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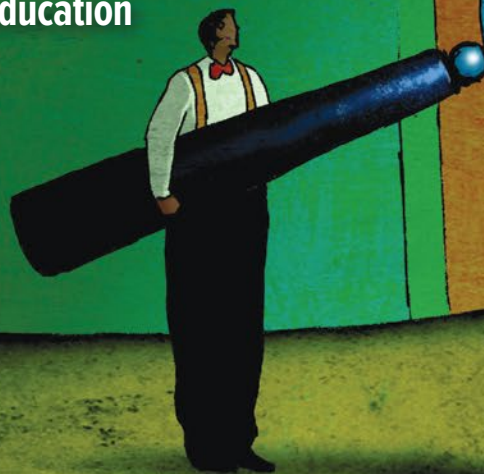
School Administrator

JANUARY 2016

ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND COMMENTARY FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS

The Potential (& Pitfalls) of Big Data

Evidence-based decisions
for managing K-12 education



PLUS

Dealing With Misinformation, p26

Parents Cry Foul on Coaches, p9

Book Reviews, p41

Google Apps for Evaluation, p12



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oasis [oh-ey-sis]

noun (pl. oases)

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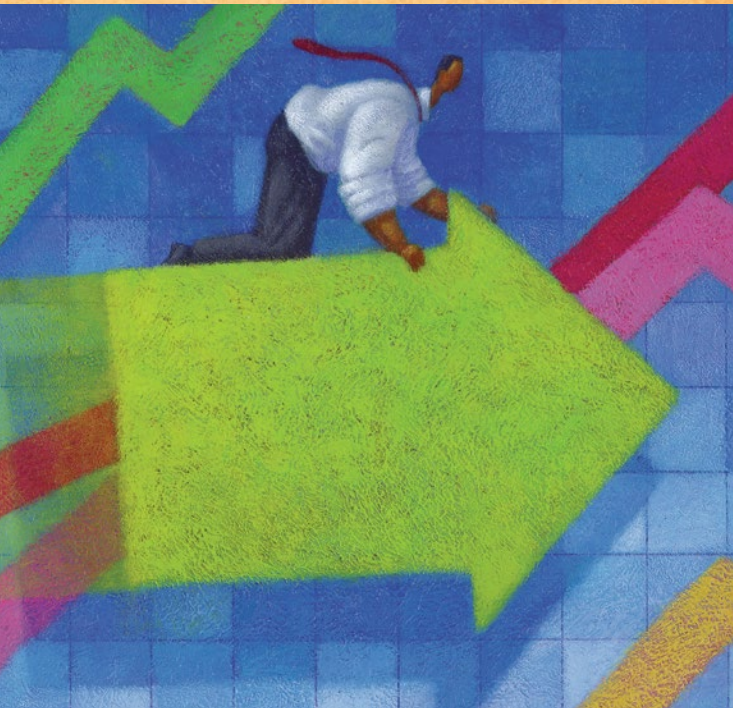
- The National Conference on Education is an oasis of inspiration in the midst of a hectic school year.

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SchoolAdministrator

JANUARY • NUMBER 1 VOL. 73

18 The Pseudo-Analytics of Year-End Data

BY JOHN KUHN

The outspoken superintendent of a small Texas district on how clumsy state and federal policies blunt the transformative potential of data in education.

21 Practical measures for taming the data dragon

23 Data Rich, Information Poor

BY HEATHER BECK AND JOE MORELOCK

The leadership of the Lake Oswego, Ore., schools on vetting and adopting technology tools that enable teachers to apply useful data to seamlessly drive their instruction.

25 Additional resources

26 Overcoming Misinformation

BY DAVID N. RAPP AND MEGHAN M. SALOMON

Researchers at Northwestern University suggest how educators might help others and themselves deal with public claims that just aren't true.

30 Data for Turbocharging Management Decisions

BY NATHAN LEVENSON

The head of the District Management Council, a former superintendent, has ideas on improving the cost-effectiveness of personalized learning, staff schedules and more, relying on Big Data.

34 Answering the Question: 'How Do You Know?'

BY JOANN STERNKE

Evidence-based leadership decisions permeate the decision-making processes in the Pewaukee, Wis., schools, according to the district's superintendent.

36 Supporting documents and videos about Pewaukee

37 Becoming a Data Champion in 6 Steps

BY SHAWN JOSEPH AND MONIQUE W. DAVIS

How a suburban district in Maryland uses the data it collects to motivate staff and improve classroom instruction.

*“Sometimes charters play well in the neighborhood;
sometimes they do not.”* **PAGE 17**

FRONTLINE

6 STARTING POINT

Our undivided attention to Big Data.

6 STATE OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Career Path to the Top

Men and women follow different steps along the way.

7 BEST OF THE BLOGS

Excerpts from five superintendents' reflective blog postings.

8 ETHICAL EDUCATOR

The ‘Convenience’ of License Expiration

What to do when a marginal teacher claiming extenuating circumstances misses the renewal deadline?



9 LEGAL BRIEF

When Parents Blow the Whistle on Coaches

BY ERIC J. QUIRING

Separating the legitimate concerns of abuse from the general unhappiness of parents over their kids' playing time.

10 BOARD-SAVVY SUPERINTENDENT

Where's the Superintendent Fit in a Successor Search?

BY STEVE HORTON

When the outgoing superintendent plays a decision-making role, things can go horribly wrong.

11 TECH LEADERSHIP

Using Google Apps for Superintendent Evaluation

BY JAY C.A. HARNACK

The leader of a small Wyoming district turns to online rating forms for use by his board.

12 FOCUS: FINANCIAL SUPPORT

A Few Tested Fundraising Routes

BY STAN LEVENSON

A consultant's favored strategies for raising targeted revenue for schools.

16 MY VIEW

In the Charter Movement, It Is What It Is

BY RYAN DONLAN

A former superintendent's view of chartering of schools today as a “permission slip.”

RESOURCES

41 BOOK REVIEWS

- *How to Become Data Literate: The Basics for Educators*
- *Millennials with Kids: Marketing to This Powerful and Surprisingly Different Generation of Parents*

Also, AASA member **Peter Corona** on writing *Sunol: Never Too Small to Succeed*

42 ABSTRACT

Women's Longevity

A doctoral study examines perceived barriers that influence tenures.

AASA INSIGHT

43 PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Big Data and New Nomenclature

BY DAVID R. SCHULER

The intense focus on applying data can be a good thing but also problematic.

44 EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

What We Know as Superintendency Trackers

BY DANIEL A. DOMENECH

AASA's latest survey paints the current picture of the profession.

45 SCHOOL SOLUTIONS

Leadership and Return on Investment

BY JOHN GATTA

An AASA partner that documents the relationship between program costs and quality.

46 PEOPLE WATCH

The monthly compilation of association members who are making career moves. The Sidelight shines on a Hoosier with fishing passions.

47 PROFILE

Paul M. Hewitt

BY PAUL RIEDE

A savvy superintendent has the rare opportunity to operate with frankness in Fayetteville, Ark.

PLUS

4 READER REPLY

48 LEADERSHIP LITE



48

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Kudos for your issue on gifted education (September 2015). This is a topic far too often ignored or, worse, demagogued. You presented the facts and a variety of perspectives, and with a good-natured focus on what's best for kids.

U.S. SCHOOLS DO A POOR JOB OF MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL of our high-ability youngsters, but no student subgroup suffers from this more than our disadvantaged pupils. Jane Clarenbach, in her article "Expanding the View of Giftedness," hits the nail on the head when she celebrates school district initiatives to both close the "excellence gap" and ensure that gifted program participation fully reflects the schools' diversity. Chester E. Finn Jr. and Brandon L. Wright do the same in their article, ("The Obstacles Deterring Gifted Education") when they state that "a woeful 2 percent of low-SES Americans reach the uppermost PISA ranks versus 20 percent from the top quartile."

Thank you for offering **WORKABLE MICRO AND MACRO SOLUTIONS**. Let's hope people listen.

MICHAEL J. PETRILLI
PRESIDENT,
THOMAS B. FORDHAM INSTITUTE,
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Her Memorable Stories

Linda Conlon's article, "The Stories They Tell About the Gifted" (September 2015), brought back many memories. As former superintendent in the Quaker Valley, Pa., district, I was attending an institute at the University of Southern California when I first heard Conlon's name. Because another district was interested in employing her, my staff asked for permission to offer her the gifted education coordinator position.

This was an unusual request because we rarely offered anyone a professional position before the superintendent interviewed the candidate. Nonetheless because they were so passionate about her, I acquiesced.

To my delight, she and her supervisor challenged the myths and metrics that tend to steer gifted education programs. Their thoroughness, knowledge of pedagogy and curriculum, and principled behavior gained the trust of students, parents and teachers.

R. GERARD LONGO
CLINICAL ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Physical Fitness Coverage

As a former physical education teacher, I found it refreshing to read "Losing Touch With Physical Education" (August 2015), which emphasized lifetime fitness and lifetime activity skills.

The article by Jessica Skolnikoff and Robert Engvall also referenced a school leader who "walked the talk" (or more fittingly "ran the talk"). In my world, there are too few senior education leaders who model a fitness lifestyle.

JERRY RESHETAR
SUPERINTENDENT,
GRAND MEADOW PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
GRAND MEADOW, MINN.

A Model Collaborator

Julie Hackett's article, "The High Price of Superintendent Turnover" (October 2015), is an excellent piece for current or aspiring superintendents. She has done an exemplary job of outlining the general circumstances of turnover at the top.

Her contribution also stirred some personal memories, as I hired Julie Hackett as my assistant superintendent in Taunton, Mass.

Since assuming the superintendency, she has brought the board together, forming a team with the superintendent. The major byproduct is less stress on everyone in the system, enabling the staff to do their jobs.

She has done another service to the profession by writing about what she has done to form a collaborative team, thereby making it possible for others, even me, to replicate her success.

ART STELLAR
AASA LIFE MEMBER,
HINGHAM, MASS.

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THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

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

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STARTING POINT

Data Data Everywhere

Elementary and secondary education for years has not lacked for statistical information about students, staff and schools. Today, that steady stream has become a torrent, leading to the notion increasingly referenced as Big Data in education.

Less established is how education leaders can prevent Big Data from drowning everyone in its wake. How can educators make sensible applications of all that data? And how should the mass of information drive decisions that will lead, ideally, to better instruction and higher learning by students?

In this issue, we have turned largely to practitioners for insights and answers. You'll find writing on this theme from current and former superintendents who've been exploring productive ways to employ the data in pursuit of their systems' goals.

We open the coverage, though, with a hard-hitting piece (page 18) by John Kuhn, superintendent of a small district in Texas, on the corruption of data use stemming from the high-pressured, high-stakes testing movement. Misguided state and federal dictates, he writes, "are squandering the power of 21st-century data analytics in education by deploying it firmly inside a 19th-century Skinner box of basic rewards and punishments."

It's a provocative read, and I hope many of our readers will share their reactions in the form of a letter to the editor. I await your responses.

Jay P. Goldman

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STATE OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY

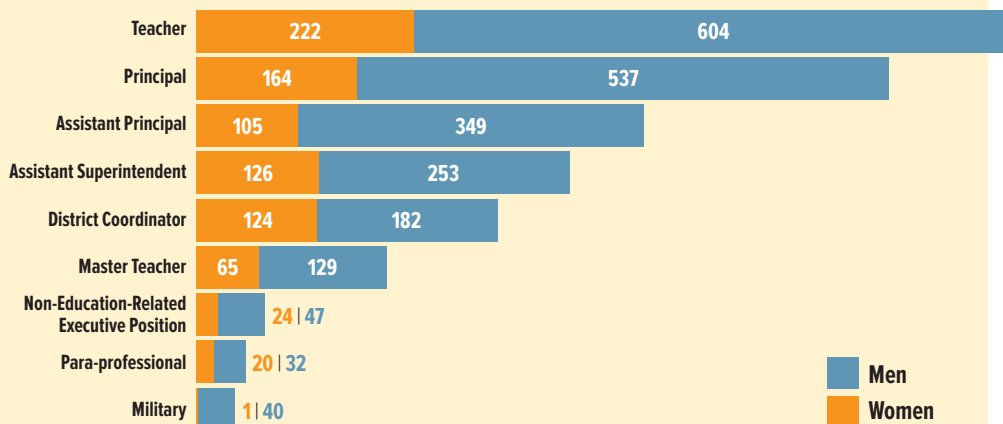
Career Path to the Top

The career path to the superintendency is defined by the experience individuals bring to the role.

Predictably, serving as a teacher dominates the profile of positions held for at least one year prior to becoming the superintendent. Some differences were noted when gender of the superintendent was considered. In particular, a greater percentage of female superintendents have served in senior staff roles (assistant superintendent, coordinator) than their male counterparts, yet a greater percentage of males served as building administrators than females.

This finding represents yet another indicator that the career path to the superintendency appears to differ by gender.

Previous Positions Held with at Least One Year of Experience
(multiple responses allowed)



SOURCE: "Study of the American Superintendent: 2015 Mid-Decade Update" published by AASA. Analysis was constructed by Leslie A. Finnan, Robert S. McCord, Christopher C. Stream, T.C. Mattocks, George G. Petersen and Noelle M. Ellerson. Access the report at www.aasa.org.





“Writing my dissertation was awful. ... I knew no one was reading it. In fact, I placed a \$10 bill on page 14 of my dissertation on display in the Cardinal Stritch Library in

Milwaukee, WI. I am certain that when I go back in 10 years to look, it will still be there.”

From “Cardboard Can Save Education” by **Joe Sanfelippo** (superintendent, Fall Creek, Wis.) on his blog You’re Always Welcome in Cricket County

“Free play, particularly with multi-ages teaches empathy, caring, as well as creativity and communications. Kids are growing up with this significant developmental void because society has forced schools to turn the youngest years into test-prep, sit-in-your-seat. ... learning activities instead of freedom to learn through play and discovery. ...”

From “We’re Killing Empathy in Our Kids” by **David Britten** (superintendent, Godfrey-Lee Public Schools, Grand Rapids, Mich.) on his blog Rebel 6 Ramblings

“Tony Wagner ... reminds us that we are living in a radically different world ... [where] *content matters; skills matter more; and motivation matters most!*”

From “Innovation: What Matters Most?” by **Amy Griffin** (superintendent, Cumberland County, Va.) on Amy Griffin’s Blog

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

“Sometimes I fear that those who oppose the standards wouldn’t know one if it bit them on the bottom. Opponents seem to be upset about where they come from and who is behind them. In fact, one questioner at the forum implied that Saudi Arabia was behind Common Core.”

From “Maryland’s College and Career Ready Standards — Common Core” by **Daniel Curry** (superintendent, Calvert County, Md.) on his blog School Talk

“I have said in presentations that ‘schools are not fast food franchises,’ each should have their own signature reflective of the community in which they exist. I also often say those in schools ‘are more than just a group of independent contractors who share a parking lot.’ It is a balancing act to see both these concepts at work.”

From “The Healthy Tension” by **Chris Kennedy** (superintendent, West Vancouver, B.C.) on his blog Culture of Yes

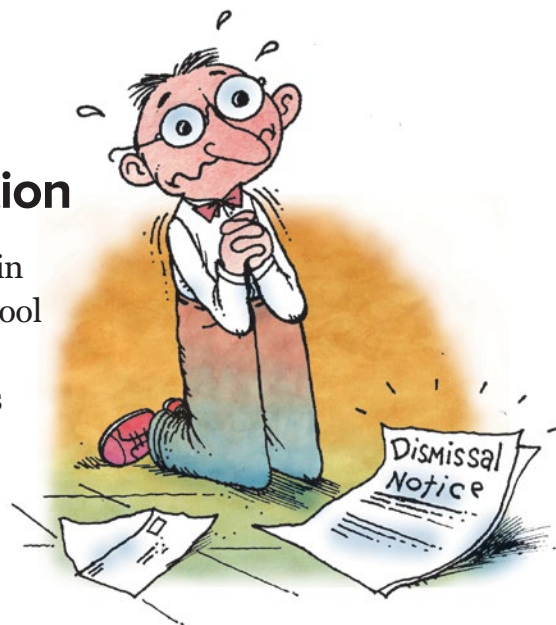
FLASHBACK JANUARY 1996

The issue’s lead article, by a Kentucky educator, laid out the most appropriate practices for multiage classroom groupings, and additional information resources filled a full page. ... A sidebar about Robert H. Anderson, who joined AASA in 1949, described his 1956 published writing on nongraded primary education. ... Jack McKay penned a guest commentary on why corporate practices won’t work for public school leaders. ... AASA President Homer Kearns titled his column “Let’s Get Connected Internationally” after representing the association on a study mission to Israel and Egypt. ... A letter to the editor from a retired superintendent criticized the author of a Federal Date-line column, for “com(ing) across as a flaming liberal ... and presum(ing) all AASA members are of like mind.” ... A promotion for AASA’s upcoming national conference touted appearances by Education Secretary Richard Riley, Jonathan Kozol, Marian Wright Edelman, Terry Deal and Geoffrey Canada. ... Profile subject: Hank Bangser, superintendent, Winnetka, Ill.



The 'Convenience' of License Expiration

SCENARIO: A marginal teacher allows his license to expire, in spite of repeated reminders from the state and from the school district's human resources department. By state regulation, he no longer can be employed, and the district processes his dismissal. He appeals to the superintendent, admitting his error but indicating a series of personal circumstances, including a death in the family, took his focus off completing the paperwork. The principal, seeing this as an expedited way of letting a poor performer go, asks the district to reject the appeal. Human resources supports that position, citing the need for consistency in handling teachers who allow their license to expire. What should the superintendent do?



MARIO VENTURA: The superintendent should reject the appeal. In this scenario, the teacher had multiple reminders from both the state education licensure/certification department and the school district about the ensuing expiration. Therefore, the teacher should be dismissed according to district policy. The district leadership has an obligation to provide properly certified staff in teaching positions and failure to do so could be considered illegal as well as unethical.

The superintendent should have a discussion with the principal and communicate that the teacher's marginal performance was not a factor in the decision to reject the appeal.

The principal needs to understand there is an

expectation that staff performing at a marginal or inadequate level should be given support and guidance that will hopefully lead toward improvement.

SARAH MACKENZIE: The difficulty here is ensuring decisions on such matters follow a consistent pattern. If he weren't a marginal teacher who was experiencing these hardships, would the superintendent be pressured to grant an appeal? The ethical principle of benevolence would dictate that the superintendent consider granting the appeal for extenuating circum-

stances. And here is the rub: To dismiss him outright is not fair if other teachers under similar circumstances have been allowed an extension.

The superintendent, in going along with the principal, must inform him or her that the decision is based on the state regulation and human resources' request for consistency in following procedures in such circumstances. Further, the superintendent should make clear to the principal that his or her job involves appropriate supervision and evaluation of staff members. And the system's procedures in that regard must be followed so that teachers considered "marginal" are dealt with appropriately.

SHELLEY BERMAN: Fairness generally requires consistent application of employee procedures. Sometimes extraordinary circumstances justify an exception to administrative policy. This, however, is not one of those times.

The teacher's failure to respond to reminders from the state and district makes it difficult to allow an exception, and placing an unlicensed individual in a classroom would open the district to liability. By not responding, the teacher put himself in a position to lose his job and put the district in the difficult position of replacing him.

The principal's rationale that this situation provides an opportune way of releasing a marginal teacher is an inappropriate justification for rejecting the appeal. Poor per-

formance should be handled through the evaluation process. If this individual again secures a license and applies for a position, his documented performance record can be considered in determining whether he should be rehired.

KELLY HENSON: Neither the superintendent nor the board has the authority to waive state regulation or code. Therefore, I assume the appeal to the superintendent is a request that the superintendent seek a waiver from the appropriate state agency or entity.

The superintendent needs to decide this on the basis of maintaining consistency with similar requests that have been made previously. The teacher's performance status in this case has no bearing on the decision.

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

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**, interim superintendent, Andover, Mass.; **KELLY HENSON**, executive director, Georgia Professional Standards Commission; **SARAH MACKENZIE**, associate professor of educational leadership, University of Maine at Orono; and **MARIO VENTURA**, superintendent, Isaac School District, Phoenix, Ariz., and member of the Model Code of Educator Ethics Task Force. Expanded answers are published in *School Administrator* magazine's online edition.

When Parents Blow the Whistle on Coaches

EVEN WITH ALL the hard decisions about budgets and curriculum, sometimes the pressure of dealing with parent complaints about athletic coaches can overwhelm even the most seasoned school administrator.

Nothing ignites the public passion quite like a complaint about a school coach. Administrators must navigate the fine line between ensuring due process for the coach and assuring the public that the complaint is being properly addressed, all while answering to a school board demanding action.

On any given day, a superintendent could receive an e-mail from parents to complain that a coach was verbally abusive to them or their child. Separating the legitimate concerns of abuse from the general unhappiness of parents because their child is not receiving enough playing time can be difficult. When other community members start voicing support for the coach in question, the superintendent falls squarely in the middle. Toss in the inevitable call from a school board member wanting to know what the school district is doing about this situation and the superintendent is in a truly unenviable position.

Administrative Handling

In these situations, superintendents first must realize they are not going to please everyone by their actions. State privacy laws likely impose restrictions on what information can be shared publicly. As a result, community members may become frustrated with the lack of information and accuse the school district of protecting the coach. However, by handling the complaint in a professional and well-reasoned manner, the superintendent can head off additional complaints directed at the school district.

Because extracurricular athletics hold an important place in schools and the community, complaints about coaches tend to rise directly to the school board level. Yet such complaints should be handled at the administrative level and proceed to the school board only if board action is necessary. A superintendent should manage board expectations to allow for investigation of the complaint at the administrative level.

In some cases, depending on the sever-

ity of the complaint, the matter may best be directed to the athletic director to simply talk to the coach about his or her communication style. In more serious cases, it may mean retaining an independent investigator to conduct a thorough inquiry. The school district's legal counsel also should be involved when the complaint rises to the level of alleged physical or verbal abuse.

Competing Pressures

Complaints about coaches must be taken seriously. Administrators should listen carefully to what the complainant has to say without making immediate judgments about the merits or any promises about possible actions. Statements that minimize the significance of the complaint must be avoided, no matter how outlandish the claims may be. Upon receiving the relevant information to determine the scope of the complaint, school administrators should act promptly and appropriately to determine whether any misconduct has occurred.

Without making any guarantees, the complainant should be reassured the district is examining the matter and will take appropriate action. The complainant also should be told that retaliation is not tolerated, and any further incidents should be reported immediately. Many student-athletes and parents are reluctant to come forward with concerns about coaches for fear the coach will retaliate against them by making practices more difficult or by limiting playing time. The worst reaction to a complaint is to do nothing or to be perceived as doing nothing.

The competing pressures between winning contests and providing a positive experience for student-athletes have never been more opposed. The increased focus on athletics, the public profile of coaches and the presence of social media combine to amplify the stakes on coaching issues. Parent complaints are a key contributor to the pressure on coaches.

By using a defined process to funnel complaints to the appropriate administrator, investigating complaints promptly and effectively and taking appropriate action, school districts can minimize the public disruption.

“Administrators should LISTEN CAREFULLY to what the complainant has to say WITHOUT MAKING IMMEDIATE JUDGMENTS about the merits or any promises about possible actions.”



ERIC QUIRING is an education attorney with Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney in Minneapolis, Minn. E-mail: ejq@ratwiklaw.com.

“The outgoing superintendent often carries tremendous influence, and the influence of this key voice can be a difficult distraction for the board.”



STEVE HORTON is a school board services consultant with the Ohio School Boards Association in Columbus, Ohio. E-mail: shorton@ohioschoolboards.org. Twitter: @OHschoolboards

Where's the Superintendent Fit in a Successor Search?

CONSIDER THE SAGA of a superintendent search gone horribly wrong — a search that for all intents and purposes started on a normal, uneventful path, but ended well off the intended mark in what became an arduous and rocky journey.

The five-member board in northern Ohio had engaged in the customary conversation with the search consultant it had hired about the desired timeline, superintendent profile and potential candidates. As a desirable district, the search had attracted a strong pool of candidates.

So what went wrong? The issue really was twofold.

First, the board lacked the cohesiveness and communication to make the difficult decisions about whom to interview. Second, the outgoing superintendent became involved in that decision making. The weight of a popular superintendent's public opinion was more than the search process could bear, and it collapsed under its own weight.

It was an unfortunate end and could have been avoided had the incumbent superintendent and superintendent applicants taken to heart three things.

LETTING GO IS SOMETIMES THE MOST DIFFICULT THING TO DO.

Most superintendents are passionate about their work and their districts. We are talking about professionals who have spent their lives in education and who truly believe in what they do.

The outgoing superintendent often carries tremendous influence, and the influence of this key voice can be a difficult distraction for the board. He or she is invested in the community and may have strong opinions about who is selected for the job. However, comments about candidates or the process itself to colleagues, news media, staff and community members can quickly get out of control. Second-guessing the board's decision regarding the merits of a candidate or about the process will make life difficult for the incoming superintendent and the district as it faces a crucial transition.

Staff (including the incumbent superin-

tendent) and community should want the board to conduct the best search possible. The interviewing process and extensive reference checking give the board important data for their decision that goes well beyond public perception. The outgoing superintendent cannot view candidates through an unfiltered or unbiased lens.

BEWARE OF WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

Candidates for the top job need to be aware of what they may be walking into. Make the decision to apply based on whether the job really is the right fit.

Why is the board seeking a new superintendent? How interested does the news media seem to be in the search? Has the district received an unusual amount of negative press? Are individual board members saying inappropriate things to the media? What is the social media “buzz” around the search?

While public scrutiny is certainly not unusual, an inordinate amount of interest from the public could be a serious warning sign. In the aforementioned scenario, the finalists unfortunately paid a professional price through sloppy reporting, misinformation and irresponsible statements made to the press that led to a media storm that spun out of control.

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE.

A typical superintendent search should take about three months to complete. The longer the process goes beyond that without a clear decision by the board, the less likely it is going to end well.

Often the most difficult task of the search consultant is to keep the process on task and on time. It really does take all board members to make the best possible decision, and it's the rare board that will ultimately make a decision that pleases everyone. However, it can happen, and the chances for such an outcome will rise exponentially when a committed board is willing to own a healthy and functional search process.

In every case, the best thing a superintendent can do is step aside and let the board do its work.



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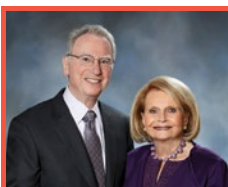


Maria Bell
Legacy Award



Herbie Hancock
Outstanding Contributions
to the Arts Award

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Philanthropy in the
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Lady Gaga
Young Artist Award

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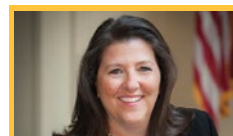
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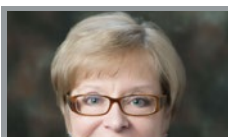
**Mayor of Nashua, NH
Donna Lee Lozeau**
Public Leadership in the Arts
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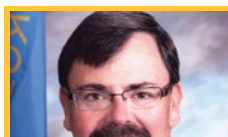
Jeff Hawthorne
Regional Arts and Culture
Council, Michael Newton Award
for innovative arts funding



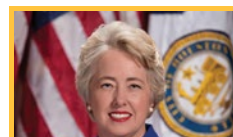
Richard E. Huff
Irving Arts Center, Selina
Roberts Ottum Award for
arts leadership⁽¹⁾



Ann Marie Miller
ArtPride New Jersey, Alene
Valkanias State Arts
Advocacy Award



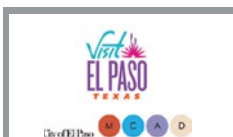
Lt. Gov. Matt Michels (SD)
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Arts Leadership⁽⁵⁾



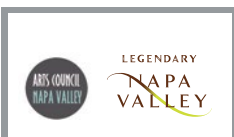
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Using Google Apps for Superintendent Evaluation

**“Our district uses
AN E-GOVERNANCE
SYSTEM TO
CONDUCT BOARD
MEETINGS,
and our board
members access
this information
through the system’s
hyperlinks.”**



JAY HARNACK is superintendent of the Sublette County School District 1 in Pinedale, Wyo. He blogs at <https://sub1superintendent-blog.wordpress.com>. E-mail: jharnack@sub1.org. Twitter: @Sub1Supt

AN EFFECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT evaluation process is the foundation of a positive board/superintendent working relationship, yet strangely, most superintendent evaluation models lack tenets of coaching for improved performance and quality evaluation.

During a collaborative process with my seven-member school board to create a shared leadership governance model, we realized all of the district’s certified evaluation processes included formative evaluation and feedback components except one: the superintendent’s performance evaluation.

We weren’t long into this discussion before we were asking ourselves this: Why wouldn’t the board model this same process with the superintendent? This question became the driving force behind a new evaluation model for the board and the superintendent.

A Digital Application

The mission statement of the 1,000-student Sublette County School District 1 includes a commitment to providing our students with a 21st-century learning experience. In establishing a new evaluation model for the board-superintendent team, our board emphasized the need to model and apply 21st-century skills.

The model we developed focuses on establishing specific roles and responsibilities for the board and the superintendent and using technology to provide monthly performance feedback to both. Each month, the board evaluates itself and the superintendent on a portion of our respective roles and responsibilities. These monthly evaluations serve as formative feedback, and collectively they become the summative evaluation.

As superintendent, I was tasked with designing and implementing a technology-based process to collect the data, archive it and provide the results to the board in real time. As a Google Apps for Education district, I chose Google Forms and Google sites to provide both the evaluation and archiving mechanisms.

The monthly evaluations are accomplished using Google Forms, and the online forms cover a specific evaluation domain with several

descriptors. Google Forms provides a useful range of rating options, but ours is a simple scale. An opportunity for board members to provide comment is also included on each form.

Board members complete the online evaluations prior to our monthly board meetings, and the information they provide self-populates the associated Google sheet. Board members are committed to full transparency in the evaluation process, and all of their ratings are time stamped. The e-mail address of the evaluator is captured — an important feature provided within Google Forms.

(A conference presentation of the district’s model can be found at <http://goo.gl/ujLdlk>.)

Timely Sharing

The results of the monthly evaluations are compiled on a Google sheet with tabs for each month’s evaluation and a summary tab. This document serves as the basis for the summative evaluation.

Our district uses an e-governance system to conduct board meetings, and our board members access this information through the system’s hyperlinks. I created a Google site to archive the evaluation data for the board and the superintendent over multiple years. Board members use the archive to view summative evaluations and performance over time.

Ultimately, effective evaluation leads to coaching for improvement. We believe this model marries the advantages of technology with good evaluation practice, in which the board and the superintendent receive timely, formative evaluation feedback. The board shares their self-evaluations with the public, and the superintendent has an opportunity to address concerns and present evidence of improvement at future meetings or during the summative evaluation.

Importantly, the superintendent has access to all scores and comments that are a part of the evaluation prior to the summative evaluation meeting. These factors not only yield multiple opportunities for improvement, but they also build trust — something all board-superintendent relationships can use.

A Few Tested Fundraising Routes



I HAVE BEEN involved in fundraising in K-12 public schools for more than 40 years. In all these years, I have not encountered a time when the need for outside funding

was as urgent as it is today.

Seven of the most successful fundraising strategies I've seen used in schools and school districts nationwide to address financial challenges are these:

► **Establish a 501(c)(3) district foundation.**

Most education leaders are learn-

ing the value of having a 501(c)(3) district foundation. They know the foundation offers tax write-offs for people who give to the schools and facilitate the acquisition of grants and gifts from corporations and foundations. They understand this is the way state universities are organized and recognize the fundraising success that these institutions enjoy. The Michigan Association of School Boards has created a useful resource on establishing a foundation (www.masb.org/school-foundations.aspx).

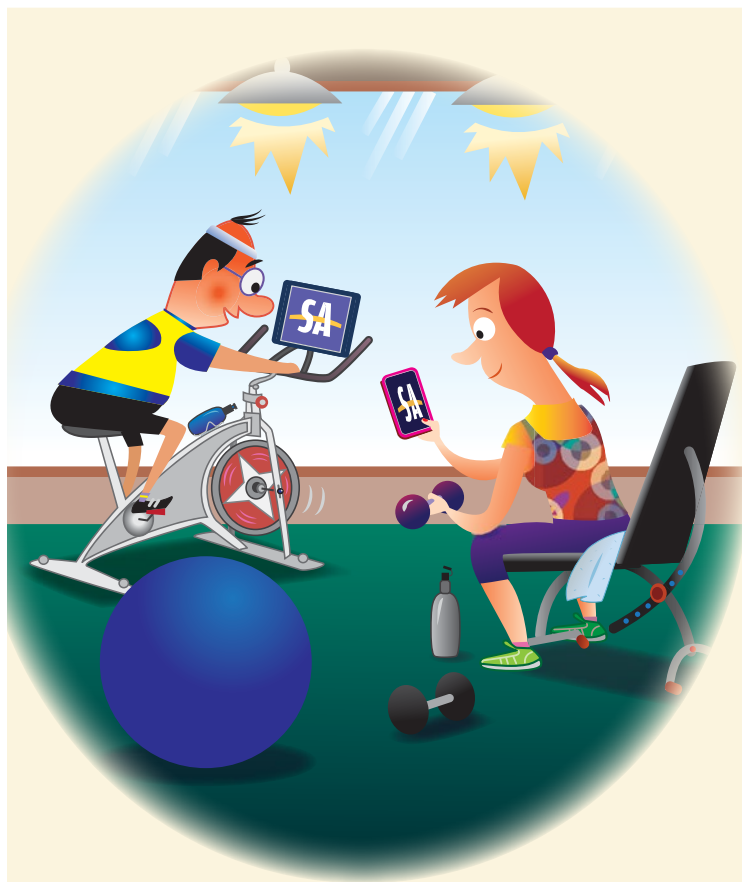
► **Set up a development office.**

Several school districts and some charter schools are discovering that

development offices, employing experienced, competent fundraising professionals, can raise millions. The Portland, Ore., district raised more than \$4 million in the last fiscal year. A development office, properly staffed, needs about two years to become a profit center. (An article I wrote on the subject appears at www.grantsandgiftsforschools.com/ProgramThatPays.pdf.)

► **Provide teachers and schools with fundraising strategies.**

K-12 classroom teachers spend a lot of their own money. School leaders can help them get started in the quest for external funding for



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some basic necessities at two websites: DonorsChoose.org (www.donorschoose.org/teachers) and Grants Alert (www.GrantsAlert.com).

► **Pursue corporate and foundation grants with gusto.**

In my experience, securing corporate and foundation support was less demanding than obtaining funding from government sources. I also discovered that obtaining large grants from these sources takes more nurturing and personal contact. Invite program officers of corporations and foundations into your schools and get to know them. Visit them on their turf, too. Their funds are waiting to be tapped (www.grantssandgiftsforschools.com/CampusTechnology.pdf).

► **Cultivate and connect with major donors.**

Many prospective major donors are graduates of the public schools, live or work in our communities, own businesses or corporations in our districts, have children or grandchildren attending our schools, have taught or been administrators in our schools or already serve as volunteers in the schools. Some are ready and able to make a major gift. Guidance for how to ask for money from prospective major donors is available in these resources: *The Essential Fundraising Guide for K-12 Schools* by Stan Levenson (<http://stanlevenson.com>); *Asking* by Jerold Panas (<http://emersonandchurch.com>); and *Mega Gifts* by Jerold Panas.

“In my experience, securing corporate and foundation support **WAS LESS DEMANDING than obtaining funding from government sources. I also discovered that obtaining large grants from these sources takes more nurturing and personal contact.”**

► **Explore naming rights.**

Named gifts have been around for a long time on private school campuses and at universities. Some public school districts have pursued this fundraising opportunity. They’ve shown that schools are a wonderful place for a family to leave a lasting legacy by naming a school building, a cafeteria, a ballfield or a seat in a theater. Commercial vendors and corporations can be approached about naming rights, especially as they relate to gymnasiums, auditoriums, stadiums, ballfields, signage and track and field facilities.

► **Pursue online giving.**

The Chronicle of Philanthropy reported that online giving is growing far faster than all other types of donations. Donors want to give from their desktops, smartphones and tablets. If your school district, foundation or parent organization is not involved in raising money online, consult this resource: <https://philanthropy.com/article/The-Big-Boom-in-Online-Giving/150689>.

STAN LEVENSON is a San Diego-based fundraising consultant. E-mail: stanleyev@aol.com. Twitter: @StanLevenson



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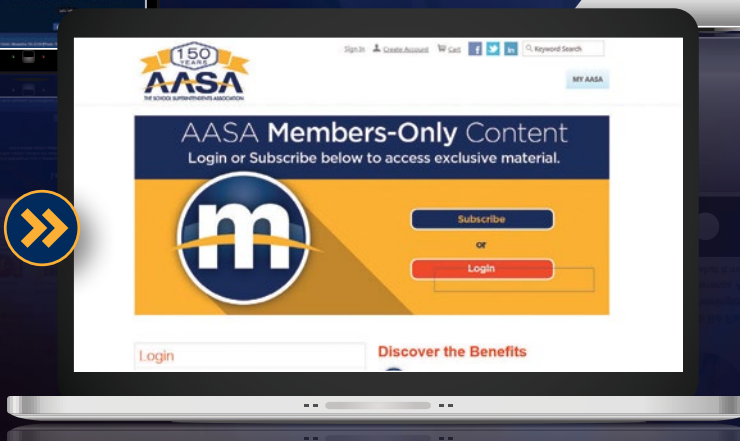
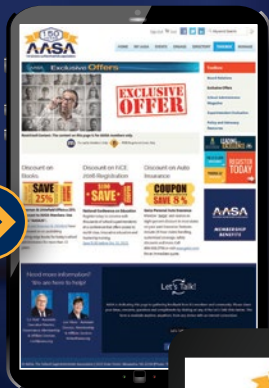
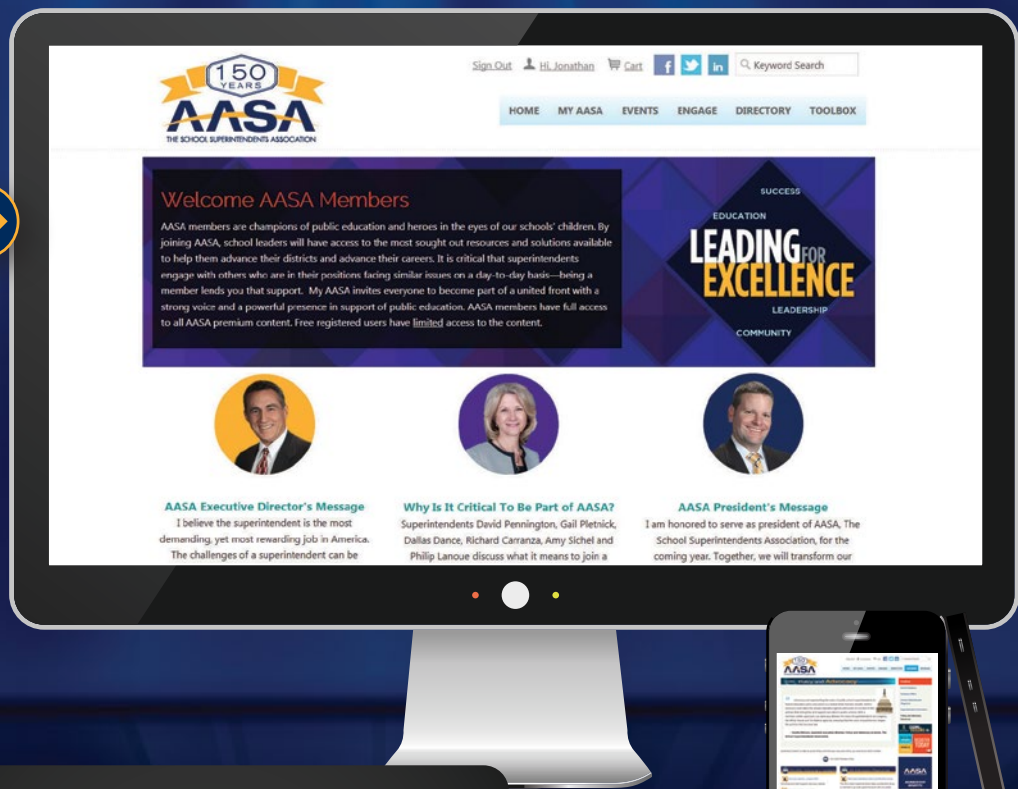
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In the Charter Movement, It Is What It Is

I WAS GIVEN a sticker some time ago that said, “Charter Schools ROCK!” by someone in the charter school profession.

Whether charter schools do ROCK! is much open to debate.

For years, the pro-charter/anti-charter dichotomy has fingered “good guys” and “bad guys,” claiming charters either provide long-needed opportunities for children or drain the lifeblood out of public school funding. Some say that when charter schools close, it’s proof that chartering does not work. Others say it is proof that the charter world works well because it is held accountable for results.

I would posit that chartering does not necessarily produce a different type of school or way of doing things in all circumstances. After all, charters often choose to replicate what we already are doing. Chartering has not as much produced a separate system that competes against our public schools as it has expanded definitions of “public schools.”

A Permission Slip

What chartering amounts to, in 2016, is a type of *permission slip*.

Chartering involves groups of education stakeholders who care about children, or purport to care,

jointly sharing their ideas about schooling with another group — those in a position to issue the permission slips. If their ideas are sound, they receive a permission slip in the form of a charter (or contract) to run a school for a given period of time, in a certain way. Often, these schools enjoy the same system of accountability as their state’s traditional public schools.

If at the end of that time frame, the sponsoring group is successful, it might get another permission slip. If not, it might not. It’s that simple.

In one instance, a charter school wanted to compete with our school

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in Michigan by offering a themed experience in music and the arts, yet wanted their kids to play sports on our teams, as they lived in our district. That did not sit well. Neither did the public criticism of our schools leveled by another charter school operator at town hall meetings a few years later.

“On the other hand, I have seen a charter school PURPOSEFULLY ENROLL STRUGGLING STUDENTS from surrounding districts, even with the significant challenges that would need to be overcome to raise their standardized test scores. This school was chartered to help at-risk kids.”

On the other hand, I have seen a charter school purposefully enroll struggling students from surrounding districts, even with the significant challenges that would need to be overcome to raise their standardized test scores. This school was chartered to help at-risk kids. That commitment made for good neighbors, as you can imagine.

Pursuing Flexibility

Sometimes charters play well in the neighborhood; sometimes they do not. The same holds true for traditional schools, which at times criticize charters out of one side of their mouths while trolling for students from neighboring districts out of the other.

What many people do not know is that traditional public schools often can apply for charter school permission slips. Some don't for political rea-

sons, but the option is there for many.

My question is this: In instances where state law allows those with permission slips to operate with more autonomy, then why wouldn't traditional schools charter their own programs to leverage flexibility? After all, chartering does not necessarily mean schools must give teachers lower wages or prevent bargaining unit services. Charter schools, in some instances, can offer administrators multiyear contracts and contribute to state retirement systems.

Local Latitude

Local control is the key.

If chartering a school district program or a building would give school districts control to provide a quality education to students with flexibility from regulations, would it not behoove us to explore this option?

The fact remains that no matter how we feel about charter schools, it seems as if we have as many (or more) interested individuals across the country today drawing up charter school applications with for-profit intentions, as we have K-12 school districts using the chartering option to provide services.

Of course, most ideal would be state laws that do not require the granting of charters for innovation practices to grow. Why not give leaders in all public schools the power to innovate and the greatest flexibility possible with minimal regulation?

Let's reserve permission slips for all who want to collaborate, rather than only those desiring to compete, in the best interest of any community's children.

RYAN DONLAN, a former superintendent and charter school director, is an assistant professor of educational leadership at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, Ind. E-mail: ryan.donlan@indstate.edu. Twitter: @RyanDonlan



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LPS Search Consultant
lpssuptsearch@gmail.com

Inquiries about the position may also be submitted to Mr. O'Neill at the e-mail address listed above.

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The Pseudo-Analytics of Year-End Data

In the era of Big Data, even our appliances collect information. The proliferation of data collection and analysis systems can be a little scary, but analytics promise critical advances in many areas. One field where analytics can help is K-12 schooling, where, for example, individualized instruction requires the real-time diagnosis of individual students' learning gaps, a daunting and time-consuming task for humans but quite literally child's play for computers.

Consider this scenario that highlights the potential of educational data: A student completes a learning exercise (preferably gamified) and, through the wonder of algorithms, her answers are instantly analyzed. Appropriate practice tasks then are delivered automatically to help the student with her weakest skills. This is already happening with apps like Duolingo and DragonBox.

This idealized role of Big Data in education is inspiring. Sadly, folks working and learning in K-12 schools rarely, if ever, get it. Data as a formative learning tool is rare. What schools get instead is an impostor, a nonresponsive form of pseudo-analytics — year-end data indictments.

This simplistic use of data is an annual rite. Information from standardized tests is massaged into formulas designed to merely spit out rankings. Data used this way gives a luster of scientific

How clumsy state and federal policies blunt the transformative potential of data in education

BY JOHN KUHN

validity to what are actually arbitrary judgments about the quality of students, teachers, districts and even colleges of education.

For educators, Big Data in actual practice is driven by state and federal mandates and revolves around an annual high-stakes test over standards. This test is developed by an outside contractor, then administered to selected students. A subjective “cut score” on the test is politically derived. The data are crunched, and then consequences for failing to meet cut scores are enforced. Students are held back. Teachers' evaluations are affected. Improvement plans target programs impugned by the data. Ratings of schools and teacher training programs are published.

A Punishing Motive

The overarching purpose of analytics in education today is merely to punish those who get bad data, and to reward those who get good data by leaving them alone. We are squandering the power of 21st-century data analytics in education by deploying it firmly inside a 19th-century Skinner box of basic rewards and punishments.

The story of Big Data in education is thus far primarily a story of missed opportunities. It's a story wherein a punitive status quo calcifies everything around it and thwarts dynamic technical and pedagogic innovations, stalling real progress that promises to personalize learning for American students. A great deal of data is gathered — data that have the power to drive individualized learning and to diagnose campus needs and stimulate restorative resourcing in schools. But due to a colossal lack of imagination, the vast educational data infrastructure merely fuels an artless punishing machine. This is Big Data in education.

Except this isn't Big Data. It's Badly Misused Data, and it doesn't remotely fulfill the exciting promise of responsive data-driven education. Yet it's the dominant footprint of K-12 data analytics on a nearly universal scale.

When pre-eminent education researcher Gene Glass announced in August 2015 he was leaving his longtime post as a measurement specialist, he lamented that the field of measurement changed for the worse when lobbyists for testing companies convinced politicians “that grading teachers

and schools is as easy as grading cuts of meat.” When measurement became an “instrument of accountability” rather than a tool for enhancing instruction, Glass said he no longer recognized the promising professional field he had joined in the early '60s.

Applied Recklessly

The use of data necessitates a dogged commitment to thoughtful and guarded implementation, lest data be extended beyond their capacity to inform and become a tool of misinformation (whether by imprudence or design). Researchers at Harvard University labeled a tendency toward the reckless implementation of data analytics “Big Data hubris,” which they defined as “the often implicit assumption that Big Data are a substitute for, rather than a supplement to, traditional data collection and analysis.” While researchers acknowledged the “enormous scientific possibilities in Big Data,” they urged that ample attention be given to foundational issues such as construct validity and reliability.

My dad, a part-time homebuilder, always says, “Measure twice, cut once.” There appears to be little of this ethic among state and federal departments of education. A better motto for them might be “Measure something, and cut somewhere.” (And never, ever trust idiosyncratic data like teachers' grades for students or principals' evaluations of teachers or programs.)

When the hubris of Big Data combined with the savvy and greed of testing contractors and the



John Kuhn, superintendent in Perrin, Texas, with Amy Salazar, principal of Perrin Elementary School.

PHOTO BY DANITA SEATON

credulity and pre-existing political inclinations of Senate and House education committee members, what students and teachers on the receiving end of things got was a punitive monstrosity built on simplistic algorithms relying on insufficient data with zero independent assurances that the data truly measured what they were supposed to measure. In short, a recipe for data disaster.

In today's K-12 environment, when one looks past the smoke and mirrors of value-added algorithms and politically developed accountability formulas, data really amount to one thing — standardized test scores. There are seemingly no purposes for which standardized test scores cannot be shoehorned into place as the prime (or sole) source of determinative information.

Meanwhile, outside education, companies do precisely the opposite. Instead of embracing a single source of data, businesses like Amazon cast a broad net for thousands of data points from millions of visitors and use what might be termed “massively multiple measures” to calculate, for example, what should appear on customers’ screens.

This inclusive approach toward data has been found to be an efficient means of drawing accurate conclusions. In one study, thousands of amateur stargazers mapped craters on the moon. Once compiled, their results were not statistically different than the results obtained by NASA scientists. The hallowed centrality of a single data source that education policymakers and philanthropies have embraced couldn't be more at odds with analytics everywhere else.

Using the results of a bubble test taken by a subset of students on a single day to conclude who are good and bad teachers is a supremely dangerous, error-prone approach with dire personal and systemwide consequences. It's difficult to imagine such reckless data-quality standards being permitted in other activities that are as critical to our national well-being as our children's education.

Value-Added Misery

Perhaps the clearest example of “Big Data hubris” in education is the insistence by those serving in the highest positions of authority at the U.S. Department of Education — in the face of considerable cautionary research — that student test scores run through algorithms called VAMs, or value-added measures, be used to make highly consequential personnel decisions.

As if to highlight the department's commitment to using data as a cudgel, in late September the department informed Texas that its No Child

Three Practical Measures for Taming the Data Dragon

How can school system leaders push for more prudent use of data in K-12 education?

► **Stick together.** Professional associations give superintendents an established channel for expressing their views and pushing legislative or regulatory change.

Florida's district superintendents, according to *The Washington Post's* education blogger Valerie Strauss, “are revolting against the state's accountability system that uses standardized test scores to measure students, teachers and schools.” Through their state association, the superintendents issued a statement indicating they have “lost confidence” in an accountability system that generates inaccurate findings. The Florida superintendents called for a review of the state system and a détente in its use during that review.

► **Sue.** Sometimes, when other methods fail, litigation may be the best way forward.

In New Mexico, teachers and state legislators have teamed up to challenge the state's teacher evaluation system, claiming among its numerous problems the fact that indicators used to determine whether educators have “added value” to students are “riddled with errors.” These questionable indicators include: “teachers rated on incomplete or incorrect test data” and “teachers rated poorly on the student achievement portion of the evaluation, even when their students had made clear progress on the tests.”

In the Houston Independent School District, seven teachers have sued the district over an evaluation plan that one teacher called a “broken model.” Douglas N. Harris, an economics professor at Tulane University, and an observer of the lawsuit, predicted “almost every city and state that implements a model like this will have a lawsuit at some point.”

► **Speak (and write) plainly.** A superintendent can use his or her communication skills to rally change in a community.

Mark Cross, superintendent in Peru, Ill., wrote a letter to parents at the start of the 2014-15 school year with his “personal thoughts regarding the current state of education.” He noted that a number on a bathroom scale cannot give “a full assessment of your personal wellness” and, similarly, a test score can't “fully assess a student's academic growth.”

The superintendent of the rural, 2,400-student Central Valley School District in New York state wrote an open letter to parents that said, in part: “The most important thing to remember is that these tests are a tool and little more.”

And Michael Hynes, superintendent of the Patchogue-Medford School District on Long Island in New York, had this to say in a letter to one of his district's teachers: “The purpose of this letter is to let you know that I DO NOT CARE what your state growth score is. Let me be clear ... I DO NOT CARE. It does not define you. ... The fact is, you are much more than a number, not only to me, but most important to the children and parents you serve. ... The Patchogue-Medford School District fully supports you as an educator, regardless of what this meaningless, invalid and inhumane score states.”

— JOHN KUHN

Left Behind waiver was put on “high-risk status” because the state had failed to establish a statewide teacher evaluation system that measured “growth in student learning based on state assessments” and failed to apply “the use of growth in student learning as a significant factor” in teacher and principal evaluations.

Numerous organizations have sounded warning bells about the dangers of this kind of reckless VAM implementation, including the American Statistical Association, the Economic Policy Institute, the American Educational Research Association and the National Research Council.

John Ewing, a mathematician and president of Math for America, noted that VAMs are not worthless, but they “need to be used with care and a full understanding of their limitations.”

Despite repeated calls for attentiveness and restraint from professionals in assessment, statistics and education, real pressure exists at the state and local levels to use value-added measures on a far-reaching scale, with little thought to prudence. School administrators nationwide are being pushed to make high-stakes decisions based on incomplete and tortured data from VAMs. I know this because I am one of them.

In late 2012 or early 2013, I volunteered my 350-student school district in north Texas to participate in a pilot program for a new teacher appraisal system. I wanted to get in early and learn the ins and outs while the state was providing ample support. When I read the data-sharing agreement, I discovered a key feature of the system would be its use of value-added measures to apply student test scores to teacher evaluations. The contract stated that “an educator effectiveness metric” was being developed to meet the requirements of the state’s School Improvement Grant. Federal money talks, and in this case, it said, “Use VAMs to judge your teachers.” I had misgivings.

In April 2013, citing the fact former supporters of value-added methods such as Bill Gates, education writer Jay Mathews and Thomas B. Fordham Institute President Michael Petrilli had all begun to express doubts about the propriety of these measures for evaluating teachers, I withdrew from the pilot program. I explained to officials I didn’t feel it was appropriate “to subject my school district’s teaching professionals



John Kuhn

to experimental and unproven methodologies that are now being called into question by those methodologies’ staunchest supporters.”

That pilot program faded into obscurity, but today Texas has a new teacher evaluation pilot and, just like last time, it’s being rolled out under the heavy weight of U.S. Department of Education pressure to use student test scores in evaluating teachers. While assessment experts have repeatedly cautioned about the inappropriate

use of VAMs for high-stakes decisions, federal functionaries are moving full steam ahead, damning the torpedoes and ignoring experts’ advice and using every coercive tool in their arsenal to get states to do that very thing. Local practitioners are left to wonder why it is that student data must be weaponized.

Turning the Tide

Value-added measurements are only one manifestation of the catastrophe of detrimental and regressive data use in K-12. The prevalence of recklessness when it comes to student data is astounding to assessment professionals and disheartening to educators who know how appropriately applied data could enhance student learning. Tragically, the data can’t help students because officials are determined that they must be used primarily to hurt their teachers and shutter their schools.

In the end, ethical data use needs vocal champions to stem the tide of carelessness and politicization. Swords that have been forged from student assessment data must be beaten into ploughshares. As instructional and community leaders, administrators have an obligation to resist wrongheaded policies. When sloppy measures are hyped as reliable tools for making important educational decisions, school leaders have a duty to see through corporate boilerplate and assessment company propaganda and educate the public and policymakers, if only to shield their students and staffs from the fallout of bad policy.

Making the wrong cuts, in education as in homebuilding, is costly. We must insist on data done right. ■

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Data Rich, INFORMATION POOR

During our in-service training in August, a few days before the start of the school year, we asked teachers to create a list of all the data sources they use to determine student progress and learning needs. We collected pages upon pages of sources such as summative tests, formative assessments, projects, report cards, teacher notes, parent conferences, and a wide array of specific, self-made items.

Clearly, our schools and teachers (not to mention the school district, state and federal government) are collecting a massive amount of data, but to what end? The critical question remains this: How usable are the data for increasing student learning?

Without tools that organize and categorize the volumes of data, we become frustrated and overwhelmed with disaggregated tables and indigestible spreadsheets. Effective school systems organize data so the numbers have practical value in the hands of a classroom professional. For school district administrators that means vetting and adopting technology tools that allow teachers to access useful data to seamlessly drive their instruction.

Mapping Guidance

To be useful, data should function like a global positioning system, offering guidance on instruction to ensure all students are on the road to reaching their highest potential. We need this “roadmap” vision to build and operate personalized learning systems that turn raw data into useful information and give teachers effective tools to meet the needs of all students. With data-driven instruction, teachers can move students further faster and fill gaps more quickly, and students are empowered to set their own goals and manage their education pathways.

**Recommended
technology tools
that help school
leaders improve
student outcomes**

BY HEATHER BECK AND
JOE MORELOCK



Superintendent Heather Beck watches students use laptops at Hallinan Elementary School in Lake Oswego, Ore.

Educators are beginning to have access to tools that uncover useful information gathered from the mountains of data we collect. What's more, we are able to use the knowledge that comes from the organization and presentation of that information.

If we learned anything from the first wave of data dashboards for education that swept through schools and districts, it's that simply taking tools made for business and rebranding them for schools did not give us the knowledge we needed. Scores of dials showed us attendance trends and state test scores and even classroom performance, but many times these information points were converted into dials that told us if the trend was "in the red" or if we were keeping it "in the black." These dashboards came up short by not turning numbers into actionable measures.

Getting the Data

In the classroom, many teachers use "clickers" as a formative assessment strategy, using student response data to guide their instruction. While this use of classroom data is helpful, the assessment results are not necessarily connected to any other student learning information and simply generate quick point-in-time data for teachers to inform and adjust their instruction.

However, what if teachers were able to see data points along a timeline? Recently, Lake Oswego School District in Oregon began the review pro-

cess of early warning systems to pinpoint areas where students are struggling academically much sooner in their education careers than we have been able to in the past.

These early-warning systems process large amounts of data about assessment, attendance, grades, reading levels and math abilities. When the system identifies students who are at-risk based on indicators of poor performance in reading, math or science, teachers are alerted so they can plan and implement interventions. Teachers who have been using formative or summative data gathering gain a clearer picture of their students as the data build a body of evidence over time.

With the introduction of computer-adaptive assessment systems, such as Smarter Balanced, we continually receive better and more focused data points about what students know and are able to do. With larger data sets, organized into better information collections and delivered as a body of knowledge about a particular student, schools have an even better chance of individualizing students' learning experiences.

Predictive Analytics

Early-warning systems are great for alerting us to struggling students based on historical factors, but the next-generation data tools use predictive analytics to extract information from the data sets, highlight patterns and predict outcomes.

This information helps teachers and principals go one step further and determine the interventions and learning experiences that will help each student.

For example, a 3rd-grade student who is not demonstrating grade-level reading scores is no longer on track to be career and college ready. In this case, early-warning systems would give us nine years to select and deliver interventions to get that child back on track. By providing teachers early on with insight into students who may be at risk, we equip them with the knowledge they need to help their students succeed.

In addition to analyzing needs and predicting outcomes, many systems help teachers identify what teachers need to learn and do in order to meet their students' needs. Rather than prescribing the same training for all teachers, professional learning and development software packages integrated within a predictive analytics system can target training for individual teachers based on the data about their students.

Personalized professional development in real time, in small doses, tied directly to individual student needs, may become the norm in a few short years. While they are at the dawn of their arrival in education, predictive analytic systems are poised to uncover knowledge from the mountains of data and information we currently struggle to understand.

Students in Charge

Recently we've also seen the rise of tools that help students track their own learning progressions. Akin to a Fitbit or other activity-monitoring device, these systems provide students with instant feedback about their learning and, like a video game, allow them to accumulate achievements. Personalization allows students to own their learning which, in turn, motivates them to learn.

Application program interfaces, or APIs, such as mobile learning, simulations, virtual worlds, real-world activities, experiential learning, social learning, offline learning and collaborative learning, allow students to keep track of their learning experiences and build their own "learner profile." The profile keeps track of what they've learned and what skills and knowledge they still need to acquire.

Unfortunately, these kinds of apps focus largely on intervention skills such as remedial reading, and there is still a disconnect between the data they provide and daily classroom instruction. Consequently, teachers end up "teaching to the middle."



Joe Morelock, assistant superintendent in Lake Oswego, Ore., speaks to students at Hallinan Elementary School.

The Road Ahead

We always have known that each student is unique, and now we are able to collect and access data and leverage GPS-like systems to personalize education and direct those individual students down the appropriate pathway to reach their goals. No doubt, the future will bring us even more effective tools and resources, but they will only be as effective as the people who use them.

Even with the best information and knowledge tools at their fingertips, success lies in the wisdom of the highly skilled and trained teachers who will ultimately make the final decisions. As the old adage says, "It takes knowledge to understand that tomatoes are a fruit, but it takes wisdom to know they don't belong in a fruit salad." ■

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Additional Resources

The authors recommend these resources related to their article.

- BrightBytes Early Warning system, <http://brightbytes.net/solutions/early-warning/>
- Guide K12, geovisual analytics for education, <http://guidek12.com>
- LoudCloud classroom dashboard with predictive analytics, <http://loudcloudsystems.com/class-dashboard/>
- Tin Can API, student achievement badging, used by several education providers, <https://tincanapi.com>



Mis

Overcoming information

Teachers work in diverse classrooms with students of disparate skill levels and abilities. Terms such as “struggling readers,” “slow learners” and “unmotivated students” immediately bring to mind challenges, potential interventions and specific experiences working with students.

These terms also convey the idea that a student’s capacity for learning is pretty much fixed. Research surveys show that instructors believe a student’s achievement will remain constant across his or her school experiences.

This view, of course, is incorrect. Classic research by psychologist Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson, a school principal, on the Pygmalion effect in the classroom demonstrated teachers can have a substantial impact on their students’ performance and the ability to learn is not necessarily fixed.

In their research, teachers were informed that their students had been divided into two groups. One group was identified as more-intelligent youngsters, likely to receive higher grades and more likely to show an intellectual growth spurt compared to their peers. The other group was identified as “normal,” meaning students were likely to develop on an average, fixed trajectory. The teachers were duped, however, as the students actually had been randomly assigned to these two groups without regard to pre-existing conditions, assessment metrics or previous classroom performance. The intention of the experimenters was to determine whether the expectations that teachers now held for these students, based on the random group assign-

**How we might help
others and ourselves
deal with claims
that aren’t true**

**BY DAVID N. RAPP AND
MEGHAN M. SALOMON**



David Rapp, a professor of cognitive psychology at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and doctoral student Meghan Salomon studied the problematic effects of sharing misinformation.

ment, would influence the students' performance.

At the end of the academic year, the researchers measured the academic progress of the students assigned to the groups. For students in the group who had been classified as likely to show intellectual growth, teachers indeed identified them as having more promise, participating more in class, and achieving better grades. In contrast, students in the other group progressed in a normal way without distinction. Teachers' expectations for their students led them to demand more or accept less from their students.

Although many of us are familiar with the influence of expectations on students, why might we still behave in ways that reflect the idea that student ability is immutable?

Easy Victims

Unfortunately, countless anecdotes and accounts available on websites, in newsletters, in magazines and newspaper coverage, and as conveyed through word of mouth, reflect the idea that student ability is fixed. So despite respected research providing reliable evidence to the contrary, people are confronted with misinformation about fixed student ability. And they may use that misinformation to inform their own teaching practices.

In our work, we are interested in the problematic effects of misinformation, as well as useful methods to overcome such effects. Empirical projects have demonstrated convincingly that people regularly fall victim to misinformation, whether its source is external or something they generate on their own. When we read, listen to others or construct our own understandings, in essence when we are exposed to ideas, that information can be encoded into memory. The process is not that different from when we read false statements, hear inaccuracies or construct incorrect inferences. Once misinformation is encoded, it is readily available to be used later.

Consider a simple demonstration of what has



been termed the "misinformation effect." We presented participants with stories that contained potentially false information. In one story, characters discussed travel plans with each other. Occasionally, story characters would mention information that was patently false without explicitly acknowledging it as such. For example, one character stated, "That's why we had to go to Russia, because her family lives in the capital city St. Petersburg." The capital of Russia is actually Moscow, not St. Petersburg, but the characters continued their discussions as if nothing were amiss.

After reading stories containing a mixture of true and false information, participants were presented with a surprise trivia quiz. The quiz included more than 200 general knowledge questions, with questions related to information discussed in the stories. One such question was, "What is the capital city of Russia?" We examined the responses that participants gave to these critical questions after reading potential misinformation.

Participants who read misinformation in the stories were more likely to produce incorrect responses on related quiz questions than if they had read accurate information. Simply being exposed to the false information increased the likelihood that participants would answer questions incorrectly, as a function of using the false information they previously read.

Perhaps these participants might simply not have previously known what the capital of Russia



is, and actually learned from what they read.

However, research by Elizabeth Marsh, a psychologist and neuroscientist at Duke University, indicates individuals use false information even when they should know better. Consider first that the misinformation effect emerges regardless of whether presented inaccuracies are associated with unfamiliar facts or with facts that should be well known to the participants (as validated by general knowledge surveys).

Second, misinformation effects also occur even when participants, prior to reading false information, demonstrate knowledge of what is accurate or not.

Third, participants who use patently obvious misinformation (e.g., that the Pilgrims came to America on a ship named the Godspeed rather than the Mayflower) sometimes indicate they knew that information prior to reading, even though it is highly unlikely those inaccuracies would be known prior to reading them!

Problematic Consequences

These findings suggest that people engage in far less critical evaluation than we might hope they would routinely apply and that exposure to misinformation can have subsequent consequences for reasoning, decision making and performance. So what can we do about it? Thankfully, some general principles are useful for reducing the problematic understandings that can emerge from exposure to misinformation.

First, it is important to be critically engaged in the world. People should regularly evaluate what they read, see, hear and believe. This means they should not just question the veracity of information, but also consider alternative possibilities and hypotheses. When we encounter information, we should remain skeptical when it is not accompanied by sufficient evidential support. This can help reduce the likelihood that presented inaccuracies will be relied upon later.

Second, when we encounter information we know is wrong, we should engage in explicit correction of the material. This might mean thinking about what the correct information is or could be (e.g., telling ourselves, “Well, that’s wrong, Moscow is actually the capital of Russia”), making a direct edit to the material as we might routinely do during proofreading, or refuting incorrect ideas with reliable, well-known facts. Doing so helps block our uptake of misinformation, as well as restating and bolstering our understanding of

what is accurate and true.

Third, it is useful to consider the reliability of a source providing us with information. If we are reading a novel in which the capital of a city is different from what we know to be true, it would be helpful to compartmentalize that information by reminding ourselves that fiction need not accurately represent the true state of the world.

Of course, knowing which sources are more or less reliable can sometimes prove a challenge. But remaining aware as to whether sources might be biased or exceptionally reputable (e.g., they engage in careful fact-checking practices) can help us evaluate information as we encounter it.

Evaluative Methods

Notably, misinformation and misinforming experiences can prove resistant to intervention and critical evaluation.

Consider another popular myth: The notion that private schools always do better than public schools with respect to achievement measures. National surveys of academic achievement and our personal experiences related to particular schools’ comparative success may lead us to believe this is so.

These claims, which are repeated widely, as well as anecdotal accounts, tend to serve as a reference point in contrast to more objective counterevidence. As such, our own experiences often are seen as more representative than the data provided by surveys, empirical projects and large-scale data analyses.

Overcoming personal experiences because they might be misrepresentative means keeping an open mind about the possibility that what we think we know is only part of the story. Just like our students, school administrators and teachers and the rest of us need to regularly engage in critical thinking and question what is presented to us as fact and what we think we understand. We must seek out reliable support or counterevidence for the claims, ideas and experiences we encounter throughout each day. Avoiding the effects of inaccurate information requires the kind of evaluative stances we hope to encourage in our students, colleagues and loved ones. ■

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Data for Turbocharging Management Decisions

*Improving cost-effectiveness of
personalized learning, staff schedules
and academic return on investment*

BY NATHAN LEVENSON

“Co-teaching is great! It’s the best of both worlds!”

“No, it’s expensive and I don’t think it works for most students.”

It was an old debate with predictable opponents and proponents. The discussion ended like it had in years past. Hard feelings, uncertainty as to who was right, and the continuation of the status quo. Adding Big Data changed everything — the discussion, the ambiguity, the budget and the services for students.

Big Data, finding insights from large amounts of information drawn from multiple sources and incorporating many types of data, can help district and school administrators be more effective leaders and make better decisions.

Big Data in K-12 is less of a new idea and more of an expansion (in a big way) of an old idea. School districts are awash in data, schools are data-driven, teachers are often members of

data teams and district leaders are constantly reviewing reports and analyses. Despite the sea of information, this is lots of data, but not Big Data.

Multiple Applications

The next evolution of managing schools and districts will be powered by *management data*, which differs from today’s ocean of numbers in two ways:

It’s the information leaders need, not the data they have. Its primary purpose is to help school and district leaders, not the state department of education, grant administrators, teachers or others.

It’s much more fine-grained. Rather than, for example, looking at a special education teacher’s caseload at the start of the school year (one data



point), it's every 30 minutes of the teacher's day, updated every week — more than 2,500 data points for a single teacher!

Management data incorporating Big Data has many uses. These include:

- ▶ Cost effectively personalizing learning on a systemic basis;
- ▶ Building student-centered, cost-effective schedules for reading teachers, special educators, paraprofessionals, English language learning teachers, etc.; and
- ▶ Conducting rigorous academic return on investment analysis of what works, cost effectively, for which students.

Economized Personalization

As schools turn to iPads, Chromebooks and adaptive curricula to personalize learning, they might

consider a less-costly approach made possible by Big Data. Great teachers long have personalized instruction without hardware or software. As superintendent in Arlington, Mass., I recall asking one elementary teacher how, year after year, she achieved such outstanding reading results. Nearly every child in her class made more than a year's growth, far better results than her colleagues in the same school or across the district.

"I personalize my instruction," she answered simply.

This surprised me because there was no hardware or software to be seen. She went on to explain that she kept very detailed notes on each student, as she pointed to a box of neatly arranged file folders. She knew the strengths, interests, needs and learning style of each student. She knew that Mark struggled in phonics, consonant sounds in particular. He liked sports and found comfort with clearly defined tasks. She



Nathan Levenson, president of the District Management Council in Boston, Mass., believes schools can improve reading outcomes by creating detailed profiles of students' strengths and shortcomings.

adapted her teaching style to meet his needs and placed Mark in a small group with other students in her class who also struggled with consonant sounds. This great teacher managed a lot of data in her head (and in the file folders). This was a case of small data leading to big results.

When the principal heard the story, he wondered how to scale these practices across the school. Using nothing more sophisticated than Post-it notes and lots of manual labor, more teachers began tracking student needs in fine detail, creating intervention groups across classrooms, finding the students with similar needs no matter who was their classroom teacher, and flexibly pairing students with teachers based on learning and teaching style. Every Sunday, some teachers would plan groups and lessons as they shifted color-coded Post-its with key facts about their students.

This worked well, sort of. For teacher teams willing to scribe notes in detail and plan over the weekend, students benefitted greatly. One such group of teachers was able to increase the number of students scoring advanced in math from 38 percent to 72 percent. But not every teacher had the time, skills or inclination to do this. Big Data would have helped.

Imagine a school district that creates a data stew with the following ingredients: a detailed profile of student strengths and needs, down to

which specific phonetic sounds have been mastered; a student's preferred learning style; data on every teachers' past success in teaching specific strands (phonics vs. fluency); and their dominant teaching style.

Finally, add a scheduling algorithm that quickly creates new intervention groups each week that match students with like needs and learning styles to teachers with the best fit of expertise and approach. This is Big Data helping to personalize instruction in a low-cost, scalable way.

Special Education Spending

Big Data also can help manage special education costs more effectively, but this requires really Big Data, and unfortunately few school districts have even 1/100th the management information they need. In most districts, each special education teacher (and English language learning teacher or reading interventionist) makes his or her own schedule, decides when to serve which students and determines which students to group.

Why do these staff members have such "freedom" when most other teachers are handed schedules and class lists? In part, it's just too hard for a centralized scheduler to know which students can be pulled from class, which students have similar needs, which individual education plans allow small groups and so on. Each teacher spends days collecting, often on lined paper, the



required information by visiting classroom teachers, reviewing the IEP files and talking to colleagues. They then sketch out their schedule by hand. While doing the best they can, the results typically are not optimal. In my firm's studies of more than 75 school districts big and small, the typical special education teacher's schedule includes:

- ▶ Less than 50 percent of the school day working with students;
- ▶ Pullout sessions during math or reading, thus denying struggling students core instruction, unintentionally dragging them further behind; and
- ▶ Much more one-on-one instruction than required by the IEP.

This less-than-desirable situation isn't anyone's fault; it's simply too hard to build great schedules by hand. But Big Data can change that. To build special education schedules that are good for students, teachers and taxpayers requires a lot of data. In a small elementary school, for example, that could be more than 25,000 data points. That's a lot for paper and pen, even Excel, but it's a modest task for computer software.

These data come from dozens of sources, a common attribute of Big Data, such as classroom schedules (when does Mrs. Smith teach reading), lunch schedules, specials schedules (when does Sarah go to physical education), the IEP database, a student's reading scores and so on.

I have worked with districts using Big Data, enabled by web-based technology, to manage and build these schedules, which eliminated pulling students from core instruction, grouped students with like needs and reduced workloads for many staff. It also reduced staffing requirements, without changing a single IEP, in selected roles by 40 percent in one suburban district with a few thousand students, by 20 percent in a mid-sized urban district of 10,000 students and similarly in larger districts of 30,000-plus students. The algorithms and data needed to efficiently build optimal schedules exceeds most individuals' ability. Using Big Data requires specialized tools.

Knowing What Works

Big Data also can help settle lots of long-running disagreements. Knowing in most districts what programs, strategies or efforts are achieving the intended results is mostly a matter of professional judgment because the data to rigorously evaluate

effectiveness and cost-effectiveness are lacking and overwhelming to collect. Differing opinions are hard to reconcile and often lead to inaction or hard feelings or both.

One mid-sized suburban district was all too typical. Some staff had assumed (for seven years) that co-teaching at the middle school was effective. The principal, many teachers and some administrators strongly supported the effort. Others had their doubts. Each year, typically during budgeting or when lackluster test scores were reviewed, the debate repeated itself. Persuasion and majority rule carried the day.

Despite a mass of test scores, the district lacked the fine-grained data to distinguish success or failure of co-teaching itself from the impact of the teacher or other factors. Big Data helped settle the debate. With some outside help, the district built a data model that analyzed data to separate cause and effect.

Again, data from multiple sources needed to be combined, including enrollment by course and teacher, IEP data, class assignments, semester grades, past performance, growth in other subjects such as English, achievement of students not on IEPs, costs and teacher growth scores for past years. In total, there were tens of thousands of data points for a single school.

Lighthouse Findings

The insights gained were definitive and surprising to many. The upshot: No gains resulted from co-teaching despite seven years of strong support based on professional judgment. Moreover, the findings revealed that the skills of the general education teacher (with or without a co-teacher) mattered most. Simply pairing struggling students with a handpicked set of teachers was quite beneficial. It also showed that an alternative intervention that cost about 75 percent less than co-teaching was a bit more effective. The debate ended, and better decisions were possible.

Gathering the data you need, combining multiple data sources and using sophisticated algorithms to match students to teachers, build schedules or find useful insights can be a lighthouse in a sea of data. It can light the path to better outcomes at lower cost by helping school district leaders make even better decisions. ■

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Answering the Question:

‘How Do You Know?’

Evidence-based leadership decisions permeate all processes in the Pewaukee, Wis., schools

BY JOANN STERNKE

We pride ourselves in the Pewaukee School District on being data-driven. Increasingly, we use the term “evidence” instead of the word “data.” This is because we are focused on practicing evidence-based leadership. This distinction has a clear implication on our practice as leaders.

First, what’s the difference between data and evidence? We often hear we are “data rich and information poor.” With a heightened focus on accountability, data are something we have a lot of in education. We have more student achievement data than we know what to do with, actually.

Evidence gives you the information to make a determination from more than guess or gut feel. The trick is making data become evidence — something that supports a belief and guides a path of action. Herein lies the connection to the second part of the term evidence-based leadership.

The term “evidence-based” answers the key question, “How do you know?” The second part, leadership, answers the question, “So now that you know, what are you going to do about it?” Evidence-based leadership takes evidence and makes it actionable for us as leaders. Leadership

focuses on a set of competencies that allow us to take systematic action to address what the evidence tells us.

Roots in Medicine

Evidence-based leadership originated in health care. Evidence-based medicine uses evidence to determine how well patients are being served. At its essence, evidence-based medicine espouses that with better evidence, better diagnoses could be made. The same can be said for “diagnoses” in education, I believe.

A health care and education consulting firm, The Studer Group, trademarked the term evidence-based leadership and created a framework that focuses on leadership behaviors and aligns goals, behaviors and processes in a way that moves and sustains results.

The firm coaches organizational leaders to use strategies that act on the evidence they learn. I like to say that it takes the work of the heart, that passion that we hold for the important work we do in the name of meeting our mission for all students and moves it forward to the work of the head as we analyze the evidence. Then, we

employ actions that take it into work of the hand.

It's the complete package. Evidence-based leadership links the work of the heart, head and, finally, hand. Quint Studer, founder of The Studer Group, says it more simply: "Are we linking operations to competencies that increase outcomes?"

Evidence-based leadership builds a *system of evidence* so you know with what quality all facets of your organization are operating ... and then focuses on employing strategies to address areas that need improvement.

While vital, we must look beyond student achievement data if we are going to truly improve as a system. We also must become more accountable in knowing how well we are serving and engaging key stakeholders, how well we are accomplishing the plans we create and how well our key organizational processes are being optimized.

In Pewaukee, our focus on people, plan and process has been a key to our organizational success. I call it "firing on all cylinders."

Serving People

Five steps exist for serving people in an evidenced-based model:

- ▶ Determine key stakeholders;
- ▶ Identify their key requirements;
- ▶ Attain the voice of the customer by assembling evidence about how you are meeting your stakeholder's key requirements;
- ▶ Analyze the results; and
- ▶ Take action to address opportunities for improvement and celebrate successes.

One way we have applied these steps is to create a dashboard graphic to monitor the school district's instructional technology service levels. In line with each of the five steps:

- ▶ We determined our key customers are students and their families.
- ▶ We know, through research and listening, that parents have three key requirements of us: a safe learning environment for their child, high-quality education and effective communication, particularly from their child's teacher.
- ▶ We survey our parents to attain their voice to determine how we are meeting those key requirements.

JoAnn Sternke (left), superintendent in Pewaukee, Wis., and Amy Pugh, district director of information technology, review a scorecard used in evidence-based decision making.

- ▶ We analyze the results by segmenting data by school, looking at comparables from other schools and analyzing how the data are trending.

- ▶ We share results with those we surveyed and set goals using a scorecard approach to address the areas we want to improve. All schools and departments use a scorecard to focus on the same five pillars: quality/student achievement, people, service, resources and innovation. The service pillar uses the voice of customer evidence in their goal setting.

Serving Staffers

Another key stakeholder group for us is our school district's employees. We have determined our employees have seven key work requirements including a positive work environment, a commitment to growth, the desire to perform high-quality work, a positive supervisor relationship, clear expectations, strong communication and competitive salary and benefits.

Similarly, we survey employees to capture their collective voice as to how well we are meeting the work requirements they desire. After analyzing these results, we set goals in the people pillar of our scorecards. We go a step further to engage our employees. As leaders, we have been coached to deploy strategies, including:

- ▶ **New employee interviews.** Supervisors take time to meet with each new hire to ask structured questions to learn their views concerning fit.
- ▶ **Rounding.** Performed in hospitals, rounding helps connect leaders with people using a structured set of questions.

As we hard-wire these competencies, we see employee engagement increase.



Supporting Documentation and Videos

Superintendent JoAnn Sternke compiled several documents that illustrate key points in her article relating to her system leadership in the 2,900-student Pewaukee, Wis., schools. They can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/evidence-based-leadership>.

The superintendent indicated the page numbers where these items can be found:

- ▶ Her conference presentation PowerPoint on evidence-based leadership (pp. 2-133);
- ▶ A department scorecard (p. 173);
- ▶ A building scorecard (p. 176);
- ▶ Pewaukee's strategic plan for 2015-16 (p. 205); and
- ▶ A Plan Do Study Act (p. 213).

She also is sharing three short videos involving Pewaukee administrators discussing aspects of their processes:

- ▶ On use of data in instructional technology operations by Amy Pugh, IT director in Pewaukee, and Michael Murphy, network engineer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIWTiKD6e9Q
- ▶ On strategically soliciting staff feedback by Randy Daul, principal of Asa Clark Middle School in Pewaukee: <https://userweb.pewaukee.k12.wi.us/~tooljul/Daul.mov>
- ▶ On the efficiency and flexibility of the scorecard at the school level by Marty Van Hulle, principal of Pewaukee High School: <https://userweb.pewaukee.k12.wi.us/~tooljul/VanHulle.mov>

Additionally, you can read about Pewaukee's distinctive operations in previous coverage in *School Administrator* magazine, shortly after the district received the 2013 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award: www.aasa.org/content.aspx?id=34306.



Monitoring Progress

How do we know we're making progress on our plans?

All too often, organizations create elaborate strategic plans but fall down on implementing them. In Pewaukee, we diligently monitor deployment of our strategic plan with 90-day action plans, formalizing a review and enabling us to answer the question, "How do we know if we are making progress?"

These 90-day action plans are on a template for what action is to be taken, by when and by whom. It also seeks evidence of completion. As members of the administrative team, we review plan progress quarterly to be certain we are moving forward. We have accomplished more with this approach.

Managing Process

Managing process is one of the most difficult challenges for me to get my arms around. This is where the rubber meets the road. Schools have many complex processes in both the academic arena (curriculum adoption, student assessment, intervention, etc.) and in the non-academic arena (hiring, instructional technology repair, etc.).

We work smarter if we truly understand what we want a process to do and then monitor it for those requirements. We collect evidence in all support-process areas and dashboard results so we can monitor process effectiveness. For example, the instruction technology department monitors such things as outstanding incidents and work requests so they can adjust their staffing to meet demand.

Likewise, the human resources office has four goals — to hire, engage, develop and, thereby, retain a high-quality staff. That is what we measure and focus on. Analyzing the evidence on their dashboard allows the staff to be more agile and responsive, thereby offering better service.

Managing process is key for us to work adeptly and leverage greater efficiency over time.

For our school system, evidence-based leadership is the way we meet increasing demands for heightened accountability and better service. We believe it's incumbent to understand what our customers want and then act accordingly as leaders to improve outcomes.

It's all about being as strategic as possible in the name of meeting our mission. ■

JOANN STERNKE is superintendent of the Pewaukee School District in Pewaukee, Wis. E-mail: sterjoa@pewaukeeschools.org. Twitter: @jasternke



Becoming a Data Champion in 6 Steps

How a suburban Maryland district uses its data to motivate staff and improve instruction

BY SHAWN JOSEPH AND MONIQUE W. DAVIS

K-12 school districts have more options than ever for accessing student performance data. As a result, we're inundated with numbers, charts, graphs and other visual representations of our students' progress and growth.

The question is how can we use that data to motivate teachers, inform instructional practices and improve students' learning? The answer: Become a data champion.

Following are six elements of becoming a data champion to positively affect student and teacher performance.

► **Identify and focus on key goals.**

Most districts and schools today simply don't have the time, money, materials or personnel to do everything that needs to be done. So instead of trying to accomplish everything at once, identify a few key goals to execute well. Then determine what support and resources are needed to achieve those goals.

In Prince George's County, Md., our district placed its emphasis on literacy. We believe if we focus on culture, data and performance with a lens on literacy, then we will produce outstanding academic achievement for all students. Based on the Common Core State Standards for mathematics and English language arts and research by the National Council of Teachers of English, we developed the following definition for literacy in our district and shared it with all schools:

Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak, listen, and use numeracy. In Prince George's County Public Schools, our focus on literacy emphasizes:

- *Achieving the ability to report, evaluate, gather, synthesize and comprehend information and ideas;*
- *Conducting original research to answer questions or solve problems;*

► *Analyzing and creating print and non-print texts in media forms;*

► *Using numbers to process information, solve problems and interpret data.*

We also asked all 209 schools to identify a focus area for schoolwide improvement under this literacy umbrella. Then, within each school, the instructional leadership team concentrates on this focus area in its discussion and analysis of data, and all teacher teams direct their attention to this focus area.

► **Set expectations for data monitoring.**

In any district or school, no matter how large or small, variance is the enemy of excellence. If staff members are moving in different directions, it's impossible to reach the finish line. So after identifying key goals, establish data points to drive and measure progress toward those goals. This will ensure everyone is moving in the same direction.

In addition to identifying what data will be monitored, set clear expectations for how and when they will be monitored. As a school district, we have adopted the Data Wise Process developed by Kathryn Boudett and Elizabeth City. All schools and all offices within the school district are charged with following the eight-step process. A central-office department was created to support schools and offices by modeling the process and supporting the expectations and implementation of effective data monitoring. Stakeholders at the district and school levels are provided with tools and training to access and understand data. Systemically, we use organizational psychologist Chris Argyris's Ladder of Inference as a data-analysis tool that emphasizes coming to a collective understanding of what the data actually tell us before we make meaning of the data and take action.

In our district, we use an assessment and data management system called Performance Matters to correlate and analyze performance data from multiple sources, including state assessments, standardized tests and local assessments. Using the system's interactive dashboards and color-coded reports, we can easily slice and dice our data to monitor student performance in real time,

Brett Givens, a crisis intervention teacher at Thurgood Marshall Middle School in Temple Hills, Md., discusses his work with Monique Davis, a deputy superintendent in Prince George's County, Md.





Shawn Joseph, a deputy superintendent in Prince George's County, Md., and Fairmont Heights High School principal Torrie Walker listen to a student's explanation of a project.

evaluate the impact of our instruction and analyze student growth over time.

Regardless of the data system used, all teachers should understand how to monitor the data on their own and in groups. Decide which reports will be the most meaningful to teachers and be sure they are trained in using those data to affect their classroom work.

► **Make time for teacher collaboration.**

Toward that end, at the school level, ensure that the master schedule allows time for teachers to collaborate. Professional learning communities provide a great way for teachers to meet regularly to continuously use formal and informal data to inform their instruction, identify and share best practices and inform the school improvement process. One principal, during the summer after his first year at a middle school, insisted that the master schedule be adjusted to allow all teams, not just math and English Language Arts, to have meeting time during the instructional day. This shift has allowed for all teachers to be a part of

regular, data-based professional learning.

Within each school in our district, all staff members meet at least twice a month on a team dedicated to working collaboratively to improve teaching and learning. Further, the school's instructional leadership team makes sure this time is protected from other uses. The teams also ensure the PLCs have complete, coherent inventories of the data sources and instructional initiatives available to them, so teachers can effectively analyze and act on their data.

Through the PLCs, we want staff members to examine multiple data sources and hold one another accountable for using data responsibly. By maintaining a relentless focus on evidence, they can choose appropriate, research-based instructional strategies to address any problem areas and discuss what the effective implementation of those strategies will look like in their classrooms.

Within the PLCs, teachers also work together to identify the short-, medium- and long-term data sources they will use to evaluate the impact

of their action plans on student learning. In addition, they set the individual- or group-level student learning goals they intend to reach through their action plans.

► **Meet with teachers one-on-one to discuss data.**

Of course, creating a structure in which teachers can meet to discuss data is meaningless if someone does not facilitate learning and hold participants accountable for reflection and next steps. Whether it's the vice principal, department chair or central-office administrator, ensure someone regularly meets one-on-one with teachers to discuss the data they've collected on their students' learning and to provide support for improvement.

Such discussions might include these questions (which I've used in both large and small school districts):

- How did your students perform on assessment 1 compared to Teacher A and Teacher B?
- What did proficiency look like on this assessment? Describe the range-finding process you used with your colleagues.
- If a discrepancy is noted, what did you and your colleagues discuss as root causes of the discrepancy in performance?
- How do you plan to re-teach and re-assess your students if needed?
- What supports do you need to improve these data?

► **Don't play "gotcha" with classroom data.**

There should be no surprises about what you are looking for in your district or school in terms of goals and expectations. As education leaders, our job is to support teachers and let them know we see our role as providing them the necessary resources to improve their formative data.

One way to do this is to use post-observation conferences to have a data discussion. To create powerful post-observation conferences:

- Send a letter to teachers discussing your expectations for teaching and learning, and the data you will monitor.

"Data should be used to help things go right, **NOT JUST TO FIX PROBLEMS. From the district level to the individual student level, use data to create a sense of urgency and **TO MOTIVATE PROGRESS** toward the goals you've established."**

- Review (a) grades by race, (b) grade distributions of special education and English language learner students, (c) samples of rigorous work and rubrics, (d) unit test data

and (e) formative test data.

- If the data is not exemplary, set supportive steps for improvement.
- Begin the next post-observation talk with a discussion of what has changed since the last meeting.
- In your post-observation written reports, include an analysis of these data sources.

The bottom line: Never blame people for what the data show, but hold them accountable for having a plan to do something about it.

► **Act now.**

Data should be used to help things go right, not just to fix problems. From the district level to the individual student level, use data to create a sense of urgency and to motivate progress toward the goals you've established. It's also important to regularly celebrate successes along the journey.

Thanks to our sharp focus on literacy and systemic, data-driven improvement processes, we're seeing results. After years of flat performance in 2nd grade in reading on the Scholastic Reading Inventory, we saw a 6 percent spike in student growth. We also saw a 4 percent increase in our 9th-grade promotion rate. In addition, our 2014-15 graduation rate was the highest we've ever had.

In the end, remember that school and district improvement is a marathon, not a sprint. It's important to do things well and keep building on that, rather than changing goals and priorities from month to month. Most importantly, remember that data analysis is about changing a child's life. ■

SHAWN JOSEPH is deputy superintendent for teaching and learning in Prince George's County Public Schools in Upper Marlboro, Md., and author of *The Principal's Guide to the First 100 Days of the School Year*. E-mail: shawn.joseph@pgcps.org. **MONIQUE DAVIS** is deputy superintendent in Prince George's County, Md.

Reading & Resources

BOOK REVIEWS

Millennials with Kids: Marketing to This Powerful and Surprisingly Different Generation of Parents

by Jeff Fromm and Marissa Vidler, AMACON, New York, N.Y., 2015, 240 pp. with index, \$24.95 hardcover



Marketing research consultants Jeff Fromm and Marissa Vidler have teamed up in *Millennials with Kids* to focus on effective marketing strategies for the newest generation of parents: millennials.

Imagine you are the owner of a children's consignment clothing store. In years past, it might have been considered effective marketing to send an advertisement through the mail to thousands of people. However, when targeting today's parents, social media is a more effective (and cheaper) approach. It provides parents with a sense of ownership as they connect with thousands of other parents through comments and feedback promoting your store.

The topics in the book range from defining millennials by age and behavior to assessing the role of millennial dads in this new generation of parenting. The book is focused on

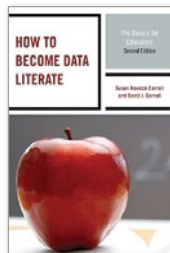
how businesses should market to this new generation of parents, but the concepts can be applied to education as well. For example, the authors suggest that "millennials don't want to be told what to do; they want to be asked how to do it." How does this relate to how schools involve parents in their child's educational experience and form effective school-home partnerships?

As a superintendent, I have already found the information in this book helpful as we continue to evaluate the most effective strategies for communicating with parents and promoting the many daily achievements of our students and staff.

Reviewed by Justin B. Henry, superintendent, Goddard, Kan.

How to Become Data Literate: The Basics for Educators (Second Edition)

by Susan Rovezzi Carroll and David J. Carroll, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Md., 2015, 132 pp., \$28 softcover



Carroll and David J. Carroll, affiliated with

School leaders deal with a large amount of data to make informed decisions but often do not have the statistical skills needed to interpret that data. In *How to Become Data Literate*, Susan Rovezzi

MORE BOOK REVIEWS

www.aasa.org/SAreviews.aspx

English Language Learners and the New Standards: Developing Language, Content Knowledge, and Analytical Practices in the Classroom

by Margaret Heritage, Aída Walqui and Robert Linquanti

REVIEWED BY NANCY L. WAGNER

Organizing Locally: How the New Decentralists Improve Education, Health Care and Trade

by Bruce Fuller

REVIEWED BY JIM HATTABAUGH

The Ten Golden Rules of Leadership: Classical Wisdom for Modern Leaders

by M.A. Soupios and Panos Mourdoukoutas

REVIEWED BY EDYTHE B. AUSTERMUHL

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon? Why China Has the Best (and Worst) Education System in the World

by Yong Zhao

REVIEWED BY ART STELLAR

Words & Numbers Research, provide succinct yet comprehensive support for administrators wading through applied basic quantitative statistics as a tool for data analysis.

In fewer than 150 pages, the authors offer instruction for managing, manipulating, visualizing and interpreting the findings of data analysis projects. While not an exhaustive text covering all options available to the quantitative statistician, the book provides support for administrators seeking to understand and use common statistical techniques.

I plan to apply this text in the education courses I teach and will strongly recommend it to my doctoral students. But the text also should be considered by educational leaders looking for an introduction to or a refresher of quantitative statistics.

If your work responsibilities include making sense of data and analyzing results from a practical, programmatic perspective, or if you need support for quantitative statistics courses that you might be taking, I suggest you consider this work.

Reviewed by Mark E. Deschaine, assistant professor of educational leadership, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, Mich.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK ...



"It was my first superintendency in 1960. At the time, the California legislature and governor wanted to close small school districts. Sunol wanted to retain its local control.

Although they had only six percent of the voters, they were able to go to the larger communities and have them vote for Sunol. Later, the state passed legislation to save small districts. How was this done? My book provides hope for the underdog. Size is not the factor. It is commitment, dedication and the will and desire to succeed that really counts."

PETER CORONA, AASA EMERITUS MEMBER, ON WRITING *SUNOL: NEVER TOO SMALL TO SUCCEED* (XLIBRIS 2015)

ABSTRACT

Women's Longevity

A recent doctoral study at Walden University examined the relationship between the longevity of women superintendents and perceived barriers that may influence longevity.

Researcher Kim C. Sethna surveyed and interviewed five women superintendents with longevity of at least six years.

She discovered a shift in the perception of barriers over the last two decades, with important issues surrounding relationships and possible self-imposed barriers. The

women superintendents no longer worried about breaking the glass ceiling or competing with their male counterparts. Rather, they were concerned with balancing professional and personal responsibilities while maintaining positive relationships at school and at home.

Copies of "Longevity of Women Superintendents" are available from ProQuest at 800-521-0600 or disspub@proquest.com.

districts and institutes of higher education.

Training topics include "Developing Emergency Operations Plans K-12," "Threat Assessments in Schools" and "Resilience Strategies for Educators."

Request details at <http://bit.ly/developing-emergency-plans>.

Engagement Event

Bright Futures USA, a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing communities together to focus on the success of children, is hosting its Community Engagement Conference at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin, Mo., March 2-4.

Ruby Payne, author of *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, will keynote the event.

Register at <http://bit.ly/bright-futures-engagement-conference>.

Teacher Bonuses

Mathematica Policy Research has released an evaluation of the Teacher Incentive Fund's pay-for-performance bonuses.

After two years of use, researchers found small positive effects on student reading achievement. More than 60 percent of teachers in participating districts received a bonus.

Access the report at <http://bit.ly/teacher-pay-for-performance>.

Conference Publication

AASA members can follow the developments of the association's national conference in mid-February in Phoenix, Ariz., through *Conference Daily Online*, a multimedia publication updated daily.

The site includes news stories about major speakers and award winners, a photo gallery, video clips, a conference blog involving several participating superintendents and a Twitter feed. The site also includes conference presenters' PowerPoint slides from an array of sessions.

Women's Conference

AASA is co-hosting a Women's Leadership Conference on March 9 with the New Jersey Association of School Administrators and the Foundation for Educational Administration. It will be held at FEA headquarters in Monroe, N.J.

Presentations will address pathways to leadership; the roles women play; work/life balance; females in science and math; crisis management; negotiation skills; and coaching and mentoring.

Find more at www.aasa.org.

My AASA.org

AASA's newly launched my.aasa.org provides exclusive web content, policy resources, special offers, engagement and communication tools, legal resources and more to association members only. Members must log in to join communities and to read and share member blogs.

Visit my.aasa.org to find out more.

BITS & PIECES

Research Briefs

Best Evidence in Brief, an e-newsletter produced by the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins School of Education, offers a biweekly round-up of current education research news.

The e-newsletter looks at the evidence behind the headlines, providing practical information on what works in schools.

Sign up at <http://www.bestevidence.org/subscribe.cfm>.

Security Resources

The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center offers on-site trainings by request for schools,

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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION AND TRUST.

Joshua Starr of Phi Delta Kappa International on "What the Public Wants From Our Schools." Steve Farkas on "The Maze of Mistrust: The Challenge of Public Engagement in Public Education." Alita McCoy Zuber of Ossining, N.Y., Public Schools on building a strong case for a community's K-12 investment. Also, the AASA Collaborative, a consulting network for the virtual age.



PLUS

- ▶ Profile of Alton Frailey, AASA president-elect
- ▶ Board-Savvy Superintendent: Small things make a difference in board governance
- ▶ Best of the Blogs
- ▶ Legal Brief: Body cameras on law enforcement personnel in schools
- ▶ Reviews of *What Connected Educators Do Differently* and *Race to the Bottom: Corporate School Reform and the Future of Public Education*

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Big Data and New Nomenclature



THIS MONTH'S School

Administrator is all about big data. Wow, where do I begin?

Everything we do seems to be about data these days. That can be a good thing, but it also can be very problematic.

Across this country, school districts are constantly working with staff to look at data. We're disaggregating, analyzing and synthesizing data daily in an effort to enhance the educational achievement of our students. We recognize, understand and internalize that each data point represents a child or a teacher, and we are committed to improving the performance of every child and adult in our nation's schools.

And at the same time, when we send big data off to the state and the federal government, it often feels like it's for the purpose of judgment and ratings rather than support, affirmation and improvement.

It's my hope we get to a point in our country where Big Data — and every point of data — represents a child with a focus on improving teaching and learning in our schools as opposed to simply identifying and judging a school district, school or classroom teacher.

Over the course of the last 10 years or so, superintendents truly have transformed the way we have used data in public schools. Instead of glossing over data that's not favorable to us and talking in generalities, we have rolled up our sleeves and looked at those areas where we may not be performing as well as we want. We have put strategies in place to reduce, eliminate and minimize the achievement gap among all student groups.

Speaking of student groups and data, Michael Hinojosa, superintendent of the Dallas Independent School District, shared with me last summer his frustration and concern with use of the term "subgroups" in relationship to No Child Left Behind and other state and federal reporting about our students and the message that word sends.

When we use the term subgroup, are we saying that those groups are substandard, subservient or subpar?

I was struck by my colleague's comments. I consider myself as someone who always thinks about words and messages through a social justice context and lens, but it had not occurred to me the message I was sending when I was using this term.

The reality is all the groups within our schools should be classified as "student groups." No student, student group or data set should be considered "sub" anything.

So as we move forward, I hope you'll join me in changing the nomenclature in our country and eliminate the term subgroups. Instead, let's focus on the term student groups, which is much more reflective of the value and ideals we hold as public school leaders.

In addition, it will be critical for our voices to be heard at the state and federal levels regarding the purposefulness of Big Data, data-collection timelines and protocols and how those should and should not be used.

I know you join with me in wanting to continue to use data to improve teaching and learning in our public school classrooms across this country. But we can't allow for data reporting to be limited to condemning and disparaging the great work happening in our classrooms on a daily basis.

I encourage you to continue this conversation by using #leadexcellence on Twitter to discuss ways you and your colleagues have used or will use Big Data to transform teaching and learning in public schools.

I am looking forward to seeing you all next month at AASA's National Conference on Education in Phoenix, Ariz. I've always enjoyed attending this conference to learn and grow professionally, as well as meet colleagues who are transforming education every day and creating innovative programs and plans to meet students where they are.

DAVID SCHULER is AASA president for 2015-16.
E-mail: david.schuler@d214.org. Twitter: @DSchuler1970

What We Know as Superintendency Trackers



IN 2010, WE published “The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study,” which took a comprehensive look at the demographics, professional experience and working history of superintendents across the country. We now have released a mid-decade update that provides a deeper dive into issues surrounding gender and the superintendency.

Nationwide, around one-quarter of superintendents are female. While this number increased 2 percent in the past five years, it is still very low. The proportion of males to females in the teaching force and the superintendency remain essentially inverted: 76 percent of teachers are female compared to 27 percent of superintendents. While we have seen growth in female participation in the superintendency over the last 30 years, it has been slow.

Are women hesitant to take on the role of superintendent? Are boards reluctant to hire female superintendents? Are other forces keeping women from district-level leadership positions? The gender section of the “Study of the American Superintendent: 2015 Mid-Decade Update” explores these questions and surrounding issues.

Personal Traits

We have seen in previous reports that female superintendents enter the superintendency at an older age. Female superintendents also are more diverse than male superintendents. Just 5 percent of male superintendents are minorities compared to nearly 11 percent of females.

Overall, several years of research have shown the superintendency to be aging. Back in 1923, the median su-

perintendent age was a youthful 43.1 years. During the period from 1950 to 1992, the median age increased to 48.5 years. In 1992, it grew to 52.5 and by 2006 it had increased to 54.6 years. Most of the current superintendents first became superintendents in their 30s or 40s, and in the next five years, one-third of all superintendents plan to retire.

The role of superintendent is difficult. Our research shows significant demands on the superintendent and his or her family. There are issues with stress and the time required for the job. The superintendency, and the ascent to the superintendency, seems to take a larger toll on women’s personal and family lives than on men. Female superintendents are less likely to be married or partnered and more likely to be divorced than male superintendents. Female superintendents also report fewer school-aged children than male superintendents.

Overall, three-fourths of respondents said, given the chance, they would choose their career again. Yet this is lower for female respondents. Given the increased pressure on their family and sometimes hostile working relationships, this disparity is not surprising.

Professional Experience

Most superintendents follow a traditional career path, beginning as a teacher, then a site-level administrator, assistant superintendent and finally superintendent. Female superintendents tend to have more teaching experience than their male counterparts. Female superintendents also are more likely to have worked as assistant superintendents before being hired as superintendent, while male superintendents are more likely to have worked as assistant principals and principals. Females also report that their board hired them for their

curriculum and instructional leadership, while male superintendents report an emphasis on personal characteristics.

The biggest issues for superintendents in their jobs were politics, inadequate funding and the media. This year, on average, respondents reported that half of their students were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, showing the long-term effects of the economic recession on schools. While federal, state and local funding remain low, the needs of our students remain high. Mindful of the many factors that make the job of the superintendent a challenge, several years ago AASA launched its National Superintendent Certification program. Three cohorts are underway with one scheduled to “graduate” at next month’s AASA national conference in Phoenix. Last year, the first cohort graduated at the San Diego conference.

Over an 18-month period, the certification program is designed to provide superintendents with fewer than five years on the job with a robust experience that focuses on sharpening the skills that successful superintendents acknowledge are needed to succeed. Similar programs have been designed for aspiring and current urban leaders in conjunction with Howard University and the University of Southern California, and this month an aspiring superintendent program is being launched in Minnesota in partnership with the Minnesota Association of School Administrators and the National Joint Power Alliance.

Dealing with the politics of the job, school board relations and business practices are essential elements in the curriculum. We hope to see these efforts reflected in future studies.

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

Leadership and Return on Investment



SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERS face challenges when they attempt to document the relationship between costs and quality. Return on investment analysis is motivated by the strategic intentions of school boards and leadership to increase quality and optimize resource allocation.

No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top and state accountability laws have shaped a definition of school leadership that is student-outcomes focused. In turn, local school boards are insisting that district resources be directed toward what truly matters for students. They expect superintendents to document the degree to which expenditures positively affect student performance.

ROI analysis requires the organizations' leaders to articulate and document the effect of an investment on student outcomes. Investments come in many forms. ROI discussions must move beyond investments, challenging district leaders to define the desired impact on learning connected to each investment.

Meaningful Questions

Documenting ROI starts with asking meaningful questions. The question "Are students benefitting from the reading support program?" is not the most meaningful one to ask. Better would be "Are students benefitting to the degree that justifies the cost?"

Specifically, how does one determine whether students benefitted more than they would have had the reading support program not been used, had students been served by a different program or had students just received the core instruction? Answering these questions is the focus of return on investment analysis. ROI

reveals whether the expenditure of resources adds value for students.

School districts struggle to answer these questions because of the difficulty in establishing meaningful comparisons or control groups against which to benchmark results. Rigorously documenting ROI requires advanced analysis to generate a unique comparison, or control, for each student based on his/her individual past performance. ROI analysis then can examine a student's actual achievement under the program against his/her projected achievement under the typical effect of the district. Such information can be linked to district resource allocations so informed decisions can be made about regarding programs and other investments and their effect on student achievement.

Benefit Analysis

More than 1,000 school districts nationally have worked with the

ECRA Group to support leadership and accountability.

Jay Marino, superintendent in Antioch, Ill., says he holds himself responsible for determining what district practices improve student outcomes and at what cost. Through ECRA, he adds, "We reviewed five years of data and uncovered that the district reading program was not increasing student achievement. Consequently, we restructured our program, saved \$1.4 million and increased instructional quality in the process. We could have never accomplished this on our own."

With outside expertise, school systems can adopt more systemic and evidence-based practices to document the ROI that various programs, interventions and expenditures have on student outcomes.

JOHN GATTA is president of ECRA Group in Rosemont, Ill. E-mail: johngatta@ecra-group.com. Twitter: @jlgatta

AASA School Solutions Center

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

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

CHROMAGEN, new lens technology for students with reading problems, www.IReadBetterNow.com and www.HelpStudentsRead.com

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

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

HMS EMPLOYER SOLUTIONS, dependent healthcare eligibility audits, www.employeraudits.com

JASON LEARNING, STEM education through exploration, www.jason.org

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

PRECIOUSTATUS, parent-teacher engagement and community/school branding, www.precioustatus.com

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

READ TO THEM, creating communities of readers, www.readtothem.org

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

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

VARSITY SPIRIT, elevating the student experience, www.varsity.com

School districts should do their own due diligence before signing contracts with companies that belong to the AASA School Solutions Center. More on the School Solutions Center can be found at www.aasa.org.



Bryan Davis

The 2,100-student Shorewood, Wis., school district has welcomed Bryan Davis as its new superintendent. Previously, Davis served as superintendent in

Columbus, Wis., for five years and as principal of Green Bay Southwest High School and associate principal of Green Bay Preble High School, both in Green Bay, Wis. He earned a Ph.D. in urban education from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. A graduate of AASA's National Superintendent Certification Program in 2015, he has been an AASA member for six years.



Rick Maxey

Horry County Schools in Conway, S.C., has a new superintendent in Rick Maxey, who has worked in the district for more than 20 years. In addition to serving as

acting superintendent and deputy superintendent, he also was executive director for middle and secondary schools, high school principal and technology coordinator. He began his education career in the district as a high school English teacher. An AASA member since 2015, Maxey holds a Ph.D. in educational leadership from the University of South Carolina.



Patrick McGee

Patrick McGee has been promoted from interim to permanent superintendent in Woonsocket, R.I., a district with 6,000 students where he earlier worked as a principal,

director of curriculum and assistant superintendent. He began his public school career in education administration in 2000 and spent two years as an assistant high school principal in Coventry, R.I., before returning to Woonsocket. An AASA member since 2015, McGee earned an Ed.D. in educational leadership from Johnson & Wales University in Providence, R.I.



Edward Lee Vargas

The new executive vice president of the AVID Center in San Diego, Calif., is Edward Lee Vargas, previously superintendent for six

years in Kent, Wash. He earlier was superintendent in urban districts in California, New Mexico and Texas. An AASA member since 1989, Vargas was honored as state superintendent of the year in California in 2006 and in Washington in 2014. He received his Ed.D. from the University of Washington and is president of the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents.



SIDELIGHT

When it's time to unwind, **Scott Hanback** heads to the banks of the Wabash River. A native Hoosier and lifelong fisherman, Hanback, superintendent of the Tippecanoe School Corp. in Lafayette, Ind., is passionate about his angling. (In college, he produced "Fishing with the Best," a spoof of popular TV shows on game fishing, replete with self-fabricated fan mail, and he even proposed to his wife on a fishing trip with a ring in his tackle box.) His personal best came in 2012 at a fishing resort in Wisconsin: two muskies measuring 43 and 45 inches. The incoming president of the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents says fishing offers him rejuvenation and perspective. "Our jobs as superintendent are so consuming that if we don't find time to recharge we can lose our effectiveness," he says.

APPOINTMENTS

Thomas Altonjy, from superintendent, Warren Hills Regional School District, Washington, N.J., to principal, Academy of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Franklin Lakes, N.J.

Mathis Calvin III, from superintendent, Stockbridge Valley Central Schools, Munnsville, N.Y., to superintendent, Wayne Central Schools, Ontario Center, N.Y.

Tahira DuPree Chase, from interim superintendent to superintendent, Greenburgh Central School District, Hartsdale, N.Y.

Thomas Giard III, from assistant superintendent, Meriden, Conn., to superintendent, Waterford, Conn.

Mark Holzman, from assistant superintendent, Sheboygan, Wis., to superintendent, Manitowoc, Wis.

Terry Reynolds, from superintendent, Pittsville, Wis., to superintendent, Tomahawk, Wis.

Dan Shelton, from principal, Kirk Middle School, Newark, Del., to superintendent, Capital School District, Dover, Del.

Jeffery O. Smith, from superintendent, West Point, Va., to superintendent, Hampton, Va.

Ron Stoneman, from superintendent, Redford, Mich., to superintendent, Manistee, Mich.

Ron Wilke, from superintendent, La Crescent-Hokah School District, La Crescent, Minn., to superintendent, Watertown-Mayer Public Schools, Watertown, Minn.

Jubal Yennie, from director of schools, Sullivan County Department of Education, Blountville, Tenn., to superintendent, Albany County School District One, Laramie, Wyo.

RETIREMENTS

Cheryl Baker, superintendent, Tomahawk, Wis.

Blaine Henningsen, superintendent, Carthage, Mo.

Mark Klein, superintendent, Council Rock School District, Newtown, Pa.

Wade Lucas, superintendent, Olentangy Local School District, Lewis Center, Ohio

Judith Lundsten, superintendent, Cranston, R.I.

HONORS

William Mayes, retired executive director, Michigan Association of School Administrators, honored with Michigan State Alumni Association's Distinguished Alumni Award.

Art Stellar, vice president, National Education Foundation, McLean, Va., honored with the Medal of Merit from Ohio University

John D. Ulferts, superintendent-principal in Shirland, Ill., received the 2015 Edward W. Chance Best Dissertation Award from National Rural Education Association

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

A Chance to be Frank in Fayetteville

BY PAUL RIEDE

IN SPRING 2014, the Fayetteville, Ark., school board was deep into a superintendent search. After the top candidate decided not to relocate, the search had reached an impasse.

That's when board President Tim Hudson found the answer a little closer to home.

Hudson had been talking casually about the search with the guy who lived across the street from him. That guy was Paul Hewitt, an education professor at the University of Arkansas and someone who had spent 17 years in the superintendency of three California school districts. After weeks of conversation, Hewitt told Hudson he was available if the board needed him.

Within a month, he had the job.

Hudson calls the board's surprise decision to hire Hewitt a "no-brainer" — a happy convergence of a district looking for a seasoned, high-profile leader and a former superintendent who felt the itch to serve on the front lines one more time.

Hewitt, 70, has brought not only decades of administrative experience to the job in the 9,500-student district, but also a freedom of action that comes from not having to worry about job security.

"This is going to make thousands of superintendents across the country really jealous, but I don't feel any stress," he says. "I don't have to worry if the board wants to renegotiate my contract. I can be very blunt, very frank and very candid with them."

The stress-free superintendency is something new for him. Stress, he admits, is not always a bad thing. It can push a leader to excel. But in the extreme, it can be life-threatening, as he says it was in a particularly difficult district he led.

"I looked at myself and said, 'If I stay in this job I'm going to die. It will kill me,'" he says of that experience.

Hewitt retired from his previous

BIO STATS: PAUL HEWITT

CURRENTLY: superintendent, Fayetteville, Ark.

PREVIOUSLY: associate professor of educational leadership, University of Arkansas

AGE: 70

GREATEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER: Without a doubt, my wife, Linda. No matter what I decided to try and do, she encouraged me.

BEST PROFESSIONAL DAY: When I was notified I had earned tenure and been promoted at the University of Arkansas.

BOOKS AT BEDSIDE: *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni, and *Making Sense of the Bible* by Adam Hamilton

BIGGEST BLOOPER: A local businessman gave me a list of ridiculous budget cuts to make. I ended up not responding because I couldn't do it without telling him what I really thought. It didn't matter, as his wife ran for the school board at the next election and won. I learned through that experience to look at everyone as a potential board member, as angry people are more motivated to campaign than happy people.

WHY I'M AN AASA MEMBER: Without a strong corporate voice like AASA, we will never regain control over our own profession and public education.



superintendency — in the Mother Lode Union School District in northern California — in 2004. But, as he admits, he "flunked retirement." He began working 55 hours a week as a consultant and as a member services representative for the Association of California School Administrators.

In 2007, he quit those jobs and moved with Linda, his wife of 45 years, to Fayetteville to become a 62-year-old assistant professor of educational leadership. Six years later, at age 68, he earned tenure.

With that personal challenge completed, he moved on to another, starting work at the Fayetteville district in July 2014. He focused on erasing the district's \$5 million deficit, cutting staff through attrition and renegotiating contracts. At the same time, he was able to provide a small salary increase to teachers — the first since 2008.

But even with all his experience, Hewitt says that after a decade away from the superintendent's chair, he was surprised by an incident that

highlighted the growing power and reach of social media.

An 8th grader arrived at school with a T-shirt that read, "Virginity Rocks." School authorities, fearing the shirt would be disruptive in a junior high environment, asked her to change into a gym shirt, which she did. But the girl's mother took the issue to Facebook.

"I got hate mail from Canada to Mississippi," Hewitt says. "It was played out like we were against virginity. ... I didn't realize the impact social media would have, and how inaccurate information could be spread nationwide instantly."

Associate Superintendent Kim Garrett credits Hewitt with handling that mini-crisis calmly and not letting it knock the district off stride.

"As long as he's been in education," she says, "it's pretty hard to throw him a curveball."

PAUL RIEDE is a journalism instructor at Cazenovia College in Cazenovia, N.Y. E-mail: hoffried@twcnny.rr.com



The Cat's Meow

At the point of retirement from the superintendency of the Piedmont, Calif., school district, Connie Hubbard told her friends she wanted no speeches and no roast. But she didn't rule out a Mickey Mouse tribute.

A fan of all things Mickey with an office full of Disney memorabilia, Hubbard had to endure a skit performed by staff colleagues and school board members in Mousketeer costumes at her farewell party.

The host of the shindig, the school board president, wore Minnie Mouse ears the entire time.

SOURCE: *Contra Costa Times*, Walnut Creek, Calif.

Ready to Ride Off Into the Sunset

When the school board of the Platte Canyon Schools in Bailey, Colo., settled on James Walpole as its superintendent 17 years ago, board members discovered to their surprise that their new hire didn't own any attire fitting for the rugged outdoors.

They remembered that fact when Walpole retired recently. Instead of granting him a gold watch, the board president presented traditional cowboy garb for a proper sendoff — boots, jeans, a bandana and a Stetson hat.

SOURCE: *The Flume*, Park County, Colo.

Pushed Out Ceremoniously

What kind of a school board expels its superintendent on the occasion of her retirement?

In Douglas County, Colo., the board humorously conducted an expulsion hearing, under the guise of a retirement ceremony, for Lisa Noonan, its well-received superintendent of five years.

The "indictment" of the superintendent included charges in some strong language by board member Thomas Moore, who said at the public session: "You helped heal this board and interacted on an individual level without taking direction from the board members individually."

SOURCE: *Tahoe Daily Tribune*, South Lake Tahoe, Calif.

Can Work Sheets Be Funny?

Comic actor Matt Walsh has carved out a nice career with a film role in "The Hangover" and on TV's "The Daily Show" and "Veep." He credits a veteran superintendent for sparking his keen sense of humor.

Walsh points to his 6th-grade creative writing teacher in the Hinsdale, Ill., schools as his early inspiration for pushing him toward a comedy writing career. That turns out to be Max McGee, who spent years in the superintendency in Illinois at both the local and state levels before retiring recently.

"He used to have funny work sheets," Walsh told the *Chicago Daily Herald*.

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.

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// As educators, we know the power of collaboration. We know that our greatest resources lie in relationships with our colleagues and community partners. Beyond the vast professional development tools offered by AASA, I can't say enough about the support and counsel the organization affords its members. AASA brings a level of expertise to the table that is invaluable. //

RUSSELL BOOKER

Spartanburg School District 7
Spartanburg, South Carolina



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Jan Luker

Senior Vice President and COO, Fraser