to reach the same goal by encouraging schools to cross over and create some vertical connections in the district.

A Coherent System

For Silver (who moved on to the superintendency in Liberty, N.Y., in January 2013), the payoff from nested rounds was high. He notes the strong connection between school-based instructional rounds and his theory of action for overall district improvement.

“The whole thing about school-based rounds is the direct involvement of teachers and the professionalization of the role,” he says. “That’s where I think the whole power of school-based rounds is, as opposed to district or network rounds. It is because teachers are the ones that are observing each other and hopefully are becoming honest with each other and need to be self-reflective enough so they can hear the messages so that they can adjust their instruction accordingly. It’s a huge investment of time on everybody’s part — administrators and teachers — so there has to be enough value in it.” ■

LEE TEITEL is a lecturer on education and director of the School Leadership Program at Harvard Graduate School of Education in Cambridge, Mass. E-mail: Lee_Teitel@Harvard.edu. This article is adapted from his book *School-Based Instructional Rounds* (Harvard Education Press, 2013). Copyright © 2013. All rights reserved.

Beyond Rounds To Build Supervisory Skills

A network of superintendents in Washington starts with instructional rounds practices to grow the oversight of principals

BY STEVE S. MYERS AND DAVID L. GOEHNER

How rewarding — and “awarding” — can collaboration be as a catalyst for improving instructional leadership? Superintendents in south-central Washington’s Educational Service District 105 reached across their borders more than seven years ago to launch a system of administrator instructional networks to improve teaching and learning practices in the region’s schools. In doing so, they committed to three key goals: turning around low student test scores, boosting the learning potential of their students and establishing methods with their principals to stimulate more effective classroom instruction.

At the request of area superintendents, our

service district convened a 14-member delegation of its K-12 school administrators to attend Harvard University’s Summer Institute for Educational Leadership in 2005. During that weeklong session, Richard Elmore, professor of educational leadership at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, advocated the use of data-gathering concepts and practices of medical rounds — the collective effort doctors use to diagnose the problems of their hospital patients — as a method educators could apply toward improving instructional practice and, ultimately, accelerating learning.

Elmore’s instructional rounds system brings educators together to tour and observe the activities of school classrooms and take notes



An instructional rounds team of superintendents takes notes during a classroom visit in the East Valley School District's Moxee Elementary School in Yakima, Wash. From left, they are John Schieche, East Valley School District; Steve Myers, Educational Service District 105; Shane Backlund, Selah School District; and Duane Lyons, Naches Valley School District.

for a subsequent group debriefing. The process engages superintendents in protocols that define how their visits and discussions are conducted, what is observed in student-teacher interactions, how the subject content is being taught, and what is the classroom's culture.

Collaborative Solutions

Energized by the ideas at Harvard, the school leaders returned home to collectively organize what would become the first replication of Elmore's ideas at a location on the West Coast. The preparations included professional development from experts nationwide on high-quality practices, such as universal instructional designs and professional learning communities

for math and reading.

The ESD 105 Lower Yakima Valley Superintendents Network began in fall 2006, bringing area administrators together at a school in a different district each month to observe classrooms and then collaborate on solutions for problems of instructional practices.

The network progress toward boosting administrators' understanding of instructional leadership eventually spurred two more superintendent networks in 2008 and 2011 for the school districts in the other areas of the region. The increased professional interactions created through these learning teams now drive a common, regionwide instructional focus on improving practice to elevate student learning.

Because the superintendents generally deal with similar issues, no matter the size or setting of their school community, they've discovered each month's classroom visit provides them with mutually beneficial experiences. The monthly networking serves as a catalyst for knitting together personal relationships across school districts, engaging administrators in conversations about effective instruction with each other through phone and weekly e-mail.

"New superintendents have unique and ongoing opportunities to plug into a structure that helps them get professional development right away," says Kevin Chase, superintendent of the 3,400-student Grandview School District.

The superintendents' network also connects principals from various districts. As Superintendent John Schieche of Yakima's 2,950-student East Valley School District notes: "At one

Collaboration Leads to Twin Limelight for One County

WE THINK THE PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING among superintendents in south-central Washington's Educational Service District 105 isn't just an exceptional way to improve instruction across a region; it's also bringing historic results in one sense.

The power of interconnected school improvement work was validated during the 2012-13 school year. That's when something happened that never had occurred anywhere else across the country: A principal and a teacher from the same county and same state were concurrently named a national principal of the year and the national teacher of the year.

In the first weeks of the school year, Trevor Greene, principal of the 700-student Toppenish High School, was named by the National Association of Secondary School Principals as its 2013 National High School Principal of the Year.

Under his leadership over five years, his school had arced into a dramatic upswing in student achievement. Despite challenges in a high-poverty community with a student population in which more than 25 percent are enrolled in transitional bilingual programs, Toppenish High School left behind its status as a school that at one time had among the lowest test scores in the state. Having expanded the availability of courses with high rigor and career applications, Greene credited the improvements at Toppenish to the efforts by the building's teachers to become more involved in learning and preparing together as unified teams.

Then as the school year approached its end, science instructor Jeff Charbonneau of the neighboring Zillah High School was introduced at a White House ceremony as the 2013 National Teacher of the Year.



Trevor Greene, principal of Washington's Toppenish High School, was named 2013 National High School Principal of the Year.

Charbonneau, who teaches at a 400-student, rural school, has weaved collaboration into his teaching by acquiring and loaning robot kits to other schools in the state for competitions at his school. Since the hands-on learning contests began in 2008, about 900 students and 65 teachers from more than 40 schools have participated. He also connected with three colleges and universities to gain adjunct faculty status and boost the instructional levels in each of his courses so students at his high school can earn up to 24 college credits in STEM subjects.

Jon Quam, who runs the National Teacher of the Year program at the Council of Chief

State School Officers, confirmed the uniqueness of the overlapping national honors.

The nationally recognized accomplishments by these two educators, whose schools are separated by just nine miles, are among the carryover effects of the culture of collaboration that serves as the core of the superintendent instructional rounds process in south-central Washington. The regional networks have had an impact on the practices of more than 20 superintendents, 80 principals, hundreds of classroom teachers and, ultimately, more than 60,000 students in the schools within Educational Service District 105.

— STEVE MYERS AND DAVID GOEHNER

school, I saw very innovative strategies filled with formative assessment, and that's one of the things our district is working on. I then had a principal go and visit that school."

Connected Growth

Seeking further growth in their role as instructional leaders of their principals, members of the region's original network reached out to the expertise of higher education. The superintendents network initiated a long-term partnership with the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership, led by Stephen Fink.

Fink's center had performed work with schools in other states that were interested in using Elmore's instructional rounds method. Fink and his team helped local administrators understand instructional practices alone in a school district will not attain the high levels of achievement desired. Network members also must improve their own leadership skills and strengthen their ability to observe and analyze instruction in the classroom.

With the center's leadership, the original network has expanded its monthly gatherings to include presentations and dialogues on how the region's school district leaders can become master mentors of their principals. Presentations based on research by Meredith Honig, an associate professor at University of Washington, focus on central-office transformation.

The latter calls for all central-office leaders, notably superintendents, to become teachers of others to build systemic capacity. The effort centers on group reading assignments of research, examinations of problems of practice, sharing of professional development plans for individual principals and constructing theories of action to propel school leadership.

The network's professional development activities are framed under the Center for Educational Leadership's research-based Five Dimensions of Teaching and Learning. These dimensions relate to purpose, student engagement, curriculum and pedagogy, assessment for student learning, and classroom environment and culture. The center underscores the need for reciprocal accountability in instructional leadership. Teachers will grow professionally only in relation to the quality of the instructional leadership of their principals, and principals' instructional leadership will be no better than the support they receive from their superintendent.

The expanded focus on the superintendents' role in improving principal performance is a

natural evolution from the network's initial goals of the instructional rounds in each other's school classrooms. Once leaders develop their capacity to observe and analyze what good instruction looks like, they then must turn their attention to developing their own instructional leadership skills.

"Teachers will grow professionally only in relation to the quality of the instructional leadership of their principals, and principals' instructional leadership will be no better than the support they receive from their superintendent."

Collaboration's Fruits

In the years since taking those first steps in 2005 to launch a professional development experiment based on regionwide teamwork, local school administrators are seeing excellent results in area classrooms and schools.

The classroom visits and conference-table discussions in neighboring districts have provided a vibrant, authentic, hands-on living laboratory for educators to apply their new learning. They also have changed how central-office leaders interact with principals. Collegiality, curiosity and inquiry have elevated the professional connections between superintendents and their principals, between principals and their teachers and between teachers and their students.

The learning network that Educational Service District 105 and the district superintendents first transplanted from Harvard and then expanded through the University of Washington's Center for Educational Leadership is now a central component revolutionizing daily instruction. Local school leaders have seen how the power of interconnectivity helps to elevate colleagues into national-level recognition for their work. (See related story, page 42.)

Most importantly, though, this networking across districts has accelerated the teacher and administrator practices, which is maximizing the learning of students inside every classroom throughout south-central Washington. ■

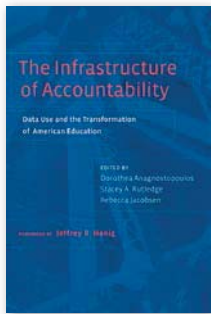
STEVE MYERS is superintendent of Educational Service District 105 in Yakima, Wash. E-mail: steve.myers@esd105.org. **DAVID GOEHNER** is the agency's public information officer.

Reading & Resources

BOOK REVIEWS

The Infrastructure of Accountability: Data Use and the Transformation of American Education

edited by Dorothea Anagnostopoulos, Stacey A. Rutledge and Rebecca Jacobsen, Harvard Education Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2013, 259 pp., \$49.95 hardcover, \$29.95 softcover



The Infrastructure of Accountability shines a light on how accountability is reshaping the way we think about public schools, providing opinions on all sides of the issue.

This weighty volume, edited by three veteran educators and university professors, maps the components that constitute the test-based accountability infrastructure. Part I examines efforts to build the infrastructure of accountability at national, state and local levels. Part II follows the infrastructure of accountability into districts, schools and classrooms. Part III explores the consequences of accountability as it relates to

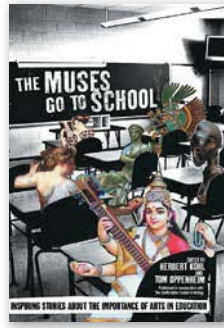
the public good.

The *Infrastructure of Accountability* also raises important questions regarding the tensions surrounding the current test-based accountability systems and discusses the larger implications for this movement going forward. The authors see a threat to displace “the broad-ranging goals that Americans have historically ascribed to their schools.”

Reviewed by Kenneth E. Hoover, superintendent, Monroe Public Schools, Monroe, Wash.

The Muses Go to School: Inspiring Stories about the Necessity of Arts in Education

edited by Herbert Kohl and Tom Oppenheim, The New Press, New York, N.Y., 2012, 198 pp., \$26.95 hardcover



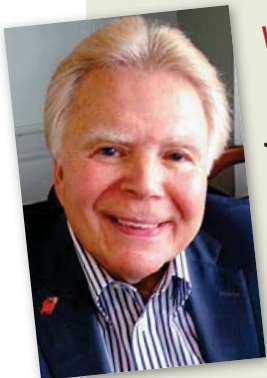
Arts advocates often champion the value of the arts in public education because they help students perform better on standardized tests. The problem with

that argument is that it admires an arts education only for the value it adds elsewhere — and not for what it offers on its own.

It is a resistance to reductionist thinking that characterizes the reflections in *The Muses Go to School*, edited by Herbert Kohl and Tom Oppenheim. As artists and advocates in their own right, the editors offer clear and compelling reasons to prove “the arts are not just for people who become artists” but for people who are creative, self-confident, reflective and thoughtful problem solvers.

Kohl and Oppenheim make their case for the arts through the autobiographical contributions of well-known performers and reformers, such as actor Philip Seymour Hoffman and educator Diane Ravitch. What emerges is a treatise on why arts should not only be included in schools but should actually be central in the school function.

Reviewed by Zach Kelehear, associate dean for academic affairs, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.



WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK ...

“I recognize we will never have conflict-free classrooms or campuses. My purpose is to help educational leaders traverse the landscape of conflicts in culture with greater understanding, to get comfortable being uncomfortable with cultural conflict issues, and to recognize these conflicts as opportunities for personal, communal and institutional growth, not obstacles.”

STEVE JENKINS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, LAMAR UNIVERSITY, BEAUMONT, TEXAS, AND AASA MEMBER SINCE 1999, ON CO-WRITING *CONFLICTS IN CULTURE: STRATEGIES TO UNDERSTAND AND RESOLVE THE ISSUES* (R&L 2013)

MORE BOOK REVIEWS www.aasa.org/SAreviews.aspx

Cheating Lessons: Learning From Academic Dishonesty

by James M. Lang

REVIEWED BY PAUL A. SHAW

The Four C's of Successful Teaching: Consistency, Contingency, Compassion & Courage

by B.C. Tozer

REVIEWED BY PRISCILLA A. BOERGER

Leadership and Teams: The Missing Piece of the Educational Reform Puzzle

by Lyle Kirtman

REVIEWED BY EDYTHE AUSTERMUHL

Learning To Breathe: A Mindfulness Curriculum for Adolescents to Cultivate Emotion Regulation, Attention, and Performance

by Patricia C. Broderick

REVIEWED BY CHRISTOPHER CLOUET

ABSTRACT

Executive Leadership Teams

A recent doctoral study at University of Southern California examined the strategies superintendents use to develop executive leadership teams.

Researcher Michelle Morse sampled five superintendents and 51 leadership team members who work in large K-12 districts in four states.

The study found superintendents balance person-focused and task-focused competencies in the selection of new team members, although issues of recruitment and retention were seen as barriers. The researcher said superintendents use six major collaboration strategies to build leadership capacity: clearly defined roles and responsibilities, climate of trust, openness, honesty, consistency and respect.

Superintendents use participative strategies with their teams at a higher rate than delegation strategies when distributing leadership.

Copies of “Strategies Used by Superin-

tendents in Developing Leadership Teams” are available from ProQuest at 800-521-0600 or dissspub@proquest.com.

BITS & PIECES

Scholastic Journalism

Quill and Scroll has updated the “Principal’s Guide to Scholastic Journalism: What Administrators Need to Know About Student Media” and the companion website for the guide, <http://principalsguide.org>.

The updated guide is a key resource for school administrators as well as for teachers, with new sections on student media in the digital age and journalism education standards. It includes an overview of how student media address the Common Core State Standards and teach 21st-century skills.

The guide can be ordered at www.quillandscroll.org.

Diversity Toolkit

The Diversity Communication Toolkit, produced by the National School Public Relations Association, offers educators

AASA Conference Proceedings

AASA’s *Conference Daily Online* will provide up-to-the-moment coverage of keynote speakers, award recipients and other news of note from the scene of the AASA National Conference on Education, Feb. 13-15, in Nashville, Tenn.

You can follow the conference through various social media, including blog postings by member superintendents, Twitter and a daily photo gallery. Presenters’ PowerPoint documents also will be collected on the site. Visit www.aasa.org.

templates, strategies and best practices for communicating with hard-to-reach community members.

The kit includes lessons on increasing a district’s cultural competency.

Access the toolkit at www.nspr.org/products.

CPR in Schools

The CPR in Schools Training Kit is a hands-on, interactive kit designed by the American Heart Association to teach students and school staff how to perform hands-only CPR in emergency situations.

Other lifesaving techniques taught in the kit include giving breaths, choking relief and how to use an automated external defibrillator. Additionally, the kit provides students with inflatable mannequins and instructional DVDs for home practice.

For more information, visit www.heart.org/CPRinSchools.

Accountability’s Impact

The National Bureau of Economic Research has released a new working paper investigating the long-term impact of school accountability measures as evidenced by Texas high schoolers.

Researchers found the policies resulted in long-term gains for students in schools at risk of failure but was damaging to students in schools that were performing at a higher level.

Purchase the report at www.nber.org/papers/w19444.pdf.

AASA School Solutions Center

These firms make up the AASA School Solutions Center. NJPA is a premier member.

NATIONAL JOINT POWERS ALLIANCE, national contract purchasing solution, www.njpacoop.org

ADVANCE PATH, budget-friendly academic growth solutions, www.AdvancePath.com

ECRA GROUP, research, analytics and accountability solutions, www.ecragroup.com

EDBACKER, crowd fundraising for education, www.edbacker.com

EDUCATION INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION, the home for K-12 education entrepreneurs, www.educationindustry.org

HMS EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS, dependent healthcare eligibility audits, www.dependentcheck.com/about/partnerships/aasa

THE JASON PROJECT, STEM education through exploration, www.jason.org

K12 INSIGHT, develop strategic communication initiatives to engage and collaborate with stakeholders, www.k12insight.com

MEDEXPERT, medical issues management services, www.medexpert.com

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH, organizational audits of human capital, www.organizationalhealth.com

PENN MID-CAREER DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, national, executive, cross-sector, innovative, cohort-based, www.gse.upenn.edu/midcareer

QUANTUM LEARNING, transformative schoolwide professional development, www.QuantumLearning.com

SCHOOL LEADERS RISK MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION, focus on federal legislation and litigation, www.slрма.org

UPS, shipping, freight, logistics, supplies for schools, www.ups.com

School districts should do their own due diligence before signing contracts with companies that belong to the AASA School Solutions Center.

Communications Kit

The National School Public Relations Association's *School Communication Benchmarking Toolkit: Rubrics of Practice and Suggested Measures* helps education leaders improve communication with internal and external audiences, including parents and family.

Order the kit at www.nspra.org/products.

Student Achievement Report

A new report examines standardized math and reading test data from 4th graders in 34 countries in order to identify the school and home factors that positively affect student achievement.

The report was completed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement and the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center in Boston. Find it at http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss_pirls2011/international-database.html.

Bullying Prevention

A new research brief from Child Trends examines the effectiveness of 17 different bullying prevention programs for children.

The study determined that programs involving parents and whole-school approaches were generally effective, while programs that promoted social and emotional learning and relationship skills

had mixed results.

Read the brief at www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/briefing_bullying5_anm1.pdf.

Mentoring Interventions

A systemic review of mentoring interventions on juvenile delinquency and school failure is available from the Campbell Collaboration.

The review, which examined all evidence published in England between 1970 and 2011, showed that though intervention can be successful for high-risk teenagers, there is still a critical need for substantial, large-scale examinations of mentoring success.

Read the review at <http://campbellcollaboration.org/lib/project/48/>.

Lifetouch Mission

Four AASA members will participate in a Lifetouch Memory Mission in the Dominican Republic from Jan. 21 to 28 to build a vocational school in the impoverished mountaintop village of Cecaini.

The superintendents will join principals, Lifetouch staff and other volunteers on the project, which will expand career opportunities for students.

Read an account of the Lifetouch mission at www.aasa.org/Lifetouch.aspx.

Have Any Funny Encounters Lately?

We're always interested in hearing your **AMUSING ANECDOTES RELATING TO THE WORK OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION** for possible use in *Leadership Lite*, *School Administrator's* back page of humor.

Tell us about the light-hearted moments in your office, during school visits, at school board meetings and ventures into the community.

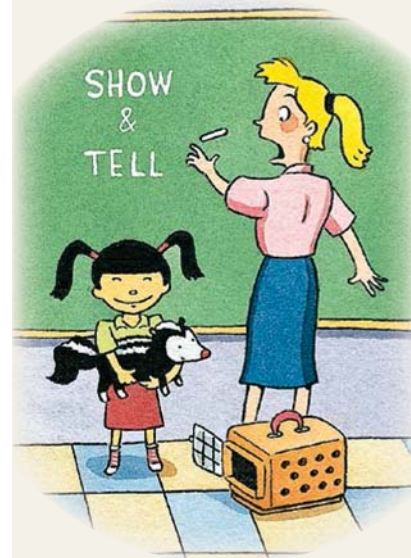
Send details of your humorous episodes to: Editor, *School Administrator*, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Or via e-mail: magazine@aasa.org

SchoolAdministrator | FEBRUARY

THE FACETS OF SOCIAL MEDIA. Scott McLeod on promoting higher-level thinking through social tools, coverage of social media policies in school districts, how to allay parental fears and a rural district's big moves into social media. Chris Kennedy addresses the ways school leaders use social media for professional development.

PLUS

- ▶ What to seek in your next school board
- ▶ Reviews of *Leadership and the Art of Struggle* and *Thriving as a Superintendent*
- ▶ Legal Brief on school district insolvency
- ▶ Leadership Lite



SchoolAdministrator
ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND COMMENTARY FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS

PRESIDENT'S CORNER | AMY F. SICHEL

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2013-14

(terms expire June 30 of the year indicated)

PRESIDENT

Amy F. Sichel
Superintendent
Abington School District,
Abington, Pa. (2014)

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Benny L. Gooden
Superintendent
Fort Smith Public Schools,
Fort Smith, Ark. (2014)

PRESIDENT-ELECT

David K. Pennington
Superintendent
Ponca City Public Schools
Ponca, Okla. (2014)

MEMBERS

Lyle C. Ailshie (2014)
Deborah S. Akers (2014)
Wayne R. Anderson (2015)
Yvonne W. Brandon (2015)
Richard A. Carranza (2016)
Garr G. Christensen (2015)
Daniel D. Curry (2015)
Charles S. Dedrick (2016)
Michael F. Fitzpatrick (2015)
Alton L. Frailey (2014)
Barton L. Goering (2014)
Robert T. Mills (2015)
Timothy M. Mitchell (2016)
Gail K. Pletnick (2016)
David R. Schuler (2014)
Robert M. Slaby (2014)
M. Brock Womble (2016)

Daniel A. Domenech
AASA Executive Director
(Ex Officio)

Jeffery D. Francis (2014)
Association of State
Executives Liaison
(Ex Officio)

Outside Partners in Tough Times



HISTORICALLY, ABINGTON, PA., School District rarely formed partnerships with commercial organizations. Past school boards were concerned with preventing external commercial messages from reaching and possibly overly influencing our students.

Yet outside of school, children today are bombarded with commercial messages from TV, radio, the Internet, social media, signage, mobile apps and more. Our school board reconsidered its stance, now permitting partnerships with outside organizations that support the mission of the school district.

AASA supports leaving decisions on commercial affiliations to local school boards and discourages state and federal legislation from impinging on these procedures. However, the association encourages local boards to always protect the health and well-being of students and staff when commercial partnerships are established.

Abington School District has in place a clear school board policy and superintendent administrative procedures that provide guidance for partnering with commercial organizations, consistent with the belief statements endorsed by AASA. Any districtwide program involving a proprietary organization must be brought to our Principals Council for consideration. Sponsorships and partnerships can provide additional funds for necessary or supplemental programs when framed and implemented creatively and responsibly.

A major impetus for considering partnerships was our success with building a new high school sports stadium. Our board allocated \$3 million for a new stadium, but we needed \$4 million total to include additional features. We bridged the gap by raising the \$1 million on our own without outside professional fundraisers. In conjunction with our educational foundation, which previously had not been a significant source of funding, we raised an additional \$1.3 million by forming

partnerships with many community organizations, individuals and corporations.

Our largest support came from Abington High School alumnus Stephen Schwarzman, a founder of the Blackstone Group, who donated about a third of our goal. The result: We built the incredibly beautiful Schwarzman Stadium, which *American School & University* magazine described as the place to be on Friday nights for football games, band competitions and other events.

That success led to sponsorships in other areas that have contributed to covering the costs of many projects. For example, we eliminated several printed handbooks and incorporated the information into a district calendar. Sponsorships cover the cost of creating, printing and mailing the calendar to all district families, and we provide the information on our website and on social media.

As superintendents, we normally do not see our role including capital campaigns, cultivating donors, or other forms of development expected in private schools and universities. Here are examples of how districts are raising funds through sponsorships and partnerships:

- ▶ Grants to teachers for classroom projects;
- ▶ Cable TV and website sponsorships and acknowledgments;
- ▶ Naming rights for facilities;
- ▶ Parent group and sports team “ad books”

In addition, individual schools use many creative methods to raise funds including flea markets, concerts and school nights at restaurants.

We have had success with sponsorship projects and recognize we need to establish more partnerships in the future as a means to address our growing needs in a fiscally challenging economic environment.

AMY SICHEL is AASA president for 2013-14. E-mail: AmySichel@Abington.k12.pa.us

Encouraging Signs at Our Women's Forum



WHEN I FIRST saw Kathryn Wienslaw walk into the ballroom foyer at the Coronado Island Marriott in San Diego, I took her to be one of the many young, aspiring women leaders attending AASA's Women in School Leadership Forum. It's a reaction that Wienslaw is used to.

Her appearance and age belie the position she holds in corporate America, chief operating officer and director of employer-sponsored business at AXA Equitable. The reaction is understandable when you realize only 3 percent of America's CEOs are women.

As one of a handful of men at the conference, I was privileged to sit in on the presentations and be educated about the gender inequities still prevalent in our society. This was the third forum AASA has sponsored in California in collaboration with the Association of California School Administrators.

I was pleased to learn that education is doing much better than corporate America as far as leadership positions are concerned. Women now hold 28 percent of the superintendencies in America, but that still suffers against the fact 72 percent of educators are women.

Confidence Building

The forum enables women educators to come together to build their skills, strengthen their professional networks, and sharpen their career planning through resume reviews and one-on-one coaching. They also hear from highly accomplished women leaders about how they achieved success in spite of the barriers.

Wienslaw shared with the audience lessons she had learned from reading

Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*. She confessed that as she progressed up the career ladder, there were times when she lacked the confidence to do the tasks she was called upon to do. But one of the principles she learned from *Lean In* was to "fake it 'til you make it." Put on the face of confidence, even though you don't feel it, and soon it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and you indeed gain confidence.

She also shared that generally for women it is not a career ladder; it is not a straight-line, linear progression upward. Rather it is more of a jungle gym, where you may have to go sideways and down before you go up.

"Wienslaw refers to her mentors as her BOARD OF DIRECTORS. She relies on them for guidance and advice but is quick to add that, ultimately, the decisions are hers to make."

Wienslaw and other conference speakers also addressed the importance of having mentors and sponsors. Indeed, the mix of accomplished women leaders and aspiring administrators at the forum provided opportunities for mentors and mentees to come together. In one session titled Moving From Mentoring to Sponsorship, my good friend and colleague Darline Robles, now a professor at the University of Southern California, urged the women to be more pro-active in mentoring and sponsoring other women.

The professional development of our leaders is a significant component of AASA's mission. Last summer, we launched the National Superintendent

Certification Program with a cohort of 28 superintendents from 19 states, including six women. The 18-month program will culminate in a graduation ceremony that will take place at the National Conference on Education in San Diego when AASA celebrates its 150th anniversary.

Participants' reactions to the program have been widely positive as they receive one-on-one mentoring from experienced and successful superintendents and develop a community of learning with their colleagues. Exposure to the business strategies of corporate leaders as well as online simulations also are part of the program. A second cohort will start this summer; and superintendents with five years or less of experience are encouraged to apply on the AASA website.

Selling Yourself

Patrice D'Eramo, a vice president with Cisco, shared with the Women's Forum the importance of branding and exposure. You have to sell yourself much like you would sell a product, she said. You need to have a brand, and you need to market it. You do not want to be the best-kept secret in your school district. Focus on your brand and reputation, or others will define it for you. Have the courage to stand up for what you believe in. There are gender differences, and some of them should be used to advantage. Women tend to be better at collaborating.

Wienslaw was pleased to see how the women educators networked during the social hour, conversing and truly enjoying each other's company. She was sad to admit such comradeship was lacking in the corporate world. Who says we should run our schools like a business?

DANIEL DOMENECH is AASA executive director. E-mail: ddomenech@aasa.org. Twitter: @AASADan

Hope and Opportunity Need Not be Costly



JORDAN, a Maryland AdvancePath Academy student: “Blended learning gives me a better opportunity of success in school and keeps me focused on my goal of graduation. I

love to come here every day and get my work done. When I go home, I feel 10 times smarter. I love telling my mother what new things I learned about in biology or health, and she is fascinated by it, and proud of me.”

Craig, a Maryland AdvancePath Academy teacher: “I’m making a difference with these students every day. Every day! This is why I became a teacher.”

Teachers and students feeling this way is the foundation of highly effective team teaching and team learning.

Students Challenged

Many students are credit deficient (six months or less behind), long-term academic deficient (1 1/2 to 2-plus years behind), socio-emotionally challenged or distracted by other priorities (ailing parents, their own children or work). Or they’re otherwise disengaged or disenfranchised from school.

Often these students are bright, creative and capable, but they simply are not suited to a traditional school setting. You may know these students yourselves. All are capable of learning under the right circumstances, especially when offered appropriate opportunities. But what are they?

How do you serve all students without spending disproportionately on a significant number of them? As evidenced by the chart at right, most districts adequately serve the majority of their students, including those at the higher end of the spectrum. But for those struggling, they often spend more per full-time equivalent

and struggle to get desired results. Why? District programs often use existing teaching methods but deploy more staff, thereby costing more per pupil without necessarily producing better outcomes. Others simply use technology instead of staff and get the same results.

Paradigm Shift

The key is to create an effective blend of online and off-line instruction, one-to-one and small group learning experiences, and resiliency skills building and to use technology and data to leverage the teaching staff — as Baltimore County, Md., Public Schools is doing.

Meeting the needs of these students requires flexibility in teaching, mentoring and scheduling. It also requires a different environment, a deep understanding of the socio-emotional and other issues that cause academic progress to stall, individualized learning plans and appropriate wraparound services to shore up rigorous academic opportunities.

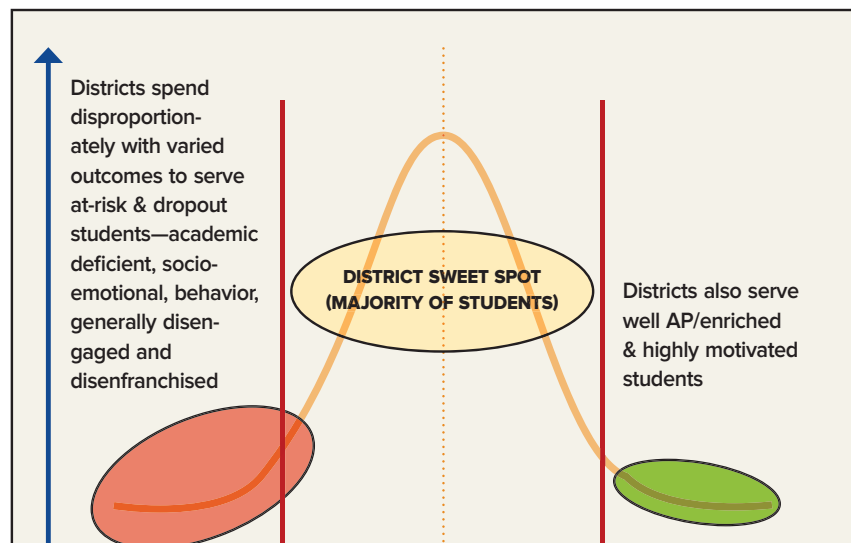
A teaching and learning paradigm shift is essential, requiring that students are “met at their time of

need” and that they have access to differentiated instruction and multiple pathways to graduation. However, the teaching staff cannot be overlooked. The staff must be highly qualified and well-trained, but they also must receive focused, high-quality, ongoing professional development. These components must be integrated to operate cost-effective, rigorous intervention, dropout recovery and academic-growth programs. Successful programs include broad-based research.

Cost Efficacy

Outcomes will be superior — with nine of 10 students experiencing success; site-based graduation improving at least 10 to 15 percent; the achievement gap narrowing by 25 to 35 percentage points; dropout rates declining and school climate improving, all within budget. This is AdvancePath’s experience serving 4,000 students a year across 21 sites in four states. The systemic application of broad-based research works.

JOHN MURRAY is founder and CEO of AdvancePath Academics in Williamsburg, Va. E-mail: jmurray@advancepath.com





Thomas G. Farrell

Thomas Farrell, an AASA member since October, is the new regional superintendent for the Shore Regional, West Long Branch and

Oceanport school districts in West Long Branch, N.J. The appointment comes after five years as high school principal in the Plumstead Township School District in New Egypt, N.J., where Farrell also served as director of technology and communications. Prior to the start of his teaching career, Farrell worked for eight years as the vice president of Atlantic Lighting in Edison, N.J.



Sandra L. Husk

After serving seven years as superintendent of Salem-Keizer Public Schools in Salem, Ore., Sandy Husk has accepted the position of chief executive

officer of AVID, a nonprofit corporation in San Diego, Calif., which prepares students for four-year college eligibility. Husk previously served as superintendent of Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools in Clarksville, Tenn., and of Mapleton Public Schools in Adams County, Colo. She holds a Ph.D. in administration, curriculum and supervision from the University of Colorado, Denver. Husk has been a member of AASA since 1996.



Debra Livingston

The 15,500-student Manchester, N.H., school district has welcomed Debra Livingston as its new superintendent. She assumes the berth after six years at the top post

in Charlestown, N.H. She previously worked in El Paso, Texas, holding such upper-level administrative positions as executive director of curriculum, director of secondary education, principal and assistant principal. Livingston began her education career as a middle school English and writing teacher. A member of AASA since 2007, Livingston holds an Ed.D. from the University of Texas at El Paso.



Joseph E. Silko

Joseph Silko has been appointed executive director of Education Innovation Partners, a regional collaboration of more than 20

school districts and five community colleges in northeastern Minnesota. Much of Silko's education career has been spent in Grand Rapids, Minn., where he worked eight years as superintendent, six years as a high school principal and six years as an assistant principal. Before moving into administration, Silko, a member of AASA since 2005, spent 15 years as a music teacher.



Jeffrey A. Villar

The Connecticut Council for Education Reform has appointed Jeffrey Villar, former superintendent in Windsor, Conn., as its new executive director.

A longtime Nutmeg State educator, Villar also held a superintendency in Rocky Hill, Conn., for four years, and worked as an associate superintendent, principal and assistant principal in Meriden, Conn. He began his education career in Hartford, Conn., as a curriculum specialist and social studies teacher. An AASA member for nine years, Villar holds a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Connecticut.



Carey M. Wright

After four years with the District of Columbia Public Schools, Carey Wright has become Mississippi's first permanent female state superintendent

of education. Wright served as chief academic officer and deputy chief in the office of teaching and learning in D.C. She spent most of her career in Maryland, as associate superintendent in Montgomery County and as director of special education and as an elementary school principal in Howard County. An AASA member since 2005, Wright earned an Ed.D. from the University of Maryland.

APPOINTMENTS

Don Adams, assistant superintendent to superintendent, Williamsport, Pa.

Anthony Annunziato, from superintendent, Smithtown, N.Y., to associate professor, St. John's University, Queens, N.Y.

Nason Authement, from secondary education supervisor, Terrebonne Parish School District, Houma, La., to superintendent, Rapides Parish, Alexandria, La.

Johnnie Cain, from superintendent, Logan, N.M., to superintendent, Portales, N.M.

Art Fessler, from superintendent, Oak Lawn-Hometown School District 123, Oak Lawn, Ill., to superintendent, Community Consolidated School District 59, Arlington Heights, Ill.

Kathy Fields, from chief academic officer to superintendent, Jessamine County Schools, Nicholasville, Ky.

Lynn Moody, from superintendent, Rock Hill, S.C., to superintendent, Rowan-Salisbury School System, Salisbury, N.C.

Scott Rixford, from superintendent, Woodland Park, N.J., to executive director, New Jersey Department of Education Regional Achievement Center, Paterson, N.J.

Jeffery Talbert, from assistant superintendent, Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, University Heights, Ohio, to superintendent, Alliance, Ohio

Neil Terhune, from superintendent, Carbon County School District, Rawlins, Wyo., to superintendent, Raton, N.M.

Lu Young, from superintendent, Jessamine County Schools, Nicholasville, Ky. to chief academic officer, Fayette County Schools, Lexington, Ky.

RETIREMENTS

Craig Dowling, superintendent, Harris County, Ga.

Randy Fowler, superintendent, Portales, N.M.

Jeff Miller, superintendent, Somers Point, N.J.

Dan Twarling, superintendent, Maxwell, Neb.

DEATHS

Peter J. Azar, 65, retired superintendent, Waltham, Mass., Oct. 7

Mike Caston, 65, retired superintendent, Escondido, Calif., Oct. 27

Ralph O. Coaster, 64, retired superintendent, Lake Fenton, Mich., Oct. 20

Robert S. Guiffreda, 58, retired superintendent, Frontier, N.Y., Oct. 30

Judith A. Kerrins, 71, retired superintendent, Woodland Park, Colo., July 18

John (Jack) Sullivan, 74, former executive director, New England School Development Council, Oct. 18

News about AASA members' promotions, retirements, honors and deaths should be addressed to: Editor, *School Administrator*, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Fax: 703-841-1543. E-mail: magazine@aasa.org

Leading in Hard Times With Integrity

BY LIZ GRIFFIN

WHEN DAVID PENNINGTON took the helm of Ponca City, Okla., Public Schools in 2004, the suburban district of 5,200 students was facing turbulent times.

Conoco Oil's merger and major restructuring reduced the local workforce by 3,600 jobs over the next few years. Teachers began departing by the droves as spouses found employment elsewhere, and district enrollment plummeted.

"David kept us all going," says Don Nuzum, school board president. "He's a great finance person. When he came in, we were losing about 150 students a year because of Conoco's downsizing. Then it went down to 100 per year for a few years, then 60, then 35 or so before it turned around two years ago."

Pennington drew on his analytical skills to target spending cuts, to staff shrinking classrooms and to postpone particular projects while maintaining what Nuzum calls "a decent fund balance." With careful oversight, he never had to resort to reducing student programming or cutting staffing, relying instead on attrition.

Conoco's corporate restructuring, which the superintendent likened to a "slow-progressing terminal disease" wasn't the biggest crisis of Pennington's now 18½ years in the superintendency, though. That would be the economic recession's toll of the past five years.

His conservative approach to fiscal affairs has preserved Ponca City's core programs and key curricular activities — achievements that look even more remarkable given that Oklahoma ranks as one of the nation's lowest per-pupil spending states.

Community leader Daren Wilson respects Pennington for his approach, noting, "He rolls up his sleeves."

Before moving to Ponca City, located 100 miles north of Oklahoma City, Pennington was superintendent of Blackwell Public Schools, a neighboring district with 1,550 students,

BIO STATS: DAVID PENNINGTON

CURRENTLY: superintendent, Ponca City, Okla.

PREVIOUSLY: superintendent, Blackwell, Okla.

AGE: 58

GREATEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER: Warren Carmichael, former superintendent in Bristow, Okla., taught me how important character and integrity are to the superintendency and Bill Stephens, the importance of being conservative with district funds.

BEST PROFESSIONAL DAY: May 21, 2013, the day after the tornado hit Moore, Okla., when our students and staff immediately looked for ways to help.

BOOK AT BEDSIDE: *Thomas Jefferson:*



The Art of Power by Jon Meacham

BIGGEST BLOOPER: Keeping schools open when a major snowstorm was forecast. Not a flake was in sight until 8:20 a.m.

WHY I'M AN AASA MEMBER: Superintendents should have a place at the table when national education policy is being decided.

for nine years. In Ponca City, he wears fewer hats, but says "the superintendency is a difficult job no matter what the district size."

He prefers to focus on brighter signs, including three schools being recognized nationally for achievement gains and ACT scores, in spite of a student body that has shot up over his tenure from 44 percent free and reduced-price lunch to 67 percent.

Pennington feels closely connected to his small community. "The smaller the district, the more personal the job," he says. "You know all of your employees, and they know you. And if you stay in place for more than two years, you are going to know most of the parents. Every decision is harder when you have a personal relationship with the individuals who are going to be affected by the decision."

Ponca City residents have come to know him and what he values. Pennington is serious, a deep thinker, a good listener and someone with integrity.

With nearly a decade on the job, Pennington has seen plans come to fruition. He's now transitioning to a 21st-century schools model, implementing a 1:1 laptop initiative and helping teachers integrate technology into their practices. He also led \$30 million in facility upgrades.

Pennington, who will assume the AASA presidency in July, carves out time for state and federal legislative affairs, earning respect from elected officials. "David's extremely bright, very quiet and highly analytical," says Phyllis Hudecki, executive director of the Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition, who came to know him when she worked for the governor.

"I was taught (early in my career)," Pennington says, "that it was important ... to talk about education policy with legislators and other superintendents so we could speak with a unified voice."

LIZ GRIFFIN is managing editor of *School Administrator*. E-mail: lgriffin@aasa.org

Grades for Greenbacks

A letter on what appeared to be official high school letterhead offered freshmen the chance “to make financial donations to ease academic and extracurricular obligations.” For \$20, the letter promised, a student could get five extra-credit points and for \$35 could receive exemption from a test.

The letter, widely circulated around the Stevenson High School District in the Chicago suburb of Lincolnshire, was just too good to be true.

Stevenson Superintendent Eric Twadell had the job of deflating students’ hopes. He said a teacher of world history had created the quid pro quo as a modern-day example of papal indulgences that were common in the Middle Ages.

SOURCE: CHICAGO TRIBUNE



Quote to Note

“Do you know the difference between education and experience? Education is when you read the fine print; experience is what you get when you don’t.”

— PETE SEEGER, legendary folk singer

SOURCE: NATIONAL SCHOOL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

Pursuit of Knowledge

Once an avid reader, always an avid reader.

When David Kellogg assumed the superintendency in Eureka Springs, Ark., in 2013, he told the *Lovely County Citizen* about his youthful voracity for the written word when he’d sign up eagerly at the public library in Webster Parish, La., for the summer reading club. And each year, a childhood nemesis, Delores, would beat him out for first place in the contest for most books read.

Kellogg’s mother had an answer. “She’d say, ‘You would (win) if you didn’t play baseball or go swimming all the time.’ I wasn’t willing to do that.”

No Passing This Bottle

As the brand-new kindergarten students in the Vail, Ariz., School District settled into their first visit to a computer lab, one little boy shyly but convincingly announced that he had a need to go to the bathroom.

For the sake of efficiency, the computer lab teacher had adopted the use of a universal bathroom pass. The words “bathroom pass” were written on a large, empty bottle of hand sanitizer. Any adult seeing a student carrying the bottle instantly knew the reason the student was not in class. The harried teacher, with other youngsters vying for her attention, handed the little boy the hall pass and said, “Take this and go.”

When the boy returned a few minutes later, the bottle was no longer empty. When questioned regarding the yellow liquid in the bottle, the

young man innocently explained: When he was traveling in the car with his family and had “to go,” his father would give him an empty bottle and say, “Take this and go.”

The teacher decided it would be best to retire her bottle hall pass.

SHORT, HUMOROUS anecdotes, quips, quotations and malapropisms for this column relating to school district administration should be addressed to: Editor, *School Administrator*, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Fax: 703-841-1543. E-mail: magazine@aasa.org. Upon request, names may be withheld in print.

Superintendent Resources

www.aasa.org/Resources.aspx

From professional development to toolkits to multimedia, AASA provides the resources you need to help you and your team succeed.

AASA Websites



aasa.org



aasaconnect.org

Also:

- AASA Job Bulletin
- National Conference on Education
- Buyers Guide for Educators
- Legislative Action Center
- AASA Closing the Gap

E-Journals/Newsletters and Publications



The Leader's Edge



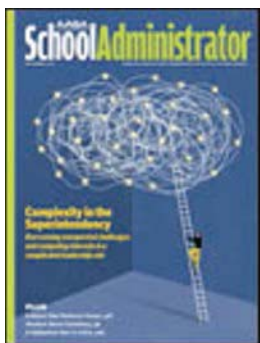
News of the Nation

Also:

- AASA New Superintendents E-Journal
- Conference Daily Online
- Legislative Corps Weekly Report
- Policy Insider

Other Publications:

- School Administrator
- Health-Related Publications
- Journal of Scholarship & Practice



Mobi On Your Device
Scan QR code to view AASA's mobile website on your mobile device.



AASA Blogs:

- Connect with Dan
- The Leading Edge Blog
- AASA Member Blogs



nce.aasa.org

PLC AT WORK™ SUMMIT



February 26–28
PHOENIX, AZ

Visionaries of PLC at Work™



Mike Mattos, Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour,
and Robert Eaker

“I returned home with an energized attitude not only for PLCs, but also for doing whatever it takes to reach the students in my classroom personally.”

—Vicky Yocum, teacher,
Wheeler Elementary School, Kentucky

The journey continues

Additional presenters



Luis F.
Cruz



Douglas
Fisher



Michael
Fullan



Timothy D.
Kanold



Anthony
Muhammad



Regina
Owens



Kenneth C.
Williams

Engaging keynote presentations, breakout sessions, and interactive forums are designed to develop your capacity for building Professional Learning Communities at Work™. Hear from experts you know and trust as they address the most important aspects of school culture that must change as you create your PLC.

Register today!

solution-tree.com/2014PLCSummit

800.733.6786