Better Schools

Happy Holidays!
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Here we are entering into the holiday season and we are already halfway through another school year. The beginning of this year has produced a number of challenges for school districts to resolve: the latest roll out of the A-F grading system, the quantitative piece of Teacher Leader Effectiveness (TLE) (VAM) (SLO/SSO), OUSF funding, loss of the NCLB waiver, shortage of qualified teachers, and other issues that make operating a public school a difficult job.

The election results in June and November may have the greatest impact on the daily operations of our public schools. Congratulations to Dr. John Cox for running a great race while conducting himself in the true spirit of a public school superintendent. Dr. Cox exemplifies all that is good about being a superintendent and I am sure his students and district are the benefactors of his superior leadership.

I am certain that as educators we are in a position of influence when it comes to working on issues with the new State Superintendent, Joy Hofmeister. Mrs. Hofmeister has demonstrated a willingness to engage public school educators in the conversations surrounding reform issues and funding sources for our students, teachers and administrators. Her transition team consists of superintendents from large, medium, and small school districts sitting at the table with business and political representatives discussing the future of public education. We look forward to working with Mrs. Hofmeister and being part of a continued dialogue on educational issues.

I am writing this article just before the Thanksgiving holiday. As we spend time with our own families, it is also important to remember our colleagues who are dealing with difficult health issues and lift them up in our prayers. I would ask that you put Shattuck Superintendent Randy Holley and his family on your prayer list.

It is also a time when it is important to stop and reflect on the following question: What are we thankful for in our lives? I am so thankful for my immediate family and look forward to spending quality time with them over the holidays. I feel that CCOSA has the best staff ever and am so thankful to be a part of such a great team. I am so thankful that positive change is coming for public schools in Oklahoma. I believe that CCOSA represents the best group of individuals this state has to offer and thank each of you for your membership, but more importantly your friendship. You are the reason CCOSA is an effective organization. Finally, I am so thankful to live in this great nation where we are free to worship, have opinions, and enjoy our family/friends. Thank you for the important work that you are doing in public education. May God richly bless you and yours during this holiday season.
My Thoughts

BY MR. JERRY NEEDHAM
Superintendent, Oktaha
OASA President-Elect

My first thought is I am glad this election cycle is over. My second thought is where does public education go from here?

Congratulations to Joy Hofmeister and her election as State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Congratulations to Dr. John Cox for running a positive, informative and influential campaign for public education. Dr. Cox was an ambassador for public education that presented an “in the trenches, been there and done that” perspective. I was very impressed with the concession statements by Dr. Cox. It was evident he makes no excuses for what he is and is proud of what he does. Dr. Cox was strong in his commitment for everyone to pull together for the future of public education.

You have to be excited about having a new State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

- Excited about the opportunity for public education.
- Excited about having a State Superintendent who will listen and receive input from all superintendents and public school administrators.
- Excited about having a State Superintendent who believes public school administrators are not the enemy and welcome accountability.
- Excited that we have a Superintendent who wants a fair and accurate evaluation of schools.
- Excited we have a Superintendent who wants to provide teacher pay raises and funding to provide a free, appropriate and quality education for ALL students.

The past four years have brought many directives, course changes and interpretations of rules. My statement to anyone who has asked me what I think about the status of education is, “I have been in the business 30 years and I am as confused as I have ever been in my career.” Make no mistake, the next year or years will not be easy. We do not want the public expectations for schools to lessen. We have to embrace accountability, standards for schools, high level expectations for staff and challenging curriculum. We should not expect nor demand these measures to go away. We must realize all students will not attend an institution of higher learning. We must provide curriculum for those that do, but allow those that will not or can not to earn a high school diploma. Our job is to produce productive members of society. Our job is to give students the opportunity to have success, self esteem, personality, morality and a belief in family and country. There is a lot to be learned in a public school outside the covers of a textbook.

Joy Hofmeister has a BIG job. She is willing to listen and involve us in moving past the previous four years. She deserves our support in her effort to restore credibility to public education. She is our State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Let’s help her get it right!
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OSAG
This is an extremely busy time of year for OAESP as we get ready for our Mid-Winter Conference on Thursday, January 29 at the Reed Convention Center in Midwest City. In fact, OAESP IS COUNTING ON YOU to attend and support our annual conference as we bring in keynote speaker Kerry Purcell from the acclaimed PBS documentary The Principals Story. This year your one day conference package will include: lunch, a free t-shirt, breakout sessions, discussion forum, the NAESP Bookstore, the Scholastic Bookstore, exhibit booths, a legislative update courtesy of Ryan Owens, a special education update from Andrea Kunkel, and (hopefully) an address from our State Superintendent-elect Ms. Joy Hofmeister. We know that you put on an invisible cape every day as a hero for your school so please plan to fly in and LEAD THE WAY for OAESP at our Mid-Winter Conference and register now at www.regonline.com/OAESPWinterConference2015.

A huge thank you to the following OAESP board members who have hosted regional meetings.

Kim Justice, Josh Skiles, Sally Greenlee – Lawton & SW Quadrant
Julie Gloss and Glen Abshire – Pryor NE Quadrant
Marsha Stafford – OKC
Jene’ Carpenter and Josh Pierce – Tulsa Area

Also, a regional meeting for the NW quadrant is scheduled for Thursday, January 15 in Woodward. Your district representative, Camille Holt, will be sending out further details.

In addition, I want to thank Kas Nelson NAESP State Representative/Federal Relations Officer and Dr. Lynda McDaniel Zone 8 Resolutions Chair for accompanying me to the Zone 8 annual meeting in Albuquerque, NM. Please see Kas Nelson’s article in this edition of Better Schools for a NAESP/Zone 8 update.

Most of all, I wish you a happy holiday season and the hopefulness that this New Year will begin to bring a positive transformation for public education in our state!

OASSP membership continues as the leader within the CCOSA organization with 858 members, 39 of which are new. Thank you to the following OASSP representatives who have hosted Regional Meetings:

Dr. Debra Thomas, Assistant Principal, Star Spencer High School, Oklahoma City
Lorraine Caldwell, Principal, Pansy Kidd Middle School, Poteau
Debbie Pearce, Assistant Principal, Altus High School, Altus
Kathy Walker, Principal, Stillwater Middle School, Stillwater
Keith Campbell, Principal, Kingfisher Middle School, Kingfisher

Leading the recruiting efforts for OASSP with 19 new members is Emily Steele, Assistant Principal, Memorial High School, Edmond. Mrs. Steel was also named the 2015 Oklahoma Assistant Principal of the Year (APOY). Congratulations to Mrs. Steel, a life-long learner who models for others her passion for innovative teaching strategies that engage all learners. Her involvement in professional organizations allows her to not only to grow personally, but to provide others with support for development. Other finalist for 2015 OASSP APOY were: David Beiler, Jenks High School; Deanna Dobbins, Waller Middle School, Enid; and Bobby Kreutz, Grove High School.

National Honor Society and National Student Council are affiliates with the National Association of Secondary Principals Association. All Oklahoma National Honor Society Chapter members and sponsors are invited to attend the Oklahoma State Convention which will be held February 2, 2015 at Santa Fe High School in Edmond from 8:30-3:00. For more information please see the CCOSA website or contact Jason Hayes, Co-Director, 405-726-7300 or Teresa Wilkerson, Co-Director, 405-376-7817.

Thank you to all OASSP members who attended the Fall Conference. We had a great crowd that gave Dave Burgess, our keynote speaker and author of Teach Like a Pirate, a standing ovation. Ed Camp was a huge success with participants commenting, “I loved it! I learned more in those 3 hours than in most of the conferences I have attended in the past 10 years.” I hope you will “Save the Date” for 2015 OASSP Fall Conference October 28, 2015.

If you have not made plans to join us in San Diego for the NASSP Ignite 15 Conference, February 19-21, it is not too late. The Oklahoma delegation will be hosting an event that you will not want to miss.
OMLEA board members are busily planning the OMLEA February 27-28 Conference at the Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center in Tulsa. Highly sought after speaker Jack Berckemeyer and outstanding middle level educator Kim Campbell (back by popular demand) will keynote the conference this year. To register for the conference please go to https://www.regonline.com/OMLEAMidLevelConference2015 or and to submit a Request to Present (RFP) please access the following fillable pdf: http://www.ccosa.org/vimages/shared/vnews/stories/545d293362052/OMLEA-RFP14.pdf

We are looking forward to a great conference so make plans now to attend!!!

A special thank you goes out to OMLEA President Linda Mace, President-Elect Jason Galloway and Past President Angie Drew for attending the Association for Middle Level Education Conference (AMLE) in Nashville. OMLEA is an affiliate of AMLE and our officers had the opportunity to network with educators from across the nation. They report that the AMLE Conference was “awesome” and a great professional development opportunity!

Due to inclement weather, the November OMLEA Executive Board meeting was cancelled. Our rescheduled meeting will be held on Thursday, December 11 at the CCOSA office. The OMLEA Conference Planning Committee meeting will immediately follow the executive board meeting.

The OMLEA Executive Board wishes you a very merry holiday season!

ODSS

Change comes with the same challenges in the education of students with disabilities as it presents in every other aspect of education. In fact, some would say the challenges in that area are even greater. At its Fall 2014 Conference in October, ODSS hosted Dr. Stevan Kukic, Director of School Transformation at the National Center for Learning Disabilities, who discussed “Transformative Leadership in Special Education.” ODSS President-Elect Kay Sandschaper's review of Dr. Kukic’s 2013 book, Organizational Change: Transformative Leadership for Special Education, appears in this issue of BETTER SCHOOLS.

ODSS is pleased to introduce the members of its 2014-15 Executive Committee:

President
Sherri Coats, Byng

President-Elect
Kay Sandschaper, Tulsa

Past President
Julie Crutchfield, Collinsville

Legislative & Policy Liaison
Justin Milner, Norman

Cami Dotson, Latta

Lynn Fitz, Lawton

Nancy Goosen, Edmond

Vicki Hampton, Bartlesville

David McCune, Enid

Melissa Morris, Fort Gibson

Donnie Phillips, Westville

Carolyn Thomas, Ardmore

Lynette Thompson, Yukon

ODSS welcomes administrators, teachers and related service providers to attend its Winter 2015 Conference on January 22-23 at the Doubletree Warren Place Hotel, Tulsa.

OASA

The AASA National Education Convention is scheduled for February 26-28, 2015 in San Diego, CA.

OASA is up to 661 Active members and 32 Associate members. The OASA Legislative Conference is scheduled for January 14, 2015. Registration is now open and information can be found on the CCOSA website at www.ccosa.org.

The OASA Executive Committee and all OASA Standing Committees have held recent meetings and have established their Legislative Goals for 2014-2015. The Ethics, Ballot, Constitution, Status & Welfare, Public Relations and Legislative committees welcome any input and suggestions. The next OASA Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for December 10th. OASA Ballot and Constitution committees are recommending moving to electronic ballots for OASA elections. This will require a change in the constitution and will be voted on at the OASA Legislative Conference on January 14th. The Constitution changes will be mailed out in mid-December along with nomination forms, so be watching for this important information.

OASA is very pleased to have Dr. Keith Ballard, Mr. Jerry Needham and Dr. Kent Shellenberger representing administrators on State Superintendent-Elect Joy Hofmeister’s Transition Team.

The OASA Legislative Conference is scheduled for January 14, 2015 in Tulsa.
Professional Development

BY DR. ALAN BAKER
Principal, Cleveland HS
OASSP President-Elect

The face of professional development is rapidly changing. The days of attending meetings and listening to motivational speakers or the idea of “sit and get” are quickly declining. Today’s educator is too busy to spend time in professional development not applicable to their area or discipline.

With the need for more diversity and hands-on interaction, we are seeing schools host a different type of professional development for teachers. I have had the opportunity to experience two fairly new ideas just this semester and want to share them with you.

This year, in our beginning of the year professional development, my school district put on our own mini-conference. We prepared for a month, and each administrator presented at least two sessions. Our technology director and a couple of teachers also taught breakout sessions. In total, we had 18 different sessions that our teachers could choose to attend. Topics ranged from Teacher Advocacy, Understanding TLE, Building Blocks for Algebra, Child Abuse, Coaching in the Classroom, Communicating with Parents, as well as a few sessions dealing with iPad Training, Twitter, and other technology uses.

Our staff then chose what professional development opportunity they were most interested in and each took part in the session that would provide them the most benefit. Teachers loved it! The biggest complaint was that the sessions were only offered in the morning and our staff could not choose all of the sessions they would have wanted to attend.

Another new idea in professional development are EdCamps, interactive professional development opportunities where participants are in charge of their learning. They have been popping up all over the country in the past few years and seven have been held in Oklahoma this past year, including Broken Arrow, Oklahoma City, and Stillwater. Just last month, the afternoon of the OASSP Fall Conference was an EdCamp.

In an EdCamp, the participants set the schedule. Anyone can suggest a topic and facilitate the discussion. Once topics and times are set, participants choose their sessions. Each session is a round table discussion, where participation is not only encouraged, but expected. If you are not getting what you want or need in one session, you are encouraged to find another session. It’s totally participant directed. You have the opportunity to gain as much from it as you are willing to put into the experience.

Each of these types of professional development is more interactive and teacher led than traditional models. As instructional leaders, administrators must model what we expect from our staffs. How can we expect our staffs to learn intrinsically and take an active role in their learning, if we don’t present and model the behavior?

So keep your eyes open for the next Edcamp that pops up, and take a team of teachers. When trying to determine who you are going to bring in for your next on-site professional development, think about all of the important offerings you and your staff could provide within your district. It’s time we get our hands dirty as we lead our teachers into this new age of professional development.
First, the new. House Bill 3469, which created the Quinten Douglas Wood Act of 2014 ("Act"), recently took effect in Oklahoma. Although most of the Act governs DHS and other non-school personnel, the following provision concerns public school personnel and the release of student education records:

B. In addition to the persons listed in subsection A of this section, juvenile court records may be inspected, and their contents shall be disclosed, without a court order to the following persons upon showing of proper credentials and pursuant to their lawful duties:

3. The Department of Human Services or other public or private agency or individual having court-ordered custody or physical custody pursuant to Department placement of the child, or conducting a child abuse or neglect investigation of the child who is the subject of the record. In addition to juvenile court records, employees of the Department may inspect, without a court order and upon a showing of proper credentials and pursuant to their lawful duties, information that includes, but is not limited to:

a. psychological and medical records, and
b. nondirectory education records.[1] (emphasis added)

This language purports to provide authorization for the release to DHS of education records that include personally identifiable (nondirectory) information about students. However, the Act provides only state-level authority for such release. Before releasing nondirectory education records without the consent of the student’s parent or the eligible student, district personnel must also comply with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the federal law commonly known as FERPA. If DHS personnel point only to the Act to support a request for nondirectory education records, district personnel should ask for information reflecting which FERPA exception to parent or eligible student consent permits the district to release the requested records to DHS. Upon receipt of that information, the records may be released.

To review the Act in its entirety, go to http://webserver1.lsb.state.ok.us/cf_pdf/2013-14%20ENR/hB/HB3469%20ENR.PDF.

The old issue concerns language that has been included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") since its last reauthorization in 2004. It provides that, to the extent FERPA permits, when a public school district reports what it believes to be a crime committed by a child with a disability, it must ensure that copies of the child’s special education and disciplinary records are transmitted for consideration by the appropriate authorities to which it made the report. However, no FERPA exception to parent or eligible student consent permits a district to just put these records in an envelope and send them to a law enforcement agency.

Instead, the district can satisfy the IDEA requirement by sending a letter to the agency advising that it has certain records about the student that the agency may request in compliance with FERPA. The State Department of Education website includes a link to a form letter districts can use for this purpose at http://ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/Letter%20to%20Law%20Enforcement.pdf. A district sending such a letter should maintain a copy for its file.
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3 Ways to Maximize Your Influence

BY WILL PARKER
Principal, Skiatook HS
NASSP State Coordinator

Delivering the Right Message

I once heard it said that principals spend 100% of their time communicating. I don’t believe that is an exaggeration. You know how important it is to deliver the right message to your school if you want an environment conducive for learning. Likewise, principals must be lead-communicators when it comes to promoting your school’s message to your community and elected officials.

As your NASSP state coordinator, my responsibilities include staying aware of what issues are happening at a national level that may affect us in Oklahoma as well as advocating on behalf of our state’s principals with elected officials in Washington D.C.

This past summer on June 25, Alan Baker, President-Elect of OASSP and I were able to meet with the offices of U.S. Congressman Jim Bridenstine, U.S. Congressman Frank Lucas, and U.S. Senator Jim Inhofe.

In our conversations, we reminded them that principals are a great resource for what is happening at the ground-level at schools, and principals need to be at the table in conversations that affect schools.

What are some ways we can each keep our voices front-and-center in public discourse about schools? Here are three suggestions:

1. Promote the great things happening at your school

Whether it’s through social media, attending community events, participating in Rotary or Chamber gatherings, volunteering for fundraisers or sending out newsletters—all of these touch-points with your community remind them why public education provides such great value to your students and the community. The public so often hears the negatives of school. You see the wonderful actions of teachers and students every day. So share those moments with others in every way possible.

2. Use a tool like NASSP’s Principal Legislative Action Center

This online tool (at https://www.votervoice.net/NASSP/Home) allows you to see what current federal issues are affecting schools. You can take quick action by clicking on the issue and immediately sending an email to your elected officials when you enter your zip-code. It’s that easy. You can edit the email to personalize the message, and your representatives in D.C. will hear from you that day. For state issues, CCOSA also emails members pre-written statements or talking points you can edit and personalize for corresponding with Oklahoma legislators. Getting our message out has never been more convenient.

3. Stay informed, and stay connected to one another.

As members of CCOSA and NASSP, we have great resources available to us in one another. Through the weekly email updates available through our associations, regional meetings, and association conferences, we have lots of opportunities to connect and stay informed. Keep communicating with fellow school leaders. These connections with one another are a huge morale boost as we walk the sometimes difficult path of promoting our schools and advocating for or against policies that affect them.

When it comes to advocating, we all play an important part as the chief communicators for our schools. Whether you contribute through positive public relations, issue-advocacy, or collaborating with fellow school leaders, together our voices can make a difference.
High-Speed Broadband Transforms Learning at Rural Oklahoma School

BY ONENET
A Division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

When Butner Public Schools received 240 new iPads, several smartboards and an arsenal of e-learning courseware through a grant award, the staff brainstormed endless ways to put the new technology to work in the classroom. Unfortunately, they quickly discovered their Internet connection was too slow to support the new technology.

“Our connection was too slow to handle streaming a single YouTube video, let alone online learning with 240 iPads,” Butner Principal Melissa Allensworth-Baughman said. “Santa Claus gave us this great gift that we couldn’t play with at all.”

The school purchased the technology through a $1 million school improvement grant from the Oklahoma State Department of Education. After the new devices began collecting dust, Butner Superintendent Bobbette Hamilton decided to reach out to OneNet, the school’s Internet service provider, for help.

OneNet is a division of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and Oklahoma’s only statewide Internet service provider. OneNet provides services to 219 K-12 school districts, 53 career technology campuses, 62 college and university campuses, and numerous other research, health care and public service organizations. OneNet also operates the Oklahoma Community Anchor Network, which delivers high-speed broadband options to rural areas in 35 Oklahoma counties.

OneNet enabled Butner staff to put the new technology to work through a new 50 Mbps Internet connection, which OneNet provided at a lower cost than the school was paying for its previous 4.5 Mbps connection.

“The impact was instantaneous,” Hamilton said. “One day I walked in, and staff members were shouting with joy.”

The new connection transformed learning for Butner students. Thanks to programs like Odysseyware and My Big Campus, Butner now boasts a plethora of online classes for every type of student, including engineering, technology, advanced placement, remedial and foreign languages. Not only is the new technology revolutionizing teaching, but it’s improving student outcomes.

For example, take the app Sushi Monster—a game in which students have to complete mathematical equations in order to feed their creature uncooked Eastern delicacies. An entire class raised its math IQ a whole grade level in six weeks, Allensworth-Baughman said.

Having high-speed broadband on tap is a precious resource for schools like Butner and will continue to be vital as educational bandwidth needs continue to grow. The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) has recommended minimum bandwidth requirements of 100 Mbps per 1,000 students for this school year and 1 Gbps per 1,000 students by the 2017-18 school year.

OneNet is focusing its efforts on finding solutions to meet these growing needs, especially in Oklahoma’s rural communities.

“OneNet is dedicated to delivering high-speed Internet options to Oklahoma’s rural communities,” OneNet Executive Director Vonley Royal said. “We will continue to seek partnerships and new avenues for providing the bandwidth our state’s students need to fully take advantage of today’s digital learning opportunities.”

For Hamilton, opportunities to participate in the digital learning age are a priority for her students.

“The new connection gives our students the same learning opportunities as students from Oklahoma’s metro areas,” Hamilton said. “OneNet made this transformation possible for our students.”

For more information about OneNet, call 888-5-OneNet or visit www.OneNet.net.
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Zone 8 Update

BY KAS NELSON
Principal, Vici ES
NAESP State Representative/Federal Relations Officer

The Zone 8 Committee met November 6th and 7th in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Leaders from Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma were present. Oklahoma had 3 attendees: Dr. Gracie Branch, OAESP Executive Director, Dr. Lynda McDaniel, Madill Early Childhood Center Principal and Director of Elementary Education who serves as the Zone 8 Resolutions Chairperson, and Kas Nelson, Vici Elementary Principal and NAESP State Representative/Federal Relations Officer. NAESP President, Mark White, welcomed Zone 8 members and principals to the NM Conference.

Zone 8 members had the opportunity to listen to a session with Kim Ratz, speaker, trainer and troubadour. Mr. Ratz entertained conference attendees with performances of songs he wrote for education. Mr. Ratz’s message was entitled “Playing Nice in the Sandbox, the Leader’s Role.”

To begin the Zone 8 meeting, attendees introduced themselves and expressed a challenge currently facing principals and education in their home state.

Discussion Highlights:

Board members expressed many of the same concerns:

1. Education decisions being made with little or no educator input
2. Widespread teacher shortages
3. Teacher and Leader Evaluations
4. High stakes testing and having adequate technology to accommodate high volumes of testers

During this discussion, Dr. Branch shared Oklahoma’s visioning project, “For the People” with the members from other states. She discussed CCOSA’s and OAESP’s involvement in outlining key recommendations for state policy makers and a structure for local communities to begin school transformation. In addition, the Zone 8 Committee discussed the following agenda items:

1. NAESP Strategic Plan – the group reviewed and discussed the 3-year strategic plan for the association. The plan and goals are located on the NAESP website: NAESP.org
2. The board discussed the potential move of the NAESP office to space in the NASSP offices in Reston, VA. President Mark White assured Zone 8 members that the intention of the Board of Directors was to strengthen collaboration between the two associations.
3. Resolution Discussion – Dr. Lynda McDaniel presented NAESP’s platform to the Zone 8 board and requested input and a review of items that should be considered for revision.

Now, let’s ZONE IN on some helpful new resources:

*The newest publication from NAESP, Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities:

**Competencies for Effective Principal Practice** is available now. Developed by a panel of leading practitioners, this standards document defines new competencies and outlines a practical approach to high-quality early childhood education that is critical to laying a strong foundation for learning for young children from age three to grade three, or Pre-K-3.

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- Digital Edition: $19.95/$24.95

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*We are proud of Julie Bloss, Principal, Grove Early Childhood Center, for her service on the PK-3 Committee as a representative from Zone 8. She modeled effective practice and provided important perspective on how this guide would be utilized by principals throughout the nation. Great Job, Julie!*

*National Panel of New Principals – To qualify for participation in this panel, elementary or middle-level principals must be in their 1st or 2nd year of the principalship. Panelists participate in 6, short online surveys and in turn, receive survey results and $10 credit for the National Principals Resource Center online store or merchandise from national sponsors such as Scholastic for each completed survey. The panel is open to NAESP members and non-members. Encourage a new principal you know to join the panel today at www.newprincipal.org!*
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Dr. Kent Shellenberger,
Superintendent of Bethany Public Schools, 2014 Education Hall of Fame Inductee and Professor for SNU Master’s In Educational Leadership.

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As of the writing of this column, your OASA Ethics committee – composed of Rick Garrison, superintendent of Cheyenne Public Schools, Cliff Johnson, superintendent of Latta, and Jim Beckham of Blanchard, is in the process of reviewing and editing Dr. Clarence Oliver’s “ethics” handbook – Leading With Integrity: Reflections on Legal, Moral, and Ethical Issues in School Administration. The completed product will be Dr. Oliver’s updated ethics manual (Ethical Behavior, An Administrator’s Guide: Ethics and Values in School Administration). The process is interesting and time-consuming, but I believe CCOSA will ultimately have an administrator’s guidebook that we can use every day in making the “right” decisions for our publically educated students. Ethical considerations must be a high priority in each and every decision we make as school administrators.

A benefit for me, as part of the Ethics Committee and thinking about ethical behavior in school administration, is that I tend to focus on ethical decision making in other professions as well, such as politics. With the ending of the last political campaign season, on November 4, 2014 – reflections of what I consider to be “unethical” behavior come to mind. Bear in mind, though, that my view of unethical behavior is my opinion, for what is unethical for one may be entirely ethical in another’s mind.

One such example of what I consider to be unethical behavior occurred on November 12, 2014 at the Capitol. A senate committee studying school consolidation invited the Heartland Institute of Chicago down to Oklahoma in order to report evidence of “school administrative waste” to committee members. Bear in mind, the Heartland Institute has no stated goals in assisting states to consolidate schools, but does have goals associated with the “corporatization” and “privatization” of public schools. In short, The Heartland Institute, funded entirely by corporate entities, is absolutely committed to reforming public education by transferring control of public schools from local school boards to education management corporations. Therefore, the one obvious goal of the Heartland Institute is to assist states in the “privatization” of public education.

The Heartland Institute said to the media after the meeting “There are over 5000 unnecessary positions in the Oklahoma education system and half of Oklahoma’s spending on public education goes to administrative expenses.” The “5000 unnecessary positions” is obviously an exaggeration and the declaration “half of school expenditures are for administration” is a lie. These statements are unethical because they are designed to mislead the public. According to the Oklahoma State Department of Education records, Oklahoma Cost Accounting System (OCAS), administrative expenditures account for 3.54% of total expenditures not 50% as The Heartland Institute would have everyone believe. What’s more, almost all of the 3.54% is a legislatively required expense, such as treasurer services, auditing services, county visual inspections, legal services, and superintendent services. Fabricated evidence IS unethical, and politicians should stop using the excuse that “all is fair in love, war, and politics” to justify unethical behavior.

We must focus on ethical considerations in our role as school administrators. The more we do this, the more easily we recognize unethical behavior in those outside public education.

**CALL TO ACTION!**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** KOKC 1520 AM, “Mitchell in the Morning”, 6 AM-9 AM each weekday, a conservative news talk show, has provided CCOSA and public education a platform (6 AM to 7 AM on Tuesdays) to counter the anti-public education tripe that many legislators subscribe to. So, tune in and listen, and if anyone has a comment or advice during the program – text me at 580-656-5055.
What Servant Leaders Do—
Why Servant Leadership Is Important

BY DR. JIM V. MYERS
Professor, College of Education, Oral Roberts University
Tulsa, Oklahoma

When you are really busy, as most all teachers, principals, superintendents, and other school staff members are, it becomes very difficult to find the time for some selective reading. I know, since I was one of those people many years ago and still find it hard to find the time to read some of the things that need reading. That got me to thinking about how many school administrators may have actually taken the time to read Roger Hill’s article on servant leadership in the April-May 2014 Issue of Better Schools. I’ve thought about that because of how “right-on” Roger was with his commentary and how critically important servant leadership has become to the work of leading, especially in public schools.

Assuming the mantle of leadership for a public school whether that be as a superintendent, principal, or other role, demands a great deal of those individuals willing to accept such responsibility. It is a big responsibility: Perfecting and providing an excellent education to a future generation. Thus, it behooves all of those who think they want to take on that level of leadership responsibility to pause and answer the question: What kind of leader should I be?

What kind of leader should you be? Roger answered that question for us in a succinct and compelling manner as he both opened and closed his commentary with the statement – Servant Leadership: It’s What School Administrators Do Best. What school administrators do best and what they are called to do, is to simply serve their respective schools: To serve the students, to serve the staff, and to serve the community. Servant leaders are in service to the purpose, mission, and vision of their school: Not for the prestige of the position, not for the salary, but to simply be of service. True servant leaders do not place personal or special interest above the common interest of those they are called to serve. They never ask the question - “What’s in it for me?” Rather, they always ask the question - “What’s in the best interest of the community I serve?” If school administrators are always serving the appropriate mission for their respective schools then their daily guiding question must be, “Am I making all decisions based on the best interest of the students I serve?”

Answering that question is why Roger stressed the importance of servant leadership. Look at the power placed in the hands of those leaders who simply serve the best interest of their students and their communities. Power given to them by their respective communities because the only true leaders among them are those willing to serve: Not as a matter of position, but as a matter of person; Not as a matter of authority, but as a matter of inspiration; Not as a matter of command, but as a matter of example.

Dr. William Cook, Jr. described servant leaders in those terms and stressed the importance of the connection between leading and community. For him, the ultimate definition of a community is found in its common core of values, those deep convictions that bind people together. Therefore, Dr. Cook believes that the true leaders among us embody those convictions. The very best school administrators are servant leaders, called from that common core of values to serve the best interest of the students of that community: To perpetuate those values and ideals that made this country great and to seek excellence in public education for every student, every day, in every community. That’s what servant leaders do – that’s why servant leadership is important.

To access Roger Hill’s original article “Servant Leadership: It’s What School Administrators Do Best!” (pg. 2)

Organizational Change: Transformative Leadership for Special Education
By Stevan J. Kukic, Ph.D and Harvey A. Rude, Ed.D

Wait….don’t let the fact that this book addresses change in Special Education stop you from reading it. As the only certainty in life is change, change is something school administrators must learn to embrace as they face it on a daily basis. Whether the change that you are dealing with is large, such as a large district initiative, or smaller, such as a site-based change, Drs. Kukic and Rude suggest ways to confront it effectively.

A set of nonnegotiable principles must be identified to serve as the foundation for all activity. These nonnegotiables are typically determined by a group of district stakeholders and shared with all staff. The nonnegotiables should be based on the principles a district holds to be true, such as holding high expectations for all students. Once these are determined, the goal is for all employees to adopt and act on them.

As with most things, change begins with the individual. The mindset of individuals may differ in how they view the proposed change. Some may be excited, some concerned, and some negative. Individuals may see the district’s vision as just a dream that can’t or won’t work. The role of the leadership is not just to develop the vision, but to provide implementation that truly puts the vision into action. In order to do so, collaboration must take place between individuals, groups, and departments. Too much of the time, collaboration takes place during meetings, but the participants walk away and continue to work in their silos without giving a thought to what was discussed and decided in the meeting. To truly work, collaboration must be continual and used in all decision-making.

In a school, as in life, competing priorities can cause everything to appear to be a priority, and the result can often be that nothing actually is a priority for sustained implementation and impact. Resources are limited, stress is high, and it is crucial to focus on the most important issues for action. A well-crafted plan for change that, with employee buy-in and collaboration, can shift the focus to the priority established by the district and can result in benefits for students and therefore the district.

Drs. Kukic and Rude address all aspects of leading a school through change and the inevitable issues that come with change. This book is small, but mighty. It includes excellent information on working through systemic change and how to guide change through leadership.
Does giving students the opportunity to retake a quiz or test help or hurt them?

I consider classroom grading practices to be a sacred cow for many educators. Any administrator that has addressed grading methodology on a school-wide level knows this to be true. I have witnessed many philosophical challenges to traditional grading practices in recent years including standards based grading, 50 base grading, only grading the learning and not behavior, and allowing for test retakes. This article will focus on the practice of allowing for test retakes, and whether it truly helps or hurts the students.

A short time back, I had the opportunity to hear Mike Mattos, one of the founders of the PLC movement, speak at the PLC At Work conference in Tulsa. He offered his perspective on the history of our K-12 model, whereby he explained that the model was not established so that all kids could learn. It was designed to identify those students that learned the information the most quickly and accurately assigning a letter grade that ranked them. It is a model designed to identify educational winners and losers. Times have changed, however, and now the charge of educators is to ensure that all students learn at high levels.

We know that students do not learn at the same pace. Most times it takes re-teaching some, if not many, of the students in your class before proficiency is met. Retakes not only give students an opportunity to improve their grades, but more importantly provide a more accurate view of teaching and learning. If done adequately, this should be a benefit to both the students and educators. At Sequoyah Middle School, we have moved towards a model where we allow students to complete retakes on tests and quizzes after a teacher determined “qualifier” has been performed. This helps ensure that the students did something a bit different, in the way of preparation, prior to the second attempt rather than just retake for the improved grade. I asked my colleagues to weigh in on the subject, and here is what two of them had to say.

Cordell Ehrich  
Principal, Cimarron Middle School, Edmond Public Schools

“If our goal is mastery, which mine is, then with the correct interventions, retakes help students to show they have achieved mastery of the content. If it is just a retake without any time spent re-teaching or intervening, then it doesn’t help the student and often can harm their confidence to master the content.”

Dana Renner  
Principal, Central Middle School, Edmond Public Schools

“We always allow for retakes on formative assessments, as they are meant to be a spot check for mastery within the content standard. We do not retake summative assessments. However, the teacher should still reflect upon the outcome of tests in reference to teacher practices and overall student success on the particular standards within the content area.”

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

Does offering test retakes help or enable students…?

Check out the discussion on edutopia at http://www.edutopia.org/groups/walden-university/14046
For more information on these plans and others, please contact MGM Sales Support at 866.881.2255.
To Play or Not to Play?

BY SHANE HOLMAN
Principal, Locust Grove ELC
OAESP President-Elect

Recess: How long should recess last? Should recess be structured or unstructured? Should we even have recess? Recess is an issue that elementary principals deal with every day.

The American Academy of Pediatrics released a Policy Statement relating to the “Crucial Role of Recess in School.” In the statement, the AAP cites research in favor of daily recess to be given to students in elementary schools. The AAP’s statement outlines the cognitive and academic benefits, social and emotional benefits, and physical benefits, as well as the duration and timing of recess. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines recess as, “regularly scheduled periods within the elementary school day for unstructured physical activity and play.” Many research studies point to the benefits of regular daily recess such as emotional, cognitive, physical, and social benefits. However, many schools are reducing or even eliminating recess time.

Recess gives students a break from cognitive tasks and allows them to be more attentive and productive in the classroom. Students are able to refocus cognitively when given a recess to give their brain a “break.” Recess also promotes social and emotional development, especially for early childhood students. This unstructured time allows for children to learn valuable skills such as communication, negotiating, cooperating, sharing, and problem solving, as well as coping skills. Of course, there are also physical benefits to recess. All children may not play at the same pace, but they are free to choose their level of activity. The AAP recommends students have 60 minutes of “moderate to vigorous” activity per day. Recess time can help achieve this recommendation.

Many principals struggle with the duration and timing of recess. The AAP has not firmly established a recommendation for the length of recess. Recess in many schools ranges from 20-60 minutes per day.

The following are recommendations from the AAP:
- “Recess is a necessary break in the day for optimizing a child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.”
- Cognitive processing and academic performance depend on regular breaks from concentrated classroom work.”
- “Recess is a compliment to, but not a replacement for, physical education.”
- “Recess can serve as a counterbalance to sedentary time and contribute to the recommended 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity per day.”
- “Recess should be safe and well supervised.”
- “Peer interactions during recess are a unique complement to the classroom. The lifelong skills acquired for communication, negotiation, cooperation, sharing, problem solving, and coping are not only foundations for healthy development but also fundamental measures of the school experience.”

Source:
Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Policy Statement
“The Crucial Role of Recess in School”

JUST SO YOU KNOW:

In the United States, our imaginative learners get little playtime, averaging 27 minutes of recess a day. Finnish children get 75 minutes of recess a day, receiving a 15-minute break after every lesson. Outdoor physical activity is highly encouraged and some lessons are taught outside—even in winter!
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