Better Schools

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The legislative process is in full swing. Many bills have been filed and many are being heard that affect public education. We are tracking over 300 bills at this time and working hard to provide your views on all legislative issues as well as advocate for additional funding. We are so happy to serve as consultants to the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Superintendent Joy Hofmeister continues to bring a refreshing positive outlook to her new role as State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

I believe that funding and testing are the two most critical issues facing Oklahoma schools today. On Monday, March 30, we are supporting a “Rally” at the capitol for additional funding for public education and reduced high stakes testing of students. Since the recession of 2008, public education continues to lack the political and financial support necessary to ensure success for all students. This rally needs to surpass last year’s participation numbers and show support for Superintendent Hofmeister as she presents solutions on testing and funding. I feel strongly that our “students are as important as potholes and bridges” and deserve a long term funding solution for public education. The rally planning committees are working extremely hard to resolve any issues involved in last year’s rally. In the near future, we will be sending you the following information on the rally: parking availability, an agenda for the day and additional talking points to use with your state legislators. Please review them carefully and plan on visiting with your political representatives inside the capitol after the presentations. The success of the day will depend on you and your commitment to the future of public education so that we can provide the majority of Oklahoma’s children even more opportunities for success.

So the question becomes, are you happy with your current levels of funding and high stakes testing? If the answer is yes, please feel free to stay at home. However, if you are disappointed in your current levels of state funding and the high stakes testing components then I challenge you to find a way to join us on March 30th at the state capitol. Together we can make a difference!

In conclusion, I want to invite you to please join us on Tuesday mornings at 9:00 a.m. for our legislative briefings. In addition, on Fridays in March and April the “CCOSA Road Show” will be coming to a location near you. We will be sharing the For the People Visioning Project and updating you on all CCOSA activities, legislative progress and other important topics. Please bring your leadership team including principals and special education director. Thank you for being a CCOSA member and trusting us to represent you. Please let us know if we can be of assistance to you.
The time is now to put partisan politics aside and for all of us to unite together to support the current leadership at the State Department of Education. It was easy to place the blame on Dr. Barresi for the failed leadership during her tenure. We fell asleep at the wheel by not being engaged in the election four years ago. Hopefully, we learned a hard lesson from our mistake. The good news is there’s no place to go but up; however, it will take some time and patience on our part. I fully anticipate to see administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders represented at the table during Superintendent Hofmeister’s tenure, something that was lacking during the past four years under Dr. Barresi.

The time is now to address the teacher shortage. We have heard for several years that the teacher shortage was going to impact our schools significantly. Well, it certainly has and it’s only going to get worse if something isn’t done soon. The legislature must make teacher pay a top priority. Being 49th in teacher pay is not okay. It’s a matter of respect to compensate teachers at a level that is worthy of this noble profession. It’s the only immediate way to attract and retain teachers to this profession.

The time is now to take a serious look at testing. Teachers and administrators have become extremely frustrated with testing. State testing has created a school culture that has limited creativity in the classroom and taken autonomy away from the teachers. For many teachers and administrators, it’s led to job dissatisfaction and caused a countless number of them to leave the profession earlier than planned. This has also impacted the teacher shortage that currently exists in Oklahoma.

The time is now to delay the implementation of the quantitative component of TLE. The process is not fair or equitable when comparing teachers having to use the Student Learning Objective (SLO)/Student Outcome Objective (SOO) model as compared to the Value Added Measures’ (VAM) model. Inequities exist in curriculum coverage, assessments, and growth target variability. It’s confusing and overwhelming and more research is needed to determine a better model for Student Growth Measures.

The time is now to fix the A-F Report Card. We need an accountability system that provides a much more accurate and holistic view of how a school is performing. We have the expertise from researchers at the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University to provide the essential insight to get the A-F Report Card correct.

The time is now to engage parents and the patrons in our own communities. We have much work to do to improve the quality of public education and we can’t do it alone. Parents and community patrons must rally behind our local schools and insist to the legislature to invest in public education. As you know, operational costs have far exceeded the funds that schools receive through the funding formula. General fund balances are shrinking and curricular programs and manageable class sizes have been sacrificed in order to offset the inadequate funding that schools receive.

The time is now to stand up for public education!
Barlow knows that grant writing goes far beyond putting words on a page.

Roland Smith
Superintendent
Lane Public Schools
On The Hill/Federal Relations: Hammers

BY TERRY DAVIDSON
Superintendent, Comanche Public Schools
AASA Governing Board

I am honored to serve as one of your representatives on the Governing Board of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). The Governing Board is divided into seven regions. Oklahoma is in Region 2, which also includes Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. We are your voice in AASA decision making. We meet two times per year. It is interesting to communicate with school superintendents from across the nation and realize that we share many of the same challenges.

We all agree that many of our most difficult challenges are caused by the fact that major policy decisions impacting public education are being made by those who do not have the experience that would qualify them to set policy and mandate “reforms.” A very basic understanding of accepted research wouldn’t necessarily qualify them, but it might cause them to be more reflective and less impulsive in their approach to their responsibilities.

Abraham Maslow introduced his Hierarchy of Needs in a paper, “A Theory of Human Motivation,” in 1943. The pyramid (see chart), although not created by Maslow, has been widely accepted as representative of the needs that must be met on the path to self-actualization and isn’t self-actualization something we ought to hope our students achieve? How does the current pre-occupation with high-stakes testing and other so-called “reform” efforts fit into this theory? Most of us will agree that testing emphasis serves to damage, not enhance, each of the needs identified in the hierarchy.

It was Maslow who said, “I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.” It is the use of “hammers” such as testing, mandatory retention, and value-added measures for teacher evaluation that have created almost insurmountable challenges, not just in Oklahoma but around the nation. All of these models can be valuable tools if used for their intended purpose. However, they don’t qualify as tools when they are used to promote political agendas rather than educational purposes. They’re just hammers.
Tech Talk: Using Twitter to Create Professional Learning Networks 2.0

BY ROBERT SCHORNICK
CCOSA Chairperson
Instructional Leadership Director (ILD), Tulsa Public Schools

I want to take this opportunity to elaborate on the article that I crafted during the September 2013 edition of Better Schools, hence the “2.0” in this month’s title. As professionals who work in a digital world, it is critical that we strive to sharpen our technological effectiveness. Building a Professional Learning Network via Twitter could assist with this endeavor. My personal belief is that Twitter should be a non-negotiable for educators. This medium is a proven strategy to connect many great educators. More importantly, participating and “lurking” in many chats driven by hashtags can support educators in this time of educational transformation.

My inspiration for this article is derived from a recent blog post by the principal at Bettendorf High School in Iowa, Mr. Jimmy Casas. Casas (@casas_jimmy) has truly been an inspiration since I began navigating through the Twitterverse. He along with @ToddWhitaker and @jeff_zoul recently co-authored a book entitled, What Connected Educators Do Differently, which is expected to be released on February 16, 2015, and is currently available on Amazon.com. Below is a snapshot of the book describing the impact of what being connected can do for both your personal and professional life. If this snapshot piques your interest and you would like to learn more about the book before ordering your copy, I encourage you to check out the January Edition of NASSP’s Principal Leadership magazine, where the co-authors give you better insight into their book.

Casas (2015) stated the following in his blog:

Ultimately, we recognize that the success and impact of any personal learning network depends on the investment of time and effort that each individual is willing to commit not only to others, but to themselves. Creating a personal learning network is a collective effort, but unless each of us is willing to give of ourselves, the likelihood of that investment paying off any amount of positive dividends is dubious. Let us be clear, giving of ourselves does not imply that we are restricted only to giving to others, but equally important, taking time to pause so that we benefit from our own reflection on what we receive in return. These “returns,” or fundamental learnings, are part of building and investing in a Personal and Professional Learning Network. This is often referred to as a “PLN,” with the “P” sometimes representing “Personal” and sometimes representing “Professional.” We believe that both are equally important and think about this as “P to the Power of 2,” or as we sometimes like to call it—a P2LN, so that, collectively, we continue to grow not only personally, but professionally, in our learning network.

Being a connected educator is not a formal title, of course; there is no degree program or certification process one goes through to be deemed a connected educator. Our view is that serving as a connected educator is a mindset more than anything else. In short, we define connected educators simply as ones who are actively and constantly seeking new opportunities and resources to grow as professionals.

I anticipate that What Connected Educators Do Differently will be a great resource as I continue on my “connected” journey. I am eagerly awaiting my copy of the book to learn more about the 8 Key Behaviors that assist educators on their path to connectivity so I can continue to serve leaders, teachers, and students in this digital world.

As stated in my previous article, Twitter can be very impactful on professional learning. While I do not believe Twitter eliminates the need for high-quality professional development, it does offer a powerful solution for isolation. The learning is real, the ideas are powerful yet simple, and the connections to resources and people are infinite.

References:

Thank you OAESP Superheroes for your support of the 2015 Mid-Winter Conference! With close to 270 administrators in attendance, our one day conference was a huge success and keynote speaker Kerry Purcell did an amazing job. A HUGE THANK YOU goes out to the OAESP conference planner and head t-shirt designer, President-Elect Shane Holman. OAESP members appreciate all of your hard work. Also, a K-POW shout out to the OAESP Executive Board members who decorated, registered and presented breakout sessions! Your commitment to OAESP is greatly appreciated. In addition, OAESP awarded approximately $6,300.00 in grant funding to the following six OAESP members who were honored at the noontime luncheon: Paula Palermo ($566.00), Shannon Peters ($1,840.00), Susan VanZant ($876.00), Josh Pierce ($1,314.00), Jeannie Gail Silvia ($747.00) and Kirk Wilson ($939.70). OAESP would also like to thank NAESP for sending Patrick to man the bookstore, Rose Schovanec from the Scholastic Book Fair and national presenter, Marsha Thauwald. Also, a special thank you goes out to NAESP President-Elect Dr. Robyn Conrad Hansen for joining us at this year’s conference. It was an honor having you in Oklahoma.

In addition, thank you for all of your discourse during our small group discussion forums in relation to the For The People Visioning Project. Work is being done to synthesize the feedback in order to craft a letter to our newly elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Joy Hofmeister, from OAESP. A draft of the letter will be sent out to all OAESP members upon its completion. Please feel free to comment and give us your thoughts before our letter is finalized. It is imperative that our letter is an accurate reflection of what is important to you and your job as an elementary principal.

CONGRATULATIONS HOLLY MCKINNEY, OUR NEW OAESP PRESIDENT-ELECT!

On February 2, 2015 Oklahoma hosted the National Honor Society of Secondary Schools State Conference at Edmond Santa Fe High School. Thanks to co-sponsors Mr. Jason Hayes, Principal, Edmond Santa Fe High School and Mrs. Teresa Wilkerson, Principal, Mustang High School who organized a day wonderful day of learning and leadership building. In attendance were more than 320 students representing over 28 schools across Oklahoma. The theme for the Conference was “Leaders Make a Difference!” The opening session was focused on giving the students a leadership message from Educational Leaders including Oklahoma State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister and UCO President Dr. Don Betz. The second included a leadership message from Business Leaders. The final session, featured giving students a leadership message from their peers. Mixed into the day were exciting breakout sessions, cool contests and drawings, and lots of fun! We are proud to build on the time-honored tradition of NHS and NJHS, the nation’s premiere honor societies for student recognition for nine decades.

Mark your calendars now and save your professional development funds so you and your school leadership team can attend the 2015 OASSP Fall Conference Wednesday, October 28, 2015. The keynote speaker will be George Couros, who received rave reviews last fall at the OTA Conference. Mr. Couros will be speaking about “Effective use of social media to improve student learning.”

OASSP Executive Board will meet on April 7, 2015 at the CCOSA Office. We will begin at 9:00 a.m. with the weekly Legislative Briefing. Participants should make appointments ahead of time to meet with legislators at the state capitol between 10:30-noon and then we will return to the CCOSA Office for lunch and a short business meeting.

About 35 participants from Oklahoma attended this year’s NASSP Ignite ‘15 Conference in San Diego, CA. Achieve 3000 and Mr. Brett Turner, hosted dinner for the Oklahoma delegation on Friday evening. Oklahoma now has the unique distinction of having two members on the NASSP Executive Board, Dr. Debra Thomas, Assistant Principal, Star Spencer High School, Oklahoma City, and Mrs. Leslie Frazier, Principal, Coweta Intermediate High School. Dr. Vickie Williams, OASSP Director, serves on the State Director’s Advisory Committee; State Director’s PD Planning Committee and is Coordinator for Region VI (Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico and Oklahoma). All Region VI Directors, Presidents, President-Elects, and Coordinators enjoyed dinner hosted by Chase Jewell, Discovery Education on Wednesday evening in San Diego.
ODSS

The ODSS Winter 2015 Conference is behind us, and, although we’re thinking ahead to Fall 2015, we still need to revisit some of the Winter highlights. ODSS had a huge conference turnout thanks, at least in part, to its focus on dyslexia. Directors, school psychologists and teachers came to hear Richard Smith, M.D., Medical Director of the Mercy Neuroscience Institute, discuss “Demystifying Dyslexia: The Neuroscience of Reading,” and Wendy Stacy, ASHA-certified Speech-Language Pathologist, Certified Academic Language Therapist & Texas-licensed Dyslexia Therapist, explain how to identify markers of dyslexia from reading achievement test instruments commonly used by Oklahoma districts. Because dyslexia is a topic of such interest, ODSS plans to emphasize appropriate interventions for struggling readers at the Fall Conference on October 29 & 30.

Looking even further into the future, we’re pleased to announce that Diana Browning Wright will be a general session presenter at the Winter 2016 Conference on January 21 & 22. You can find information about Wright and her focus on student behavior issues at dianabrowningwright.com.

In the next few weeks, ODSS will be seeking nominations for its 2015 Director of the Year, Maurice Walraven Award winner and Jimmie Prickett scholarship recipient. CCOSA members can help with the Director of the Year process by nominating a member of CCOSA/OĐSS or another CCOSA group who has served one or more districts as Director of Special Services or in a position that includes the duties of Director of Special Services for at least ten school years. Watch the News Clips and your emails for the nomination form.

OMLEA

OMLEA members hit a home run with their conference “Swing for the Fences” at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center on February 26 and 27. Major League middle level presenters Jack Berckemeyer and Kim Campbell hit their keynotes out of the ballpark. Thank you both for being a part of our conference. Jason Galloway did a “cracker jack” job in stealing home as the conference planner and OMLEA board members covered all their bases in managing an outstanding professional development experience for all participants. Also, we extend a huge thank you to all of our great “batter up” concurrent session presenters for all of the knowledge that you shared with our conference participants.

Please be on the lookout for our first ever OMLEA President-Elect electronic ballot coming your way in March. This year all OMLEA members will have the opportunity to vote for our President-Elect candidate. You will receive an email blast with the voting link and their biographies. So get ready to make your vote count!!!

OASA

OASA is excited to announce that we have set a new all time high of 717 members! The previous record was 714 set in 2008.

The OASA Legislative Conference was held January 14, 2015 with over 400 in attendance. OASA Ballot and Constitution committees recommended moving to electronic ballots for OASA elections and this was voted on and approved at the OASA Legislative Conference on January 14th. The first electronic ballots were sent out this month and the voting deadline is February 20th.

Legislative Briefings are being held every Tuesday morning at 9:00 a.m. in the CCOSA office. The last three OASA Executive Committee meetings are scheduled for March 10, April 7 and May 12. These three meetings will be held on Tuesday’s at 1:00 p.m.

Save the date: CCOSA Summer Conference will be June 11-12, 2015 at the Embassy Suites in Norman. Our keynote speaker this year will be well known blogger, educational policy analyst and public education advocate Diane Ravitch. This year’s CCOSA Summer Conference will be held Thursday, June 11 and Friday, June 12, 2015 following the USSA (United Suburban Schools Association) New Law/CCOSA Summer Pre-Conference on Wednesday, June 10, 2015 at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in Norman, 2501 Conference Drive, Norman, OK 73069.
Special Education Update

BY ANDREA KUNKEL
CCOSA Staff Attorney

Although Oklahoma has approximately 95,000 students identified with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it has very few special education due process hearing requests filed in any given year. Nineteen due process hearings were requested during the 2013-14 school year and, as of this writing, only seven have been requested for the 2014-15 school year. Of those cases, most are resolved by the parties alone or with the help of a mediator or facilitator. However, districts should take note of the most recent decision from Oklahoma’s administrative process, which can be found on the Special Education Resolution Center (SERC) website at www.ok.gov/abletech/Special_Education_Resolution_Center/SERC/hearingdecisions.html.

In Due Process Hearing No. 2060, the parent of a child with a disability claimed that (1) the District failed to satisfy its IDEA “Child Find” responsibility and to provide Student with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) because it did not identify or address Student’s alleged dyslexia; (2) Student’s ongoing behavior problems resulted from an inability to learn because of undiagnosed dyslexia; and (3) the District should be required to use a particular multi-sensory methodology to educate Student. In response, the District asserted that (1) it had satisfied its Child Find responsibilities by identifying Student as having an “Other Health Impairment” for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), for which he already received special education services; (2) Student’s behavior issues arose from ADHD, for which District staff had completed three different Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and implemented three different Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs); and (3) the District decides methodology issues.

After a three-day hearing, the Hearing Officer found that the District failed (1) to satisfy its Child Find responsibility; (2) to devise appropriate measurable goals and objectives based on Student’s present levels of performance because it had not determined what drove Student’s behavior and lack of school success; (3) to implement Student’s BIP “as evidenced by its efforts with three different [BIPs], none of which have proved successful”; and (4) to provide a complete and thorough Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) in response to the Parent’s request. The Hearing Officer ordered the District to provide and pay for an IEE that included Health/Medical; Vision; Hearing; Motor; Communication/Language; Academic Achievement; Intellectual/Cognitive; Perceptual Processing; Development; Psychological; Social/Emotional; Observation; Functional Behavior; and Adaptive Behavior components. He did not enter any orders concerning dyslexia or educational methodology.

On appeal, the District raised ten issues, all of which the Appeal Officer rejected. She affirmed the hearing decision, stating:

The [BIPs] that have been in place for this child have been wholly ineffective and have led to significant time away from instruction and the ability to concentrate on the tasks in the learning environment. Indeed, the child has spent more time outside the classroom receiving instruction. . . . At a minimum, when a child cannot succeed in the classroom, is a constant behavior interruption with three different BIPs having been in place, and has a Parent – as well as at least one District employee – raising concerns as to learning disability (at a minimum, dyslexia) and possible emotional disturbance, the District has failed on some level to identify the child’s issues and/or to provide FAPE. . . . No behavior consultant has been utilized, though the child is not making educational progress. . . . The hearing officer was extremely generous in ordering an IEE for this child and not holding this hearing open to further order services once the evaluation was complete. The District should seize this opportunity to bring in behavioral consultants; implement an appropriate IEP that will lead to educational benefit; and do anything else in its power to make certain another due process is not filed following the completion of the IEE and continued denial and apparent resistance by the District. (emphasis added)

What lessons can others take from these decisions? Like so many IDEA disputes, this one appears to have arisen from continuing behavior issues that disrupted the student’s educational progress. Despite its efforts, the IEP team was apparently unable to identify behavioral interventions and strategies that significantly reduced the behaviors of concern. The Hearing Officer ordered a fourth FBA, and the Appeal Officer urged the District to bring in behavior consultants. The bottom line is that districts are expected to work continuously to reduce and even eliminate behaviors that impede student educational progress. When behaviors of concern exceed the capacity of district personnel to address them, districts should bring in a behavior consultant.
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Photo: Brian Wood
Plate-Juggling Balance

BY MEGGAN WILSON
OAESP President
Principal, Western Oaks Middle School

Finding a “healthy” balance in the high-stress, multi-faceted job of being a principal is difficult for anybody. Our job requires us to juggle many plates and it seems that if even one falls, they will all come crashing down around us. During my first year as head principal, I learned the hard way that in order to be well, I had to find balance in my work, home and social life. I was diagnosed with Systemic Lupus that year and ended up missing three months of school. During those three months, I learned a lot about myself, my leadership style and my need to put things in place that would allow me to return to work and be healthy.

Here are a few tips that have worked for me on my quest for balanced wellness:

Eat breakfast—If your house is like mine, mornings are crazy. I found that in order to eat something healthy, I have to prepare/plan for it in advance. According to research, a healthy breakfast makes a significant difference in weight maintenance, academic performance, and overall health.

Schedule yourself a plan time—Teachers are guaranteed by contract a personal plan time. My dad pointed out early in my principalship that I must SCHEDULE time for completing paperwork, answering emails, returning phone calls, etc. I must create a “personal plan time” for myself. This was revolutionary for me. This time must be safe-guarded with the help of your secretary. I have found that sometimes I just have to close my door for a few minutes to get some quality work done.

Visit your favorite classroom—On days when I wonder if I can do this job one more second, I escape to my favorite classroom. I can be found hiding in my severe/profound classroom hanging with some of my favorite kids. They always help me remember why I became an educator in the first place.

Leave on time—Schedule at least one day a week as an “early” leave day. What I mean by that is, actually leave on time. The job is NEVER done, and the work will always be there tomorrow. If you are really living on the edge, schedule two early leave days in a week.

Eat lunch—Teachers are allocated thirty minutes of “duty free” lunch. Can you imagine? You must take time to eat. Eat in the lounge and get away from your desk.

Delegate—Of all the tips, this one is most essential. You must learn to rely on the experts in your building. There is NO WAY one person can do it all. Develop leaders within your building and allow them to work their magic.

Set limits for your cell phone, texts, and emails—Turn your phone off or at least refrain from checking your phone after a certain time each night. This day in age, people have 24 hour access to us. This is not healthy or necessary. Turn it off and take a break—your family will greatly appreciate it.

Create a list of priorities—Make a list of the things that must be done in the day. The principalship is “reactionary” in nature. We often move from one fire to the next, instead of proactively addressing situations and circumstances. Do your best to complete a couple of the “Priority” jobs each day.

Exercise—I know, I know...there is no time. MAKE TIME. This is one area that I just recently have added to my daily routine. I joined the gym that is next door to my school. Exercise has made a huge impact on my stress level.

Just say no—Every day there is a new program or initiative in which schools can participate. Sometimes, you just have to say no. Decide on one or two initiatives that your school is going to participate in for the year, stick with it, and do them well.

Juggling all of the responsibilities of the principalship and finding a “healthy” balance is not an easy task. I hope some of these simple tips help as you journey across the long haul of second semester. Be well, my friends.

"Health is a state of body. Wellness is a state of being.” J. Stanford
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Meet Our Expanded Oklahoma Team:
Donna Bigbee
dbigbee@earthlink.net
405.503.8228
Kathleen Messenbaugh
jkmm95@cox.net
405.615.3020
Beth Daniels
bdaniels@booksourceme.com
800.444.0435, ext. 278

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**Book It!**

**BY SHERRI COATS**

*Director of Special Services, Byng Public Schools*

*ODSS President*

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**Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard**

In these times of change, we need to effect transformative change, not just change for change sake. It needs to be a cultural change, a change that releases creativity and compels educators to excel. In the book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*, authors Chip and Dan Heath, demonstrate example-filled stories coupled with a step-by-step, how-to approach to effectively lead change.

Their approach is based on the premise discovered by psychologists that says our minds are ruled by two different systems, the rational mind and the emotional mind, which compete for control. Heath and Heath describe it like this, “The rational mind wants a great beach body; the emotional mind wants that Oreo cookie.” Whether in personal matters, business, or school districts, this ongoing competition can doom a change effort, but if it is overcome, change can come quickly. In this tale, Heath and Heath describe the rational mind as the elephant, and the emotional mind is described at the rider. It gives a great word picture of the conflict and the competing wills of an elephant and its rider.

In a great how-to fashion, *Switch* gives leaders insight and guidance on how to guide the rider, motivate the elephant and shape the path of the elephant and rider to effect transformative change.

To direct the rider, the rational mind, it is important to find the bright spots, script the critical moves and point to the destination. As it relates to the rider, what looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity.

To motivate the elephant, the emotional mind, it is important to find the feeling, shrink the change and grow your people. As it relates to the elephant, what looks like laziness is often exhaustion.

To shape the path it is important to tweak the environment, build habits and rally the herd. As it relates to the path, what looks like a people problem is often a situational problem.

Finally, the authors contend that for change to happen somebody has to start acting differently. As leaders, we need to recognize that each person has an emotional elephant side and a rational rider side, and that both sides need to be motivated to effect change. Also, it is our job as leaders to clear the path for success. Read *Switch* and lead on!
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From our membership...

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- Taking the paperwork out of our offices.
- Your knowledge of law and the system saved us many hours, and I know it saved us money.
- OPSUCA staff has worked diligently to keep our district informed regarding our unemployment claims. The assistance we receive from OPSUCA is necessary to the success of keeping our unemployment cost under control.
Politically Correct

BY RYAN OWENS
CCOSA General Counsel
Director of Legislative Services

Spring marks an important time at the Oklahoma State Capitol. The legislature has been in session since February 2nd and we know this session will be a difficult one. A budget hole of $611.3 million causes our state to face an uncertain future. In times such as these, it is important for educators, students, parents, and other stakeholders to rally together and support our public schools.

March 30th has been designated by the Oklahoma Parent Teacher Association as a Rally Day to support public education at the State Capitol. Please make plans to attend! So many CCOSA members have asked me if last year’s OKED Rally was a success; my answer is YES! In a year when other agencies were cut public school budgets were increased. YOU made a difference by being part of the collective voices supporting public education and demanding better for our students and their schools. This year it is even more important for YOU to make public education a priority.

No one is coming to rescue our schools or our state from the tribulations we face. CCOSA members are the leaders of our state’s public, charter, and private schools. If we want to see greater support for education, better budget practices for our state, investment in public education allowing schools to recruit and retain quality teachers, and common sense testing policies for students, then it is up to us to advance that cause!

We are blessed to have a State Superintendent that is our advocate rather than our adversary. We must help her succeed. There are many bills this session that, if passed, will provide better outcomes for Oklahoma students. We have a real opportunity to enact a long-term funding solution for schools, replace EOI exams with the ACT, respect the voice of parents in the Reading Sufficiency Act, address the concerns of the quantitative component of the TLE, and get A-F school accountability right.

The budget chasm we face poses a significant threat to all core services of state government. As education leaders, we know that our students and teachers bear the brunt of budget cuts which is why we must set aside our differences and unite in the common cause of public education. If educators allow the March 30th OKPTA Rally to fail, that failure will be felt by the entire system of common education.

“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up.
The most certain way to succeed is always
to try just one more time.”
Thomas Edison

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9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2015
Great Plains Technology Center
4500 West Lee Boulevard,
Centennial Room #701
Lawton, OK  73505

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2015
Edmond Public Schools Administration Center
1001 West Danforth Road, Rooms B & C
Edmond, OK  73003

FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 2015
Northeastern State University — Broken Arrow Campus
3100 East New Orleans Street, BAED Room #119
Broken Arrow, OK  74014

FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2015
McAlester Public Schools Central Office
200 East Adams, Cafetorium
McAlester, OK  74501

FRIDAY, APRIL 17, 2015
High Plains Technology Center
3921 34th Street, 201 A/B Meeting Rooms
Woodward, OK  73801

You must cancel 48 hours in advance of the workshop or payment is expected.

ONLINE REGISTRATION LINK:
www.regonline.com/CCOSARegionalVisioning
We would like to welcome you to 2015! NASSP has had a very busy start to the year! We would like to share one very important event that recently occurred on Capitol Hill.

Dr. Christine Handy-Collins, Principal of Gaithersburg High School in Gaithersburg, Maryland and NASSP Board of directors’ member testified before the Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. During her insightful presentation, Christine focused on the importance of school leadership, support for principals and ESEA reauthorization. She cited research from the Wallace Foundation that says “only a principal can lead a school to success in all classrooms for each student’s success and create the culture for sustaining long-term improvements.”

Another significant point in her testimony, focused on recruitment, preparation and professional support for principals. Christine emphasized the growing demands that have been placed on principals. The principalship is a demanding position and in order to meet these demands “they must be provided ongoing personalized professional development to meet their individual and school needs.” NASSP supports principals’ recruitment and preparation grounded in research to improve instruction in high need schools. In addition, federal policy should support state and school districts in efforts to guarantee that: school districts put structures in place to ensure a principal continuum; prospective principals commit to work in high need schools in both urban and rural environments; prospective principals reflect the increasing racial, ethnic, and economic diversity of our nation’s students. NASSP is strongly supporting Senator Franken’s bill, The School Principal Recruitment and Training Act, which will be reintroduced during this Congress. This bill is vital for every principal to enter the profession ready and properly equipped to improve student achievement and to be an effective instructional leader.

Principal evaluation and pathways for principal leadership are crucial components in a reauthorization of ESEA. “An effective evaluation system is collaboratively developed; provides meaningful feedback to the individual principal; is based on multiple measures; and takes into account student growth as well as evidence of effective school leadership practices.” It has been recommended that no more than “a quarter of principal’s evaluation be based on student achievement and growth.” Principal evaluation should be tied to professional development plans focusing on the six key domains of leadership responsibility. With a reauthorized ESEA, Congress can provide support for school districts to significantly improve leadership capacity through a full range of leadership in order to develop strong instructional leaders. It is believed that “sustained improvement in schools takes no less than five years to put in place and leadership continuity during those five years is absolutely essential...to see initiatives through.”

In conclusion, it was respectfully requested that Congress work to “refocus the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to help put in place state and local education systems that will provide robust, meaningful accountability together with sufficient supports for education and schools. The law is in dire need of this redirection to provide high quality educational opportunities and improved outcomes for all students”.

Christine did a wonderful job representing her peers and I am proud to say she accomplished her task!

“…there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst.”

The Wallace Foundation
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How Do You Nurture Teachers in an Effective School?

BY CHRIS LEGRANDE
Principal, Guthrie High School
OASSP President

As administrators, we are continually striving to improve the culture of our schools. Whether it is building a physically, socially, and emotionally safe learning environment or creating an institution whereby all stakeholders sense a welcoming aura upon entry, a positive culture is paramount. However, an important element that is easy to overlook in this entire process is the significance of cultivating a nurturing experience for our teachers.

If we expect our schools to exude vibrancy and energy, then we must start with the largest contingency of employees in the school: our teachers. In an effective school, faculty members sense empowerment. Teachers feel empowered when they have a voice in the collaboration and decision making that takes place within the building. When faculty members’ ideas are heard and acted upon, they experience empowerment. For our recent district-wide Professional Development Day, teachers were polled as to specific topics in which they were interested. Sessions were created based on results of the survey. All sessions were facilitated by either teacher leaders or administrators and staff members were given a choice of classes in which to attend. The entire experience was based on the Edcamp format of PD whereby learning is engaging and collaborative. Teachers provided valuable feedback after PD expressing their appreciation for having ownership of their individualized learning. Empowering teachers provides an environment, in which administrators, staff and students are encouraged to be self-directed lifelong learners.

Any amount of nurturing, whether subtle or on a large scale, will promote healthy relationships, supportive environments and high performing schools.
Clay McDonald
Assistant Principal
Piedmont High School

Everyone loves and deserves to be told when they are doing a great job or for going above and beyond what a job description entails. It doesn’t seem to matter if you are the boss or part time employee, all people want to be acknowledged if they are meeting the expectations set forth. I have tried my best over the years as an administrator to recognize others that I work with for their accomplishments or just for doing a great job. I might mention a teacher or coach at a faculty meeting who did something spectacular in the past month or I might mention his/her accomplishment on the school website or Twitter/Facebook. I do my best to recognize those who deserve credit sometimes in passing in the hallway or a direct email thanking them. While these are great ways to recognize others, none of these methods are as good as a handwritten note. When I go into teachers’ classrooms, notes that I have written the teachers over the years are pinned up on their bulletin board for them to continually view. Never underestimate the power of a handwritten note in this digital age.

All organizations seem to flow in synergistic proportions if everyone has a voice in some capacity. At Piedmont High School, we work to give the teachers a voice by creating focus groups. Each year we create at least five different focus groups and every teacher is assigned to at least one group. Over the years these focus groups have included Veteran’s Day planning, literacy month, freshmen orientation and even a landscaping group just to name a few. These groups are a great way to allow each teacher to have a voice in some way. Every teacher is part of something that helps the school and those teachers that generally say yes to everything are aided by the entire staff. In the end, you receive so many great ideas from those individuals that you rely on each day to make the school run well.

Renae Dozier
Principal, Grove High School

Nurturing teachers and maintaining an effective school go hand in hand. There is a positive correlation between the two especially in regards to relationships among teachers, administrators and students. Teachers must know their administrators care about them as people in addition to caring about them as teachers. This positive relationship allows for those tough conversations to happen when things need to improve or may be headed down the wrong path. Interestingly, this positive relationship transcends from teachers to students making the classroom culture a more comfortable, open environment for learning. This practice in turn, leads to a more effective school.

Teachers should also feel they have a voice in their professional growth. The TLE model provides a framework for this to happen. At Grove, we are taking it a step further and asking the teachers for specific indicators they would like to improve upon and providing support for their development. We use peer observations and support their professional growth by sending them to specialized teaching strategies training. On the secondary level, most teachers are experts in their content areas, but may be lacking in their toolbox of teaching strategies so this support allows that gap to be bridged.

Sometimes nurturing should come from being a little silly and providing some friendly competition. Most Friday’s we GOOSE (Get Out Of School Early) at Grove High School. This means that one of the administrators will go to the selected teacher’s class 7th hour to teach it and allow the teacher to start their weekend early. The preceding week the teacher may have gone above and beyond to help students, another teacher or administrators. We also recognize the value of teachers having perfect attendance and have drawings each semester for an electronic tablet. However, one of the favorite silly things we do has been our Silver Skillet competition. Teachers simply cook their favorite dish for a meal at lunch. We bring in judges who select the dish that is worthy of the coveted Silver Skillet and the winner gets to display the skillet in their classroom all year until the next competition.

When teachers visit about the silly things we do or the professional growth opportunities they have had, you can see and feel the excitement in the room. This leads to a more effective classroom which creates a more effective school.
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