Better Schools

Education

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A publication of the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration Editor . . Dr. Gracie Branch
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I am always amazed at the quality of work that you do in our public schools.

While some may have labeled us as whiners and being against change, I find you to be exactly the opposite. It is your job to speak up for students and to make sure that improvements to public education will benefit children. It is your job to suggest improvements to reforms that guarantee students benefit from the changes being suggested by individuals who have only gone to school, but have never run a school. While we are seen as whiners and against change, the truth is that real change will only happen if we are the force behind it.

I am so impressed with our schools A-F scores. I am convinced that A-F processes need improvements and I look forward to working with you to make them happen. It is apparent to me that poverty and the populations of special needs students that you serve are the two major factors affecting your school’s grade. I do not think that we should ever give up on children who find themselves in these circumstances, and I know that you never will. CCOSA continues to look for ways to help you implement A-F to maximize your district’s grade.

I am very concerned about the passage of the two state questions that will remove funding from schools next December. I believe that we must expect the legislature and governor to replace the lost revenue to schools, whatever the amount. I believe that we will know that amount as soon as the filing of 2013 tax information becomes available. I am advising that school districts plan for a reduction of thirty five dollars per weighted student next year, December 2013. I am fearful that the amount could be even greater. I hope that the supporters of SQ766 are equally aggressive to replace the lost revenue to public school children as they were to pass the question. I challenge them to step up and support the children of Oklahoma who didn’t get to vote to give up their funding.

With the election over and the legislative session just around the corner, we are busy developing our legislative agenda. Be sure to let us know if you have ideas for legislation. We have friends in the legislature who are willing to listen to our concerns and who are very interested in our solutions to issues that affect them. This can be a very good session for public education.

Once again thanks for all that you do for children. Our staff is working hard to help you succeed. Please let us know if we can be of assistance. It is our hope that you have a great holiday season.

Respectfully,

Steven Crawford
CCOSA Executive Director
CCOSA Needs You!

BY RANDY RADER
CCOSA Vice Chairperson

As I type this, I am fully aware of the fact that I am essentially typing an article that would fall under the oft used category of “preaching to the choir.” That is often the case when the selected topic is membership and the article is being published in a magazine distributed primarily to members. However, I shall venture down that road anyway.

FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK EACH AND every one of you for being a member of this great organization. CCOSA and the organizations under its umbrella are here because of you. The staff, and officers of each organization are here in support of the very challenging, yet rewarding jobs that you do every day (and night) providing an education for the children throughout our great state. This being said, in order to continue to have a strong organization, we need to grow our membership and that is where you come in. You, the individual school administrator, are our greatest resource for attracting and keeping new members. Following are some suggestions for how you can do just that:

1. Make the Invitation Personal: Ask
   Many times people are just waiting to be asked and a personal invitation from a colleague that is a member will help them decide to join.

2. Get them Connected!
   When the organization holds a meeting in your area or you are attending any of the incredible professional development opportunities provided by CCOSA, invite new administrators to attend. Share with them the cost savings for being a member and point out the benefits of the networking that takes place at these meetings.

3. Know the benefits!
   CCOSA provides a wealth of benefits and as a member, you should know them and take advantage of them. Taking advantage of just a few of these benefits will more than pay for a membership. Some of those benefits are listed below.
   • A united voice in state legislative activities. This is one of those intangibles that is hard to put a price on. Our organization is having a greater impact on education than ever before and a strong membership base allows this influence to grow.
   • Online services that include professional development and legislative updates.
   • Conferences for members.
   • Professional and legal assistance for active members
   • Discounted professional development programs throughout the year
   • Life insurance in the amount of $10,000 including $10,000.00 for accidental death.
   • And the list could go on.

4. Don’t forget to include the Future!!
   When thinking about prospects for membership, don’t forget to include speaking with teachers that you think would be good future administrators. Each of the organizations offer an associate membership for non-administrators or students enrolled in a university working towards becoming an administrator.

On behalf of everyone that does this job and knows how hard you work, I want to thank you for being members and for helping us to grow an already great organization. If there is any way that CCOSA or any of the organizations under the CCOSA umbrella can help, I hope you will let your state leaders or the staff know. Thank you!
Bergenfield Public Schools drive student growth with data.

Dr. Michael Kuchar is a person who makes things happen.

In his first year as Superintendent of Bergenfield Public Schools in New Jersey, 63 kids dropped out. There were 6 AP courses with an average score of 1.7, and only 55% of seniors applied to a college or university.

Dr. Kuchar rolled up his sleeves and went to work. He dropped NWEA™ MAP™ and chose STAR Enterprise™ assessments to help teachers differentiate instruction and drive growth.

STAR Enterprise simply revolutionized the way his teachers taught.

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Last year, Bergenfield had zero dropouts. Its 17 AP courses had an average score of 3.2 and 97% of seniors applied to a college or university. Wow.

Watch Dr. Kuchar tell his story in a short video at www.renlearn.com/lp/21139 or scan the code.

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Oklahoma Association Secondary School Principals held its fall conference on November 7 in Norman at Embassy Suites. Participants enjoyed movie night November 6th sponsored by Scholastic. On November 7, Dr. Donna McCaw, Vice President, Midwest Region Center for College and Career Readiness began the day by discussing Common Core State Standards. Erin Gruwell author of The Freedom Writers Diary, told her compelling story of her journey with 150 high school student who had been written off by the education system. Breakout sessions during the AM and PM provided a myriad of topics for discussion. Thank you to all those who attended, presented and exhibited at the 7th Annual OASSP Fall Conference.

The OASSP Executive Committee met on Wednesday, November 7 at noon. This year’s officers are Dr. Debra Bendick-President, Robert Schornick- President-Elect, Benny Barnett-Past President, Sammy Jackson-NASSP Coordinator, David Morrow-NASSP Board Member, Becky Cole and Will Parker-Assistant Principal Representatives. District Representatives for 2012-2013 are:

- Cliff Benson, Yarbrough
- Kyle Reynolds, Woodward
- Paul McQueen, Ponca City
- Dr. Alan Baker, Cleveland
- Stacey Vernon, Tulsa
- Liz Burns, Broken Arrow
- Terry Adams, Claremore
- Bruce Chrz, Welch
- Della Parrish, Catoosa
- Jeff Lewallen, Elk City
- Chris LeGrande, Guthrie
- Brian Lomenick, Bristow
- Leslie Frazier, Coweta
- Garry Ferguson, Tahlequah
- Matt Goucher, El Reno
- Adys Altstaff, Oklahoma City
- Dr. Debra Thomas-Oklahoma City
- Peter Lienefeld, Norman
- Matthew Riggs, Earlsboro
- Lorraine Caldwell, Poteau
- Cathy Hunt, Hobart
- Dale Spradlin, Waurika
- Toby Ringwalt, Dickson
- Stan Cochran, Latta
- Jon Shepard, Bennington
- Rod Davis, Broken Bow

Regional meetings have been held at Coweta, Poteau, Ada, and Oklahoma City. Regional meetings are a great way to encourage networking in your area with principals and learning more about OASSP, NASSP and CCOSA news. If you would like to schedule a meeting in your area please contact OASSP Executive Director Dr. Vickie Williams.
ODSS has changed the dates of its upcoming winter conference from February 7-8, 2013, to January 24-25, 2013. ODSS is also in the process of changing the winter conference location to the NCED Conference Center and Hotel (formerly known as the Postal Training Center) in Norman. One conference day will be devoted to presentations by national speakers, explaining how to align IEP goals and objectives/benchmarks to the Common Core State Standards, how to develop and implement assessments to check student progress on an ongoing basis, and what to expect from the new Common Core assessments. In our new conference space, ODSS will be able to offer breakout sessions so that participants have a choice of presentations on the other conference day. Please save January 24-25 on your calendar to attend the ODSS winter conference, and plan to bring other district staff members along.

OASA is up to 633 Active members and 52 Associate members. Plans are being finalized for the OASA Legislative Conference to be held on January 16, 2013. Registration is open and information can be found on the CCOSA website at www.ccosa.org. OASA District Representatives for 2012-2013 are:

- D1 – Freida Burgess, Goodwell
- D2 – Rocky Burchfield, Fairview
- D3 – Roydon Tilley, Chisholm
- D4 – David Pennington, Ponca City
- D5 – Jarod Mendenhall, Broken Arrow
- D6 – Rick Kibbe, Catoosa
- D7 – April Grace, Putnam City
- D8 – Jeanene Barnett, Bristow
- D9 – Charlie Dickinson, Dale
- D10 – Jerry Needham, Oktaha
- D11 – Max Tanner, Central
- D12 – Rick Garrison, Cheyenne
- D13 – Randy Batt, Cache
- D14 – Todd Bunch, Ninnekah
- D15 – Sherry Labyer, Duncan
- D16 – Jim Beckham, Blanchard
- D17 – Cliff Johnson, Latta
- D18 – Charles “Buddy” Enis, Wilburton
- D19 – Ted Brewer, Haworth
- D20 – Tom Stiles, Indian Capital CT

The OMLEA Executive Committee met November 6th prior to the OASSP Fall Conference at Embassy Suites-Norman. Members discussed conference logistics with Embassy Suites Director of Catering, Dee Cody. The OMLEA Middle Level Conference will be back in the OKC area at a new venue, Embassy Suites-Norman, February 28-March 2, 2013. The theme for this year’s conference will be “Mardi Gras” featuring Dr. Cynthia “Mama J” Johnson as the keynote speaker. Dr. Johnson is a national consultant acknowledged for her work with reaching and teaching today’s youth, instructing diverse student populations, and selecting strategies to close the achievement gap. “Mama J” has experience in elementary, middle, and secondary education at the rural, suburban, and urban settings. “Mama J” has served in the classroom teaching multiple abilities including special education, gifted, and at-risk students. She has also served as a principal at both the middle and high levels, and as a district-wide administrative professional development trainer. Make your reservations now on-line at www.ccosa.org.
The Oklahoma Visioning Project

By Dr. Joe Siano
OASA President
Superintendent, Norman Public Schools

It is hard to believe we are this far into the 2012-13 school year. There has never been a time when strong positive leadership has been more important. Our state, along with the nation, is focused on school reform with a mission to improve public education.

As leaders, we should take a proactive role in this state and national discussion. We can only do this by communicating a clear and effective vision for the future of public schools in our state. For far too long our energies have been consumed with responding to others’ ideas. We must divert our energies into building support for a vision that is founded on research-based initiatives that are proven to positively impact student learning.

CCOSA and OSSBA have joined to begin a statewide effort to develop The Oklahoma Visioning Document to advance concrete ideas for the future of Oklahoma public schools. This project will involve superintendents and board members across the state from rural, suburban and urban schools. And, as this project develops, other stakeholders will become partners in the effort.

A steering committee comprised of fifteen school superintendents and board members has been working to develop the organizational structure of this initiative. Through study and discussion, we have identified the following seven areas to comprise the visioning document:

1. Teaching, learning and assessments for student success
2. Expanded learning opportunities for student success
3. Financial resources
4. Climate, culture and organizational efficacy
5. Physical resources
6. Partnerships for human and organizational capital development
7. Governance, leadership and accountability

Over the next year, it is our goal to develop a document that educators, parents, business leaders, and policy makers will embrace as a proactive, positive educational vision that will serve the needs of all students in our state. As such, we look forward to collaboration with you in the coming months and bringing you more news of this exciting effort.
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Congress reconvened on Tuesday, November 13 for its lame duck session. They have only a few days left to organize for the next year and avert the “fiscal cliff”. The entire lame duck session will last only 16 days. Congress will meet for an initial four days and then they will dismiss and return on November 27 for 12 days until dismissing on December 21 for the Christmas holidays.

BOTH THE PRESIDENT AND HOUSE SPEAKER John Boehner have made a number of conciliatory statements about finding common ground and working together to reduce the deficits and reform the tax code. However, a budget deal will prove most difficult. Labor supports higher taxes on the wealthy, but opposes any changes in entitlement programs. Corporate CEO’s support entitlement reform and higher revenues, but risk alienating small business and Republicans on the questions of higher taxes.

After a week of negotiations, both sides appeared to harden on their positions of tax increases and spending cuts. As of Monday, November 19 Congressional leaders have signaled they were ready to accept tax increases and democrats have said they would accept spending cuts. House speaker Boehner wants a plan to agree to these targets in legislation while extending both spending cuts and tax increases to 2013.

Democrats are not willing to accept a deal which does not include tax increases on the rich. Republicans say they will accept tax increases from loophole closers, while Democrats are suggesting they would extend the tax rates on everyone up to 1 million.

The key issue in resolving the “fiscal cliff” is the extension of the Bush tax rates for those earning more than $250,000. The President’s position to raise taxes on the wealthy is non-negotiable. The real question is will the President accept tax increases on the wealthy by closing loopholes or limiting deductions.

Time is increasingly short to make a deal. The likely scenario is an agreement on a framework for deficit reduction in 2013 with a tax reform plan designed to raise an agreed amount of revenue. This deal would put off any tax increases or spending cuts for 6 to 12 months. The House Republicans would agree to increase the deficit limit, removing a major problem for the President. The deal would also include a “down payment” on the deficit of $100 billion in spending cuts and tax increases on the wealthy.

The other possible scenario is continued disagreement and the plunge over the “CLIFF.” Senator Patty Murray, D-Washington, the incoming Chair of the Senate Budget Committee, said this past weekend that if Republicans do not accept the higher tax rates on the wealthy, Congress will let all the tax cuts expire and start over next year.

If that were to happen, most are now predicting an 8 percent reduction in all federal programs to begin in FY 13. The only federal program impacted this fiscal year (FY12), would be those schools who receive impact aid.

As always, schools are left in the middle trying to balance significant losses in state and federal revenue with the needs of students.

The President’s tax package has proposed tax increases of 1.6 trillion in his opening bid in the “fiscal cliff” negotiations. The White House has said these tax increases would come from not extending the Bush tax cuts for the top 2 percent, returning the top tax rate to the Clinton-era level. However, the proposed 1.6 trillion in tax increases goes well beyond raising the top rate from 35 to 39.6 percent. In fact, the total tax package calls for raising taxes by 1.9 trillion and providing about 300 million in tax cuts for individuals and businesses.
Employees need to protect their income

No one wants to entertain the possibility of not being able to earn an income and most people have a tendency to believe “it will never happen to me”. The fact is ¹350,000 personal bankruptcies every year are blamed on injuries and unexpected illnesses and ²one in seven of us can expect to be disabled for more than five years.

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¹“Illness and Injury as Contributors to Bankruptcy,” Health Affairs, Feb 2, 2005
²Commissioner’s Disability Table, 1998, Health Insurance Association of America, NY Times, Feb 2000

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When in doubt, test’em!

BY CLARK OGILVIE
Superintendent, Owasso
OASA President-Elect

Testing, testing...testing everywhere!
If you believe much of what you read in the daily newspapers and watch all of the constant campaign rhetoric that has brought every issue to a head in this election month — more testing is the answer to half of society’s ills...! Legislators along with a number of state superintendents continue to espouse the belief that the benefits and positives that spring from standardized testing results are THE answer to education reform.

I'M SORRY BUT AS A 35+ YEAR EDUCATOR and superintendent I disagree with this school of thought. The more research I seek out to justify my beliefs on this matter, the more evidence I am finding that supports this conviction. Recently one of my superintendent colleagues, knowing my growing discontent with standardized testing, encouraged me to read an article by a renown Chinese educator by the name of Dr. Yong Zhao. Dr. Zhao is the presidential chair and associate dean for global education in the University of Oregon’s College of Education, Eugene, Oregon.

He was quick to point out that Chinese students had recently left American teens in the dust across the board in reading, science and math as reported in the results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) of 15-year olds. U.S. Secretary Arne Duncan labeled it a wake-up call for America and President Obama tagged the occasion a “modern day Sputnik moment to catch up.” In the most recent round of testing, 65 nations participated in the study, with China’s Shanghai ranking No. 1 in all three categories and the U.S. coming in average or below average. Initially, this achievement gap between American students and Shanghai students seemed to warrant this sense of urgency and anxiety.

However, China’s educators were not celebrating. Apparently, a gap exists between high test scores and the level of economic development in their country. Although the by-rote study techniques and constant testing may produce world class test scores, this does not necessarily translate to China’s burning desire for innovative and entrepreneurial talents that will help them dominate the world economy. In fact, China’s economy remains labor-intensive rather than knowledge intensive. Another very interesting fact, provided by the Chinese National Statistics Bureau, shows only 2,000 Chinese companies owned the patent for the core technology used in the products that they produced in 2005. In addition, merely 473 innovations from China were recognized by the world’s leading patent offices outside China in 2008 versus 14,399 from the United States!

Why is such an “excellent education system” being held responsible for China’s failure to produce a Steve Jobs? Why is it that the Chinese want to emulate us while at the same time many in the United States want to emulate their system of education? Apparently there is a mismatch of understanding educational excellence on both sides of the globe. Even a prominent Chinese businessman by the name of Kai-fu Lee, founder of Innovation Works an investment company aimed at cultivating innovative entrepreneurship in China said, "the next Apple, the next Google will come, but probably not in China.” He also said, "if China wants to have an Apple or Google, it must rebuild its education system!"

The study by Dr. Zhao concluded that America is becoming too much like Asia with American reformers steadily transforming schools into education environments hostile to creative and entrepreneurial talents. There is a significant narrowing of curricula and a drastic shift toward teaching to the test. Coincidentally, there is a significant decline in creativity in the last few decades. One has to ask the question; shouldn’t we try to stop policies and practices that can harm creativity and entrepreneurship?

Perhaps we (America) need to consider changing our mindset and not just, “test-em more!”
Principal and teacher evaluation is currently the primary tool being promoted for school improvement. With its focus on teacher leader effectiveness, the federal Race to the Top initiative began the process of requiring participating states to develop more extensive evaluation systems, including more differentiation among ratings and the use of student learning as evidence. That initiative has been continued as a condition of state waivers under No Child Left Behind. As a consequence, Oklahoma has dramatically overhauled their evaluation system for teachers and administrators.

While most would agree that evaluation needed changing, we must recognize that changing will not by itself transform the quality of teaching and leading. Identifying and removing poor teachers and administrators will not really improve the quality of the profession unless we also bring in an excellent supply of good teachers and well-prepared principals committed to ongoing learning. This will require building a strong professional development system that can help spread expertise.

In short, what we really need is the conception of evaluation as part of a teaching and learning system that supports continuous improvement for individuals in the profession. Such a system should enhance learning and skill while also ensuring that the individual can effectively support student learning.

There is a growing realization that we need a more systemic approach to building teacher leader effectiveness. Recent conversations with Oklahoma superintendents revealed that districts across the state have not been able to fill all available positions this year and have been forced to hire less qualified personnel than in the past. A pipeline for quality with incentives to recruit and retain good teachers and administrators is needed to provide the catalyst for shaping school improvements, creating lasting foundations for student learning and accelerating teacher leader effectiveness.

Leadership is second only to teaching among school influences on student success. The impact of leadership is most significant in schools with the greatest needs. The Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration (CCOSA) has trained 2,113 administrators since June using the Tulsa Model and 1,045 superintendents and other administrators using the McREL Model. Oklahoma’s public school principals influence thousands of teachers and students, pre-K through grade 12, and are pivotal to ensuring that all students achieve. Additional training in both the Tulsa and McREL models will be held in January for personnel hired at mid-year. The fifth day of Tulsa training will also be presented after school resumes in 2013. CCOSA and their partners, Barlow and McREL, also offer a half-day and full day orientation for teachers and principals. Please contact CCOSA if you are interested in any of these training opportunities.

Principals and teachers play an important role in transforming evaluation systems into mechanisms for improving instruction and student learning. If the education system cannot provide meaningful ongoing and summative feedback to teachers and principals, it relinquishes significant opportunities to influence practice and student achievement. Given the overwhelming evidence that teachers and leaders have the greatest impact on school improvement, supporting their ongoing growth and development should be a priority. Without appropriate assessments that recognize excellence and identify problems, investments in teacher and leader development are disconnected from school and district goals for improvement. To ensure teacher and leader growth, assessment of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the evaluation systems must be ongoing and we must take the necessary steps for continually improving those systems.
As I write this article I can hardly believe that the 2012 election is over, winter break is only weeks away, and the Oklahoma Legislature is soon to return to the “people’s business” in Oklahoma City. There have been many issues that have caused calls to the CCOSA office, but one in particular that is worth noting concerns teacher suspension.

NEWTON’S LAWS OF PHYSICS STATE THAT for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Although managing the affairs of a school district or site might not seem related to or governed by the laws of physics, Newton’s principle can be instructive on the issue of teacher and administrator suspension. Affecting the employment of another through the use of suspension will most assuredly result in an equal reaction from the suspended employee in an attempt to protect their employment interests. Furthermore, action taken to suspend a teacher or administrator triggers an automatic reaction from the school board.

Section 6-101.14 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes governs suspension procedures for school administrators. Section 6-101.29 of Title 70 of the Oklahoma Statutes governs suspension procedures for teachers. Both sections of Title 70 contemplate a fact situation in which the certified employee has been suspended without notice or a hearing.

 Suspending certified staff without a hearing is allowable when the local board or district administration believes that:

1. Cause exists for dismissal of the administrator or teacher; AND
2. Immediate suspension of the certified employee is in the best interests of the children in the district.

Once both requirements listed above are satisfied, immediate suspension with continued pay and benefits is permitted.

Indefinite suspension with pay and benefits, however; is not allowed under current state law. Both Sections 6-101.14 and 6-101.29 of Title 70 require that “within ten (10) days’ time after the suspension becomes effective, the local board of education shall initiate a hearing for dismissal pursuant to law.”

Both suspension sections of Title 70 provide only one exception to the requirement of the initiation of termination proceedings within ten days of the effective date of the suspension. If criminal charges or an indictment is pending against the suspended employee, then the suspension can continue with pay and benefits until the case is finally adjudicated by a trial court. In the absence of an active criminal case against the suspended certified employee, the law requires that termination proceedings begin within ten days of the suspension becoming effective. Neither the employee nor the district can waive the statutory obligation of the local board of education to take up termination proceedings. In the absence of termination proceedings, the employee is entitled to return to work.

It is important to note that the Oklahoma Legislature was clear in their intention that termination proceedings begin within ten days of the effective date of the certified employee’s suspension. Criminal investigations do not fall within the sole exception provided in the suspension sections of Title 70. Investigations can take many months or years to complete. Keeping certified employees suspended indefinitely pending the outcome of an investigation would violate public policy.

Equally important to note is the different treatment allowed for different classes of employees. If you are looking to suspend, demote or terminate the employment of a support employee you must look to Sections 6-101.40 and 6-101.43 of Title 70; as well as locally adopted board policy regarding suspension and termination of support employees.

Newton’s laws of physics hold true even in the realm of employee relations. Though instructional leaders should endeavor to help teachers and administrators overcome obstacles to professional success, there are times when such an outcome is impossible to achieve. In those moments, remember the words of former U.S. First Lady Rosalynn Carter; “A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go, but ought to be.” Though these decisions are never easy, they are guided by law and board policy. Following both will ensure you are adequately prepared for the reaction sure to follow.
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TLE, A-F, CCSS, RTI, IEP, PLC’s. Shall I go on? It is no secret that we have been furiously working on federal, state, and local initiatives. While there are numerous tasks and challenges in front of us, we must always make time for LOL. With our lives full of deadlines and responsibilities, it is important to take time out to see the lighter side of life.

YOU HAVE PROBABLY ALL HEARD THE PHRASE, “laughter is the best medicine,” and I often find this to be true. Who does not enjoy a good joke or a perfectly timed one-liner to help lighten the mood? Indeed, it feels good to laugh, even if at ourselves.

In our very active world, we’re working harder and tackling an array of issues in one of the world’s most important careers, education. So, why do we need to take a little time for a bit of old-fashioned humor? Because our work lives seem to lack cheerfulness.

In the day-to-day grind, it is easy to forget this fact. So, my call to you today is to take a minute to share a laugh and lighten the mood with your coworkers and students—doing so makes it easier to pull together when the going gets tough. Laughter can build better teams and foster creativity and innovation in teams. People, who laugh together, work better together.

Having a little occasional fun is a necessary ingredient as we go about our serious and important work of making our schools healthier and our environments more productive. So without a doubt, laughter has a major role to play in the unfolding of our potential. If we want to boost morale, we can start by laughing. You might feel more engaged, more positive, more enthusiastic and more able to create a meaningful life and workplace in every way. My recommendation is that you strive to keep laughter on your radar...learn to live life laughing.
EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Healthy Schools Incentive Grants for School Districts

BY SHARON HOWARD
Program Manager, Healthy Schools Incentive Grants

The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) will be offering incentive grants to qualifying school districts beginning in January. The incentive grants are to encourage schools to become Certified Healthy Schools and to encourage school districts to take important policy actions to improve health among students, faculty and staff.

THE CRITERIA FOR THE HEALTHY SCHOOLS Incentive Grants address such issues as tobacco use prevention, health education, improving nutrition and physical activity, and behavioral health issues. The grants will provide opportunities for districts to receive monetary awards based on the size of the school district, the level of certification achieved, and the incentive criteria met (basic incentive, merit incentive or excellence incentive). Awards for the excellence incentive level can range from $2,500 for small school districts up to $150,000 for very large school districts.

As a prerequisite to a district’s incentive grant application, at least 50 percent of the schools in the district must achieve certification from the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Schools program, administered by the Oklahoma Healthy Schools Advisory Committee and other partners including the State Chamber, the Academy for State Goals, the Oklahoma Turning Point Council, and the Oklahoma State Department of Health. The Certified Healthy School application period has closed for this year, but will re-open in August 2013.

The incentive grants will be provided to school districts to enhance wellness policies, activities and programs. Scientific reviews have documented that school health programs can have a positive effect on educational outcomes. For more information on the Healthy Schools Incentive Grants or to sign up to receive informational updates, contact Sharon Howard, Program Manager, Healthy Schools Incentive Grants at: sharonh@tset.ok.gov or call 405-521-6231.
Responsive Classroom strategies put to work in Oklahoma schools

This year, Oklahoma teachers from several school districts attended Responsive Classroom training.

The Responsive Classroom approach is a widely used, research-backed approach to elementary education that:

- Increases academic achievement
- Decreases problem behaviors
- Improves social skills
- Leads to more high-quality instruction

Responsive Classroom methods are continually refined to meet schools’ needs. The social-emotional strategies provide educators with the structures valued in teacher evaluations, such as the Marzano Protocol and Tulsa Public School’s TLE rubrics.

When Oklahoma teachers emphasize social skills and academics, classrooms are places where students feel free to learn and take academic leaps.

How do educators create a safe haven for inquiry while covering required material? Oklahoma teachers learned practical Responsive Classroom strategies, such as:

- Engaging students with academically rich Morning Meetings
- Modeling acceptable behavior
- Quickly and firmly catching and correcting unacceptable behavior
- Increasing proximity to students

Responsive Classroom methods work with students of varying learning styles, abilities, and accommodations. Read how one elementary educator put new Responsive Classroom practices to the test with a challenging group of students, including Nathan, a fourth grader with ADHD.

Responsive Classroom® is the licensed trademark/service mark of the Northeast Foundation for Children.

Origins is the Midwest Regional Center for the Responsive Classroom®.

“I am grateful to see the positive and proactive approach being truly implemented in our schools.”
– Oklahoma educator

“Responsive Classroom I – one of the best workshops during the course of my career.”
– Oklahoma educator, 32 years experience

Oklahoma educators like you are improving their instructional effectiveness with Responsive Classroom strategies.

Visit OriginsOnline.org for:

- Free activities, games, and advisories
- Educator help for establishing and maintaining order and more
- Workshops scheduled near you in summer 2013

“I was able to share and take risks in the Responsive Classroom workshop.”
– Oklahoma educator, 17 years experience
Turning Behaviors Around with Responsive Classroom® Strategies

BY JOE ANKLAM
fourth grade teacher, Wautoma, WI

I heard rumors for years about how difficult my incoming group of students would be. “They’re a real tough bunch,” some of my K-3 colleagues said.

The summer before the “real tough bunch” arrived, I attended a Responsive Classroom workshop.

I was determined to prove that the reputation that preceded these students was unwarranted. The whole class deserved a fresh start. I was determined to provide one.

KNOW A STUDENT LIKE NATHAN?

Nathan was alleged to be the most challenging student of the bunch. He had been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and was emotionally and behaviorally disabled. He was on numerous medications aimed at calming him down, but these medications adversely affected his sleep patterns, which often left him irritable and prone to outbursts, especially in the morning.

MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STUDENT INTERESTS AND CLASS CONTENT

To assist Nathan, I first established a positive relationship. Playing chess proved to be the key. He loved to play, so we sat down for a match whenever we could. He also enjoyed playing musical instruments. He gained additional privileges and responsibilities when his positive behavior showed he was ready.

LOOK AT WHY CHILDREN ARE MISBEHAVING

Nathan’s crisis committee and I also looked for indicators for his volatility.

He frequently acted out first thing in the morning. It was as if he wanted to be sent to the office. Turned out, the vice principal was offering Nathan a fruit bar. I suspected Nathan wasn’t getting breakfast at home. After speaking with his family, his father now brings Nathan to school early enough to eat breakfast here. Nathan’s behavior has been much better.

As I learned in Responsive Classroom I, knowing the children you teach – individually, culturally, and developmentally – was as important as knowing the content.

DISPLAY CONTROL AND PROBLEM-SOLVE BEHAVIOR

One day, Nathan asked to borrow a pencil. I gave him one and asked him to take care of it. When he later became volatile toward another student, he threw the pencil so hard it stuck in between the metal hinges of our folding walls. I snapped. I grabbed the pencil, broke it in half and threw it on my desk, looking Nathan in the eye the entire time. He was then escorted to the office.

During lunch, I circled back with Nathan. I apologized to him for breaking the pencil. We discussed why we were both upset and brainstormed some ideas for calming ourselves down. Nathan acknowledged his problem behavior and recommended taking deep breaths and counting to ten – strategies he found successful in the past! I thanked him for his advice and gave him another new pencil. Since then, we have not been uncivil to each other. I’ve worked extra hard to keep my cool.

ADDRESS MISBEHAVIOR IMMEDIATELY

In the hallway, I saw Nathan run up the ramp to the lunchroom. When I asked him to come back to the bottom of the ramp and walk, Nathan looked at me, then kept on going as if he didn’t hear me. I had to act. I went up the ramp, intervened, and made him walk back with me. As we walked together to the lunchroom, we debriefed. He told me that running could cause him to crash into someone coming out of a hallway door. He was starting to see how his behavior impacted others.

“I noticed how teacher language really sets the bar for expectations of a child being responsible for his own learning.”

– Oklahoma City, educator

A few weeks later, I saw Nathan running in the hallway again. This time he was very polite and cooperative with everything I asked him to do. In the beginning of the year I would have had to take him to the office to calm him down. Nathan was getting much better at de-escalating himself. The strategies – building relationship, reinforcing the positives, and intervening when necessary – are clearly paying off.

BUILD A SOLID COMMUNITY FOR ALL

This ill-reputed fourth grade class is shaping up just like any other class.

I consistently use Responsive Classroom methods, including:

• Daily community-building meetings
• Break chair for students who need to refocus
• Problem-solving social conferences for students who continue to break rules

Nathan follows instructions and rules very well. He has made a lot of progress in a few months. Nathan was referred for rule breaking three times in September, but by mid-November, he hadn’t had a referral since September 24th! The student support committee and I have worked together to help Nathan, putting the new Responsive Classroom practices I learned to good use.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 19

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See Responsive Classroom methods in action on the Responsive Classroom YouTube Channel.

For summer institute dates in Oklahoma, visit OriginsOnline.org.

In schools using the Responsive Classroom approach:

CHILDREN:
• Scored higher on math and reading tests
• Felt more positive about schools, teachers, and peers
• Had better social skills and fewer behavior problems

TEACHERS:
• Felt more effective and more positive about teaching
• Offered more high-quality instruction
• Collaborated more frequently with other teachers

Taken from The Social and Academic Learning Study
The High Value of NAESP Membership

BY KAIR RIDENHOUR
Zone 8 Representative

Every day as a principal you face new challenges, but where do you turn for best practices you can quickly put into action?

AS A PRINCIPAL MYSELF, I HAVE AN ANSWER: Use the source I rely on, day in and day out. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) is my go-to source for solutions, ideas, insight, and even inspiration. NAESP offers a rich palette of professional benefits, including being a part of a network of dedicated school leaders that you just won’t find anywhere else – colleagues and friends who share the commitment, wrestle with the challenges, understand the opportunities and rewards, and appreciate the complexities of being a principal.

Now that the pressure on principals is greater than ever, NAESP has your back on Capitol Hill, shaping legislation and policies designed to support you and your school and to make sure that our voice doesn’t get drowned out in the debates on funding, accountability, and improvements in education. NAESP also offers the Principal magazine, Best Practices for Better Schools Annual Conference, and a variety of online programs at www.naesp.org.

I’ve been a member of NAESP for 5 years. Ever since I joined, I have enjoyed the opportunity to network both locally and nationally, to learn from my peers and share experiences with friends across the nation, to benefit from the insight and knowledge of nationally recognized experts, and to quickly find the information and resources I need to keep my school running smoothly and my career on track. As you know, we wear many hats as principals; having so many quality resources at our fingertips saves time, money and headaches.

I currently represent Zone 8 (Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) on the Membership Advisory Group chaired by NAESP President Mark Terry. This group was established to develop an in-depth strategy and plan focused on building and engaging membership. As of this year, Oklahoma has only 234 members who are a member of NAESP. This year we are asking each NAESP member to help NAESP grow by reaching out to colleagues who are not members. NAESP recently concluded that market research indicates that non-members often do not know enough about NAESP to make the membership decision, but the research also says that non-members are eager to learn more about the Association. With your help, we can build awareness about NAESP and its many unique and valuable benefits and build membership at the same time.

Let’s grow NAESP together. It matters!

tech tip

Secure social learning network for educators and students. Find more information at edmodo.com.

Edshelf is a directory of digital tools for educators. Check out the website at edshelf.wpengine.com.
Disciplinary Removal – What Is It?

BY ANDREA KUNKEL
CCOSA Staff Attorney

It’s time for a brief refresher course on a basic rule of discipline applicable to students with disabilities under the IDEA and Section 504/Title II.

IN A NUTSHELL, WHEN THE DISCIPLINARY removal of a student with a disability constitutes a change of placement, the district must provide certain required procedural safeguards, including a manifestation determination, before it implements the removal. To comply with this rule, administrators must understand the meaning and application of several terms, including the term “disciplinary removal.”

So, what type of discipline constitutes a “disciplinary removal”? Generally, a disciplinary removal includes any type of disciplinary consequence imposed upon a student with a disability that has the effect of separating the student from the services, programming and/or placement deemed necessary for him or her by the IEP or 504 team.

The term covers:
1. Removals from school for out-of-school suspension;
2. Removals from school without an out-of-school suspension, imposed at District request, to address misconduct, even if the child’s IEP, 504 Plan, or Behavior Intervention Plan provides that removal from school for a period of time is appropriate to address behavior concerns;
3. Placement in an in-school intervention program, unless the child
   a. gets the opportunity to continue to progress appropriately in the general curriculum while in in-school intervention;
   b. continues to receive the services in the IEP or 504 Plan while in in-school intervention; and
   c. continues to participate with nondisabled children while in in-school intervention to the extent the child would have in the current placement; and
4. Removals from the bus or other required school vehicle if bus/other transportation is included as a part of the child’s IEP or 504 Plan, unless the District provides an alternate form of transportation during the removal.

Every school must have a method of keeping an accurate and up-to-date count of the number of disciplinary removal days for each child with a disability during each school year so that administrators can determine quickly whether a proposed removal triggers required procedural safeguards. For disciplinary removals less than a full school day in length, schools must keep track of the number of school hours or periods of removal.

These concepts can be difficult to apply, even for administrators who well understand the concepts. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns about these issues.
Special Education Administrators’ Roles and Responsibilities

BY JULIE CRUTCHFIELD
ODSS President-Elect
Director of Special Services, Collinsville

Last summer, at the CCOSA Summer Conference, a colleague and I presented on the roles and responsibilities of Special Education Administrators. As we all know, the role of all school administrators continues to evolve.

THE INCORPORATION OF TLE, A-F, HIGH STAKES TESTING AND COMMON CORE has further increased the need for individuals in special education administration to be not only instructional leaders, but also an integral part of the district administration team.

Working with diverse groups such as the State Department of Education (accountability and assessment), the Office for Civil Rights (Title II of the ADA and Section 504), the local school board (policies and procedures), parents (FAPE and IEP’s), teachers (staffing and continuous training), site administrators (FERPA and discipline) and the central office staff (budget and employees) creates unique challenges for the special education administrator. Each of these diverse groups has its own expectations of special education in the school environment.

Educational administrators are faced with the challenge of meeting increasing legal mandates with funding instability. We have been told to prepare for the anticipated impact of sequestration in the coming year. This will have a direct and substantial impact on funds that support special education and Title I. No matter what we are hit with and no matter how frustrated we become, we continue to “show up” each day. I truly believe we could not do our jobs without the support from our colleagues.

Special education administrators’ roles will continue to become more complex. We will continue to learn, continue to teach and continue to make a difference in each of our communities. Despite our challenges, our jobs are made a little easier with the tremendous support system that special services directors have in the state of Oklahoma. This is an exciting time in our profession, and we have great opportunities ahead of us. Get involved, stay informed and make a difference.

PROFESSIONAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS:
• The Oklahoma Directors of Special Services (ODSS), which is now under the umbrella of the Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration (CCOSA), and provides ongoing training, support and advocacy from CCOSA’s attorneys, directors and other professionals. Contact Andrea Kunkel, CCOSA Staff Attorney, at kunkel@ccosa.org, for more information.
• The Metro Area Directors of Special Services, for special education administrators in the Oklahoma City area. The Metro group meets periodically throughout the school year. Contact Dick Heatly at the Moore Public Schools, dickheatly@mooreschools.com, for more information.
• The Tulsa Area Directors of Special Services (TADSS), for special education administrators in northeastern Oklahoma. TADSS meets on the third Thursday of most months during the school year. Contact Pamm Lambert at the Skiatook Public Schools, plambert@skiatook-schools.org, for more information.
• The State Department of Education, Special Education Services Section, under the leadership of Dr. Rene Axtell.
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