

FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY...IT'S OUR BUSINESS

by Mark Shepard; Business Manager, Fremont Public Schools; President, NASBO



Shepard

Scenario One: Friday, 7:30 p.m., East Over-shoe, Nebraska, High School Gymnasium, District Basketball Tournament. The crowd is excited, the gym is full, and a line begins to build outside the main entrance. The Deputy State Fire Marshal arrives and asks to speak to the individual in charge. The Deputy directs the school administrator to close the doors due to Fire/Life Safety Code capacities.

Scenario Two: Tuesday, 9:30 a.m., Anywhere, Nebraska, Elementary Principal's Office. The Deputy State Fire Marshal walks in, introduces himself and begins a building inspection. Prior to leaving the building he presents the administrator with a set of Official Orders. Listed are some minor infractions and one or two major items that need to be corrected immediately.

Unfortunately, this is how many school administrators across the State have been introduced to their local representative of the State Fire Marshal's Office. That is beginning to change.

Through the efforts of individuals and organizations, a task force titled the School Safety Advisory Committee was formed in 2003. The main goal of the committee was to open dialogue between school officials and the State Fire Marshal's Office. The Nebraska

(continued on page 8)

AS SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, LET'S FOCUS ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP!

by Thomas Christie, Administrator, Multicultural School/Community, Lincoln Public Schools

I believe closing the achievement gap between students of color and majority students is a major responsibility of multicultural education. Administrators in the state of Nebraska have the responsibility of facilitating this process. The Lincoln Public Schools multicultural goals of "establishing and maintaining a quality educational environment in which ALL students achieve academically, intellectually, emotionally and socially" challenges past examples of history and present national, state and local data which makes it very clear as to how we got to this point and why our focus needs to be on students of color.

On October 6, 2003, Elizabeth Eckford, one of the "Little Rock Nine," and Kendall Reinhardt, one of the white Central High students, made a presentation at North Star High School. I was asked to share my educational experiences relating to the landmark school desegregation case:

I was born in South Carolina in 1952 and in 1957, the time of the integration of Little Rock High School, I was attending a separate African-American elementary school because of the separate and unequal way of life. Still in the 1960s, I attended a so-called "integrated" school. I knew something was missing in my educational experience, and I believe many students of color in 2004 are having similar experiences that impact their achievement and create a continual achievement gap.

So the question is why is there still an

achievement gap? In 1994, Dr. Cornell West wrote *Race Matters*. In this book, Dr. West makes it clear that race is a key factor in most of life's outcomes.

In 1954, May 17, the United States Supreme Court in the *Brown v. Board of Education*, of Topeka, Kansas, unanimously declared that "separate but equal" educational facilities are "inherently unequal" and that segregation is, therefore, unconstitutional.

W.E.B. DuBois in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, stated that, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line." When I became an educator, it was clear to me that just putting students in a building wasn't enough to get the needed outcomes of equal education and achievement for all students.

For instance, the achievement gap of

(continued on page 10)

INSIDE...

Creating and Leading Believers . . .	2
Sustaining Academic Rigor	4
Surviving as a First-Year Supe	5
Out of the Mouths of Babes	7

The mission of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) is to be an effective leader for quality education and to enhance the professionalism of its members.



CREATING AND LEADING BELIEVERS

by Sue Galvin, Principal, Covington Elementary School, South Sioux City

In August, 2002, I was confronted with a new challenge in my educational career. Due to a growth in student population the district had created new boundaries which meant we would, for the first time, bring together 320 K-5 students and 50 staff members into a new configuration and remodeled school, in which I was to be the principal. As I paid a visit to Covington Elementary School, I was faced with a three-story building which had been constructed in 1926, but with some vision and renovations, had been transformed into a lively and inviting elementary school.

As I reflect upon that first visit, and my first experience as a principal, expected to lead a very talented group of educators during their first year in the new building, I had some old lessons of leadership affirmed and learned a new

lesson that I would like to share. The old lessons were what educators have always known about effective school leaders. I was expected to be the driver – the person who kept a vision in front of people and reminded them of what it was that they were about. I believe that educators must have a firm understanding of the instructional expectations of a school, and that they must seek continuous improvement for themselves and their students. After all, achievement is largely the product of steadily raising one's level of aspiration and expectation. Part of the old lesson was that every day within our schools, teachers must be about teaching and students must be about learning for growth to occur.

More importantly, the new lesson that I learned was about the immense impact that can be created by instilling

and supporting the power of believing in one's self, her mission, her staff and her students. It is my firm belief that the greatest good a person can do for another is not just to share her riches, but to reveal to them their own. School leaders have to become believers, and they have to love seeing things happen as a result of what they believe and value. I remember the first time that I addressed the new staff at Covington Elementary. The message was quite clear with two simple steps. First, I want you to stay focused on student achievement by thorough planning and examining the assessment data. Second, I want you each to believe that you can create a community of believers in this building.

Surprisingly, I had no specific idea what I had meant by the term, "believing," or what course of action I expected them to take. However, the teachers began to apply some amazingly creative classroom strategies and they rediscovered many hidden strengths. It seems as though fifty wonderfully creative staff members were waiting to be told that one powerful word, believe! That one single word empowered the staff to tap into resources that had been hidden because they now were no longer afraid to believe in themselves and what they were doing on behalf of the students.

To develop believers it is vital for the staff and students to see me as much as possible. I need to be traveling around the building observing staff and students doing their jobs and encouraging them to believe in themselves. After all, encouragement is essential, and I have to be among the teachers and students to encourage, inspire, motivate and congratulate them.

Furthermore, as a first-year principal, I realized that I was expected to be a catalyst for staff and students and to give them some motivation and direction. As a building leader, I must first believe in myself and my vision for my school. After that, I learned that I must believe in others even when they may not believe in themselves. The philosophy was contagious. A good leader must continue to believe in others, and to let them know that she believes in them, until they are confident enough to actually believe in themselves, and others. It wasn't always

(continued on page 10)

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PERSPECTIVES

by Jerry Sellentin, Ph.D., Executive Director



Sellentin

THOUGHTFUL REFLECTIONS

I recently received a publication from Dr. Jim O'Hanlon, retired Dean of Teachers' College at UNL, entitled "Musings about Leadership." It's fifty-three pages in length and in those pages Dr O'Hanlon has a number of powerful messages. Dr O'Hanlon offers twenty-seven propositions about leadership and discusses each in a direct and helpful way. I believe the following titles will give you a reflection about leadership skills Dean O'Hanlon demonstrated:

1. Do not make status/stature differentials in how you work with people.
2. If you ask a lot of questions, you will understand varying points of view better.
3. The buck stops here.
4. Help each individual finds his or her place.
5. How can we make this into a good thing?
6. Community building is essential.
7. Good leaders do much celebrating.
8. It's amazing what you can hear if you listen.
9. If you are going to have a meeting, be certain to get something accomplished.
10. Trust everyone and trust no one.
11. Communicate, communicate, communicate . . . and then communicate some more.
12. Make a long-term commitment even if circumstances lead you to stay for only a short time.
13. Don't be defensive.
14. Never accuse.
15. If you are in it for the praise and appreciation you will receive, don't do it.
16. Level off ups and downs.
17. Follow-up, follow-up, follow-up.
18. Persistence is a virtue.
19. Keep oversight on the budget.
20. Be a good team player.
21. Be an advocate for positive psychology.
22. Trust your "gut level" in making decisions.

23. Keep the focus on others.
24. Surround yourself with the best people you can find.
25. Have an agenda.
26. People are diamonds.
27. Know thyself...and take good care of thyself as well.

I would like to quote in part from one paragraph of "Musings about Leadership" which I think school administrators accomplish as Leaders of Learning: "Today there is much concern about assessment, including how to assess the effectiveness of leaders. Perhaps the most important assessment of leaders is whether they are good stewards. Viewing oneself as a steward causes a leader to do things that produce good stewardship. Viewing oneself as a steward causes a leader to focus on the organization he or she is leading instead of on him or herself." Dean James O'Hanlon was a steward for the University of Nebraska Lincoln and the graduates of Teachers' College. I have also benefited from his leadership.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The January 2004 issue of the *Phi Delta Kappan* has an article I would recommend to you: "Turning the Accountability Tables: Ten Progressive

Lessons from One Backward State" by Chris W. Gallagher, Associate Professor of English, University of Nebraska Lincoln. Gallagher asks ten questions as to his ten principles of accountability:

1. Does this system regard teachers as leaders?
2. Does this system focus on capacity rather than controls?
3. Does this system foster commitment and not mere compliance?
4. Does this system promote integration of accountability and school improvement?
5. Does this system risk complexity rather than demand simplicity?
6. Does this system really include all students?
7. Does this system engage all teachers?
8. Does this system engage all other relevant stakeholders?
9. Does this system keep pedagogy at its center?
10. Does this system encourage high-impact, not high-stakes, assessment?

People are like tea bags, you find out how strong they are when you put them in hot water. Anonymous



Nebraska Department of Education
Contact: Alice Senseney - 402.471.2775

24th Annual
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Mark your calendars now!

April 21-22, 2004
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Watch for the registration brochure coming soon.
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April 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20			23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



SUSTAINING ACADEMIC RIGOR

by Coni Schwartz, Principal, Morley School, Lincoln

At Morley, the home of the Meadowlarks, we were not surprised to find our 2002-03 Metropolitan Achievement Test results for both third and fifth grade in the upper 90th percentiles in both total reading and total math. Our "flight pattern" of learning and instruction is flown with precision, each teacher knowing what to expect, each student reaching for what is expected.

Again this past year, our Metropolitan Achievement Tests results were exemplary, being among the top in almost every area. Our commitment to academic priorities, along with the staff's strong, steady and effective instruction, gives us a teaming spirit that continues to make a difference for our children.

Morley School was featured in the June 29 edition of the *Lincoln Journal-Star*. If you look at a section featuring all of LPS academic success, Morley's third grade students scored in the 96th and 97th percentiles for reading and math on the Metropolitan Achievement Test. Not featured in that article, Morley fifth grade students scored at the 88 percent in total reading and 93 percent in total math. Morley's fourth grade students, assessment of state reading standards, reveal 100 percent proficiency in Vocabulary and Active Listening, compared to the LPS District's 86.25 percentage of proficiency in vocabulary and 81.50 proficiency in Active Listening. The State of Nebraska set the proficiency level at 62 percent for the area of reading. Morley's fourth grade students achieved 98 percent proficiency in math as compared to the LPS District's overall proficiency level of 77.33 percent. Nebraska's cut level is 65 percent. So, what exists at Morley to realize such high student achievement? Simply put, the faculty, as we have historically done, is to strive to help each and every child learn and reach toward their fullest learning potential through at least what we call "a list of the top 12" reasons why our students have extraordinary opportunities to learn! I will list these a little later in this article. Our top 12 strategies are straight forward. We teach by these top 12. We excel by following the top 12

that will be listed below.

In addition to academic excellence, in 2002-03 Morley families and friends validated extraordinary commitment to the focus on our students' success. Not only did our children excel, parental and community volunteer involvement hours rose to over 6,000 hours from approximately 4000 hours the previous year. As the instructional and visionary leader of Morley, it is my strong desire and leadership dream that each parent be involved at Morley.

OUR TOP 12 CHARACTERISTICS

Our top 12 characteristics start with **emphasizing the importance of learning**. The staff is so aligned with masterful teaching and learning that, according to a past NCE visitation team member, "Morley reeks with excellence." We didn't take offense to that word, "reeks." We found it to be exhilarating and motivating to "kick it up one more notch." Our students loved our added improvement goal of rigorous and complex vocabulary. They searched for words that "reeked with excellence." Students and parents got a kick out of bringing those challenge words right into the classroom where we gave them an overhaul through research, writing, and challenging other students.

Strong leadership has to guide the instructional program. It is essential that not only the principal, but experienced staff is well versed in learning research. I love instruction, know curriculum, excel in instructional performance and evaluation, and student growth and development. It is important to know each and every child and their learning level, style, and strengths to nourish those minds! The Morley faculty talks about students' growth, mastery of learning, hot buttons of students, and strategies to match our students on a constant basis. Everyone is involved. Those students and the instruction they receive are our priorities. Morley's goals are clear. Our objectives are precise. Ask any teacher in the school what our goals and objectives are, and you are in for at least a half an hour of discussion. We

love to articulate our goals and we celebrate meeting our objectives.

Students are grouped to promote effective instruction. Each quarter and, probably more frequently than that, instructional conferences are held with the principal and each teacher to analyze effective instruction, student grouping, and student progress. As a result, Morley engages in constant evaluation of how best we can serve students. We ask the 'what if' questions about grouping and we do not hesitate to monitor and adjust for higher learning.

Firm and consistent discipline. We are a far cry from a 'military' school, however, our discipline is firm and consistent. The rules are simple. Students respect one another and the learning environment. Their goal is to learn. Our goal is to see that our students' goal is met. Students want to learn and model the very best behavior for others. Students listen, with full presence of mind, and teachers check the understanding of students before time and thinking are lost. The rest of the discipline story follows the Lincoln Public Schools' Code of Conduct and Responsibilities. Be nice. Keep hands and feet to oneself. Help each other. Think about your character. Discipline holds no fancy programs or steps. It works because the expectation is held high that 'we expect it to work.' Everyone knows that at Morley.

High expectations for quality instruction. There are no exceptions. We all agree that our primary responsibility is to provide excellent instruction for students in which to learn. Our school culture and pride are such that we don't mind doing that at all!

Incentives and rewards provide strong motivation. Many of the incentives and rewards are INTERNALLY held by students. We like it when intrinsic motivation prevails. It is our entry into our students' minds.

Parents are invited to become involved and the majority of parents are involved. On any given day at any given hour, parents are involved and joyfully working for our students' success. We are all in this learning area together and each parent shares rich gifts with us. They feel welcome. They know that

(continued on page 9)



“SURVIVING AS A FIRST-YEAR SUPE”

by Mike Lucas, Superintendent, Franklin Public Schools

Things have finally slowed down just enough that I had some time to reflect on how my professional life has changed since the past July 1st when I became a first-time superintendent in Franklin. I feel fortunate to have four-plus

biggest help and his professionalism and caring made for a smooth transition.

Rely on your former boss to assist also. Dr. Freeman in West Point was my boss for three years and he was able to provide me with lots of insight and

other paperwork.

Focus on Family

Managing your time will be more important than ever, especially if you move into a new community as you will need to work hard forming relationships with business leaders, parents, etc. Schedule time with your family, just as you would with a patron or Chamber group. Keep your spouse and children's needs in the forefront of your mind because there will be plenty of other things on your mind as well!

Cope with the Loneliness

Being a superintendent is a lonely position day to day. You need to be able to adjust to not having a buddy or confidant that is equal to you on the organizational chart. As a principal, it was great to have at least two to three other principals in the district to talk to. As a supe, you are the only one in town. Get to know other supes and work to create friendships with them.

Message to Principals that are Considering Becoming a Supe

Go for it. It is a wonderful job to have with lots of challenges and opportunities to help a district improve. The negatives are far outweighed by the positives of being able to impact change on an entire school system.

These are exciting times to be in education as a supe; you have an expanded opportunity to put your stamp on the quality of education for the young children of our great state. Good luck!

It has been a blessing to be able to rely on classmates, colleagues, acquaintances and “friends of friends” this school year. There are so many new things that I had to deal with like LC-2 forms, budget documents, tax requests, Annual Financial Reports, etc. that it would have been impossible to do alone. NCSA helps promote this type of network and collegiality.

months under my belt now and have some observations that may help others that are contemplating the jump to Central Office.

Rely on a Trusted Network

It has been a blessing to be able to rely on classmates, colleagues, acquaintances and “friends of friends” this school year. There are so many new things that I had to deal with like LC-2 forms, budget documents, tax requests, Annual Financial Reports, etc. that it would have been impossible to do alone. NCSA helps promote this type of network and collegiality.

Form a tight network now that you will be able to call on in a time of need and be willing to provide assistance to others when they call upon you. The former supe here, Mark Sievering, has been the

helped prepare me for what to watch out for:

Other colleagues that you know from graduate work or run-ins at Administrator Days can be of great assistance also. Jeff Edwards in Sandhills, Dr. Steve Joel in Grand Island, the administration in Waverly, Scott Shepard at Platteview, Ray Collins at Prague, Darryl Vitosh at Diller-Odell, Jim Havelka at North Bend, Dick Hindalong at South Sarpy, Mark Shepard at Fremont, Dr. Kirby Eltiste in Millard, Dr. Nancy Biggs in Lincoln, and many more around the state have all helped in one way or another so far this fall.

Create a strong bond with the NDE staff also. They have been phenomenal. Janice Eret, Kay Stillwell-Berquist, and others do a tremendous job of helping out first-timers with the budget and

The Nebraska Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance is seeking nominations of elementary and secondary professionals for Outstanding Educator awards.

We recognize outstanding physical education teachers at the elementary, middle school and high school levels, as well as awards in health education and outstanding program awards. Nominations require a name, address, phone number and school of the nominee and no paperwork on your part to nominate. If you know of an individual or program that you may want to nominate, contact Debra Kaplan at: dkaplan@westside66.org for further information.



LEADERSHIP TIPS

COPING WITH MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES

• **Learn to change gears quickly and smoothly.** Like new drivers with stick-shift automobiles, learn to shift from first to second to back, without grinding the gears. Principals need to move from task to task with care.

• **Learn to go with the flow.** It's important to have priorities and "to-do" lists, but some days it's not possible to get to all of the work. Remember there's always tomorrow.

• **Look at the big picture and take a long-term view.** Understand how solving immediate problems serves larger purposes. Understand how answering a question about curriculum at 6:00 p.m. is part of the larger reform effort. Take the long view. See how brief interactions and problem solving with staff build long-term relationships and cement the culture.

• **Become a historian and anthropologist of the culture.** (Deal and Peterson 1998). Hone your skills as a historian by listening to stories of past events, exhuming old planning documents, and reviewing past efforts to understand from where the school has come. But also develop the skills of an anthropologist by digging into existing norms and values, examining artifacts and symbols, and asking about the deeper meaning of staff traditions and rituals.

• **Develop a deep understanding of the school's purpose and values.** Every school has a deep set of values. In toxic cultures, those values are negative and hostile. In positive cultures, those values hold deep meaning for staff. Learn to identify and interpret what those values are as they relate to curriculum, instruction, approaches to assessment, and learning. See if the current values match the community's and one's own.

• **Become a "bifocal" leader.** Bifocal leadership means knowing deep down that managerial tasks communicate values and build culture, and that symbolic actions help staff and students internalize the actions and routines needed to run schools (Deal and Peterson 1998). Intuitively, bifocal leaders manage by leading and lead by managing. Every action reinforces core values and purpose. It is harder than it sounds, but key to being a successful principal.

• **Enjoy the rush.** A principal's daily work is exciting, surprising, and mysterious (Belmore 2000). It will never be boring or routine. By celebrating and learning to enjoy the rush of activities through networking, stories, and collegiality, principals will gain new energy to cope with work's challenges (Peterson 2001, 20).

From "Redefining the Role of the Principal" ERS

You Gotta Love This School District

This was floating on the Net and is reportedly a real message used by a California school. It is tempting.

"Hello! You have reached the automated answering service of your school. In order to assist you in connecting to the right staff member; please listen to all of your options before making a selection:

To lie about why your child is absent – Press 1

To make excuses for why your child did not do his work – Press 2

To complain about what we do – Press 3

To swear at staff members – Press 4

To ask why you didn't get information that was already enclosed in your newsletter and several flyers mailed to you – Press 5

If you want us to raise your child – Press 6

If you want to reach out and touch, slap or hit someone – Press 7

To request another teacher for the third time this year – Press 8

To complain about bus transportation – Press 9

To complain about school lunches – Press 0

If you realize this is the real world and your child must be accountable/responsible for his/her own behavior, class work, homework, and that it's not the teachers' fault for your child's lack of effort, hang up and have a nice day."



OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

by Margaret Walker, Principal, Clinton Elementary School, Lincoln

"In my old country we were poor..." writes a boy in third grade.

I am awed by this phrase. His family of twelve lives in a dilapidated, two-bedroom house – most of the children sleep on the floor without pillows. One of the younger children asked for a blanket for Christmas – and gloves and a hat. That's all.

I sometimes describe to people the poverty of our students. It is hard for many to believe that there are children in Lincoln, Nebraska, who do not have enough to eat. But this third grader's comment stunned me!

As I read through more of the student's essays, I realized anew that while we see our families as living in poverty, they see themselves differently.

"Here we have a house and the floor is not made of dirt."...Boy, Grade 4

"I can eat a whole meal every day."...Boy, grade 4.

"I am thankful for a house because in Sudan there was no roof."...Girl, Grade 4

"I moved to heaven – the cool place, America...in Mexico the food was all dried up."...Boy, Grade 5.

"The president took people's money. In America there's a lot of rules so nothing bad happens."... Boy, Grade 3

"In my old country, they put kids in the war. That's why we came here." Girl, grade 4.

They see themselves as having come to something better than what they had. They have left behind family, friends, homes and belongings. They have endured circumstances unimaginable to most of us. They are embarking on a new life.

"Who says freedom is free?" Boy, Grade 5

"In Iraq we had a lot of money but my family had to move to America because of the war in Iraq." Girl, grade 5

At Clinton Elementary, we say that part of our mission is to equip our students to compete (e.g. for higher education, for jobs) with students from much more affluent backgrounds. But...perhaps we discount the riches of our students. Because they don't have dance lessons, soccer coaches, gymnastics, computers and video games, and vacation trips do we assume they are "deprived"? Do they come to us with something that all the opportunities afforded to our middle-class children cannot match? Something that is not measurable – something we may not see? When an eight year old fulfills his responsibility of getting his younger siblings out of bed, dressed, fed and to school on time every day because his parents are not home, do we recognize this as a skill? Do we simply not know how to tap into those strengths?

"Having to choose is a remarkable thing. You can choose to have an education, you can choose your work, you can choose what to eat." Girl, grade 5.



CONGRATULATIONS TO...

☞ **Tri-County School District** on the success of their override election

☞ **Ed Hollinger**, Superintendent, Hemingford Public Schools, who was recognized as Nebraska Music Educators Association Administrator of the Year

☞ **Jeff Edwards**, Superintendent, Sandhills Public Schools, on obtaining his Doctoral Degree

☞ **Caroline Winchester**, Superintendent of Elba Public Schools, on obtaining her Doctoral Degree

☞ **Terry Haack**, Principal, Elkhorn

High School, who has been appointed Superintendent of Bennington Public Schools

☞ Congratulations to the Nebraska Association of School Boards on the completion and move to their new offices at 1311 Stockwell Street – Lincoln, NE 68502 – 402/423-495

RETIREMENTS:

☞ **Jim Merritt**, Superintendent, North Platte Public Schools

☞ **Rod Borders**, Superintendent, Gordon Public Schools

☞ **Harlan Schrieber**, Superintendent, Logan View Public Schools

☞ **Bill Pile**, Superintendent, Leyton, Potter-Dix Public Schools

☞ **Ed Hollinger**, Superintendent, Hemingford Public Schools

☞ **Larry Jess**, Superintendent, Wilcox-Hildrith Public Schools

☞ **Dave Hendricks**, Superintendent, Amherst Public Schools

☞ **Don Zeiss**, Principal, Wayne High School



NSDLAF+ NOTES #14



Nebraska School District Liquid Asset Fund Plus is a diversified, open-end, actively managed investment fund designed to address the short term cash investment needs of Nebraska school districts and Educational Service Units. The investment objective is to seek high current income, consistent with preservation of capital, and maintenance of liquidity. The Fund seeks to maintain a stable \$1.00 share price.

The Fund invests in high-quality, short-term U.S. debt securities including Treasury bills, agency floating rate securities, agency notes, agency discount notes and repurchase agreements collateralized by U.S. Government securities. The portfolio maintains a weighted average maturity of 60 days or less. The Fund maintains an S&P AAAM rating.

NSDLSF+ also offers its clients individual fixed income securities currently through Ambac Securities.

For information on the benefits to your school district, educational service unit or community college from participation in NSDLAF+, contact Cliff Dale, Vice President, Ambac Securities, Inc., 402-483-1678, or cdale@neb.rr.com.



Fire and Life Safety...

(continued from page 1)

Council of School Administrators, Nebraska Department of Education, State Fire Marshal's office, Nebraska Association of School Boards, State Board of Education, and the Association of School Architects and Educational Consulting Services, are involved in this effort. The Commissioner of Education, Doug Christensen, and the State Fire Marshal, Dennis Hoehbein, have been directly involved with the committee.

The early goals of the committee were to identify the issues. With the help of Paul Ladehoff of the Mediation Center in Lincoln, the group focused on such topics as: 1) application of the Life Safety Code - as it pertains to existing, new and newly remodeled facilities; 2) what are "Official Orders" and what do they mean; 3) funding issues related to life safety improvements and the lids; and 4) appeals processes and jurisdiction issues.

Many of the frustrations experienced by school administrators are due to a lack of understanding of the above topics. After several very pointed and sometimes heated discussions, one thing became very apparent: School Administrators and the State Fire Marshal's office have the same goal - Safe Kids and Safe Schools.

Some of the positive outcomes include: 1) improved communication between administrators, school boards, architects and the State Fire Marshal's

representatives; 2) an understanding of the Life Safety Code and its application; 3) passage of legislation to provide a funding mechanism through the sale of bonds outside the lid; and 4) the development of a checklist for building administrators with the top twenty items deputies are looking for when completing an inspection.

The process worked well and is a first step toward building positive relationships between School and State Fire Marshal officials.

Meetings of the committee are scheduled twice a year. Representatives of the task force will present information at the following state conferences every other year: Administrator Days, NASBO, Fall School Board Conference and the NRCSA conference. Representatives of the committee made presentations this past year at NASBO (April) and the School Board Annual Conference (November). NCSA members on the School Safety Advisory Committee are Al Inzerello, Westside; Doug Townsend, Bellevue; Ken Navratil, Elkhorn Valley; Jerry Bartee, OPS; Russ Inbody, NDE; and Mark Shepard, Fremont.

For additional information regarding the School Safety Advisory Committee contact one of the committee members or Russ Inbody at the Nebraska Department of Education. 

WILCOX-HILDRETH PUBLIC SCHOOLS Superintendent Vacancy

The Wilcox-Hildreth Public School District, located in south central Nebraska, is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Superintendent of Schools.

The School Board is seeking a superintendent who has strong leadership and communication skills, is knowledgeable in the area of school finance, and is able to work and communicate effectively with students, staff, and community members. An interest and experience in middle school education is preferred. The superintendent will also serve as middle school principal.

Persons interested in this position should send a letter of application, credentials, transcripts, and five (5) references to: Wilcox-Hildreth Superintendent Search, KALL/SDAG, Box 101 Wayne NE, 68787-0101. For additional information contact Alan Katzberg at 402-328-2923 or Larry Lindquist at 402-761-3284. EOE



NEBRASKA SCHOOLMASTERS CLUB ANNOUNCES...2004-2005 \$1,000 SCHOOLMASTERS SCHOLARSHIPS

The Nebraska Schoolmasters Club is awarding two scholarships to support educators who are pursuing administrative degrees. One scholarship will be given to an educator pursuing a principal endorsement, and one for a candidate gaining qualification as a superintendent.

Please read the criteria and consider this excellent opportunity.

Submit application to:
Carol Renner, Scholarship Chair
310 W. 24th Street
Kearney, NE 68845

QUALIFICATIONS/SELECTION CRITERIA:

- Be a teacher or administrator in a Nebraska Department of Education approved or accredited school
- Hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university
- Make application and be accepted in graduate program for a master's degree in educational administration or an endorsement for the superintendency
- Fully intend to seek an administrative position upon completion of program

APPLICANT MUST SUBMIT:

- A letter of application stating interest in becoming a school administrator/superintendent
- Resume
- Three letters from supervisors, board members, or college instructors who attest to the candidate's leadership skills
- A description of leadership position held in current or former positions
- Submit all materials by February 14, 2004

UPCOMING EVENTS...

FEBRUARY 12-13

NASES/NDE Joint Meeting
Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln, NE

MARCH 1

Nebraska Association of Teachers of Mathematics Spring Conference
Grand Island, NE
For more information contact Linda Moore at moorel@esu10.org

MARCH 31

GRIT
Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln, NE

For information and to register for any of the above events, please visit www.ncsa.org

*NCSA Inclement Weather Policy: Should the school district where an NCSA Conference/Workshop is being held is closed, the event shall be canceled or postponed.

ACADEMIC RIGOR

(continued from page 4)

our students and teachers need and desire their strengths, focus on learning, and support.

Teachers, paraeducators, support staff, and the principal continually strive to improve instructional effectiveness. Apathy cannot be tolerated where excellence is required. Each member of the Morley team is important to improve instructional effectiveness. We know the power of working together for students. A custodian is delighted to provide a little mathematical drill and practice for fifteen minutes with two or three students. A paraeducator bounces in with a new certificate of recognition and accomplishment for completing a course on reading strategies. A teacher finds a new schematic mapping approach and share it with others. A kitchen staff member posts new vocabulary and we make sure students know what it means. A principal holds an after lunch 'Scholar's Table' to afford students' opportunities to finish work, check work, and learn literacy strategies. We all work together to continuously improve instructional effectiveness. Again, it is a

love of ours and..it is expected.

Saving one of the best of the 'top 12' for last, but definitely not least importance, is that school time is used for learning. With an understanding that we have limited time with our students, it is important that, along with their intent to learn, our golden window of opportunity lies in every second, minute and hour of each day. The protection of this time, along with wise decisions in the use of this time, makes a significant difference. At Morley, we all know that. We are "all in our places, with bright shining faces" when the bell tolls. Then, the positive electricity of learning begins to glow, and the torch of knowledge burns brightly.

At Morley, our "Meadowlark flight pattern" is in order and our mission is to "fly high." We are committed to providing the highest quality of education for all Morley students. Morley aligns with the Lincoln Board of Education in its mission, at an elementary level. Morley accepts with enthusiasm, and desires to be held highly accountable for outstanding achievement of this mission through the most effective and efficient use of available resources. 



Close the Achievement Gap!

(continued from page 1)

students of color is one of those inherent outcomes Chief Justice Warren referred to in the *Brown* decision. We must continue to have honest conversations and planning strategies to heal the centuries of poorly addressing race in educational pedagogy.

The continued parity issues relating to race support W.E.B. DuBois's position for the 21st century: There still is a "problem of the color-line." If we are going to make a significant impact in the achievement gap for students of color and empower all children to learn to live in our multicultural country and world, we must have the courage to honestly address the social, political and educational construction of race.

After further thought and reading the book, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* by Lisa Delpit, the great need for cultural responsive pedagogy is apparent. In addition, Cheryl Brown-Henderson one of the plaintiffs in the *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education* case, in a presentation in Kansas City, Missouri [Oct. 14, 2003] stated that, "... the case was filed in order to have access to the same quality of education as white students; not to just sit next to white children." Furthermore, the present and future expectations of No Child Left Behind require us to work for equal outcomes for all children.

Likewise, Lisa Delpit in her book provides a key reason for the need to work

for authentic relationships in the educational environment. She states, "Members of any culture transmit information implicitly to co-members. However, when implicit codes are attempted across cultures, communication frequently breaks down."

In conclusion, I believe this breakdown is what happens with our educational system when it comes to children of color and children of poverty. Dr. James Comer provides us with some guidance as we attempt to lessen this breakdown and move towards cultural responsive education. He states that, "No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship." As leaders, we must continue to demonstrate improved outcomes for the least of our achieving students. Michael Fullan suggests in order for us to be effective we must "(1) have an explicit "making-a-difference" sense of purpose; (2) use strategies that mobilize many people to tackle tough problems; (3) be held accountable by measured and debatable indicators of success; and (4) be ultimately assessed by the extent to which it awakens people's intrinsic commitment, which is none other than the mobilizing of everyone's sense of moral purpose."

I am convinced that until those of us in the educational family develop the passion that Lisa Delpit describes as, "Wanting the same thing for everyone else's children as I want for mine," closing the achievement gap will continue to be conversation, not an action! I will con-

tinue to commit my professional and personal life to make a difference in racial understanding and improved student achievement for all students. I invite you to have the courage to join or continue with me. 🙏

Creating and Leading Believers

(continued from page 2)

easy to expect the best and believe the best of others, but I was relentless. And I have found that one can't help others get up the hill without getting closer to the top herself. In my opinion, real leaders are ordinary people with extraordinary determination and belief.

During this first year, our philosophy of believing and becoming a community of believers began to show some positive results. What followed were significant improvements in academic scores and student achievements. Other tangible results were evidenced by students like Morgan Rae, who had been diagnosed as a selective mute. This year due in part to the power of believing, she voiced her first words in the school setting. Another young man, Carter, a fifth grader, brought a poem about believing to school and read it at an all-school assembly. When questioned about why he brought and read that poem, he responded, "Because at Covington that's what we are about." It seems that we had indeed built a community of believers. One final reward came as, I watched Diane Woodford, one of my staff members, accept her award as the 2004 Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

As this first year winds to an end, I have learned that as a building leader, I can know how to teach, how to assess and how to build relationships, but that is not enough. I have realized that if I can take the risk to truly believe in myself and my vision, and share those beliefs, while inspiring others to believe in themselves, the rewards will be everlasting as others come to believe and see their dreams fulfilled. And most importantly, I have learned that at Covington Elementary we are all only fragile threads, but woven together around the philosophy of believing, we make a wonderful tapestry. 🙏

SYMPATHY

☞ **Drew Welch**, Principal, Bryan Elementary School, Lexington, on the death of his Mother

☞ **Marlene Uhing**, Superintendent, Seward Public Schools, on the death of her Mother

☞ **Jackie Estee**, Assistant Superintendent, Westside Community Schools on the death of her Mother

☞ **Brad Conner**, Director, Papillion-LaVista Public Schools on the death of his Father

☞ **Steve Wilson**, Centura Elementary School, on the death of his Father-in-law

☞ **Tom Jacobson**, Professor UNK on the death of his Father

☞ **Renee Jacobson**, Superintendent, Plattsmouth Community Schools on the death of her Father-in-law

☞ Family of **Allen Friesen**, retired Superintendent of Henderson Public Schools (now the Heartland Public Schools)



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Calendar of Events

FEBRUARY

2	NSASSP Executive Board, 3:00 p.m., Ramada Inn	Kearney
3	NCSA Executive Board, 8:30 a.m., Ramada Inn	Kearney
3	NASA Executive Board, 5:00 p.m., Ramada Inn	Kearney
3-4	Labor Relations Conference, 1:00 p.m., Ramada Inn	Kearney
4	NSASSP Region V, 10:00 a.m., Valentino's	Ogallala
4	NAESP Region III, 3:00 p.m., Lifelong Learning Center	Norfolk
4	NAESP Region V, 9:30 a.m., Valentino's	Ogallala
6	NAESP Region I, 8:30 a.m., ESU #6	Milford
11	NASA Region V, 12:00 noon, CSC Union	Chadron
12-13	NASES/NDE Joint Meeting, 1:00 p.m., Cornhusker Hotel	Lincoln
18	NSASSP Region III, 2:00 p.m., ESU #1	Wakefield

MARCH

3	NAESP Region II, 5:30 p.m., Georgetown Club	Omaha
10	NASA Region IV, 10:00 a.m., ESU #10	Kearney
10	NSASSP Region I, 5:30 p.m., Merle's Bar & Grill	Emerald
17	NASA Region V, 12:00 noon, Gaslight	Gering
24	NAESP Region I, 1:00 p.m., Malcolm Elementary	Malcolm
25	NAESP Executive Board, 9:30 a.m., I-80 Holiday Inn	Grand Island
25	NASA Region III, 10:00 a.m., NECC	Norfolk
31	GRIT Conference, 9:00 a.m., Cornhusker Hotel	Lincoln
31	NAESP Region V, 9:30 a.m., WNCC	Sidney
31	NSASSP Region V, 10:00 a.m., WNCC	Sidney

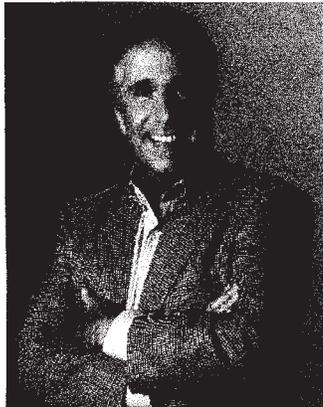
NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

February 19-22 - ASA National Convention - San Francisco, CA
 February 27-March 1 - NASSP National Convention - Orlando, FL
 April 16-20 - NAESP National Convention - San Francisco, CA

The NAESP Link

Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals' Newsletter

JANUARY 2004



Explore the possibilities of the General Session speakers.

Henry Winkler is a recognizable Hollywood name. What many people don't know is Winkler's passion for helping children. In his session, he will share his stories of motivation and inspiration.



The People Behind the Logos

Marcia K. Gray, Principal, Battle Creek Elementary, Battle Creek, Nebraska

As the "New Year" gets into full swing in our elementary schools across Nebraska, I am sure you are reminded many times daily, as I am, of the old saying "So much to do and so little time." It is the time of year when we ask ourselves if the programs we have put in place will meet not only the needs of individual students, but also the many challenges set forth by NCLB, the state standards and assessment program, school improvement goals, to name just a few. Our ability to meet the challenges presented in our education world today is greatly enhanced by the networking that goes on between colleagues both people-to-people as well as through organizations such as the NAESP. And, as we know, it is not the organization in and of itself that makes the difference, but the people behind the "logo" giving of their time and talents to keep our Nebraska schools among the best in the nation.

Region III is proud to have three individuals working behind the scenes as state officers at this time, they are: NAESP President Scott Dodson, Woodland Park, Norfolk; NAESP Secretary, Sarah Williams, Ainsworth; and NAESP State Representative David Ludwig, Wisner-Pilger. Also deserving of recognition is Beata Rudloff, Creighton Elementary, whose school has been recognized by the United States Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School. All of these individuals, and many more of you across the state, continue to give of yourselves for the good of all. A special "Thank You" goes out to all of you for your dedication over the past year and to your continued time and efforts to keep education alive and well in the state of Nebraska in 2004 and into the future.

NAESP is proud to announce that **Troy Juracek**, Elementary Principal at Hamlow Elementary School in Waverly has been named the **NAESP Outstanding New Principal for 2003**. He was honored at the President's Dinner during the All-Principal Conference where he received a plaque. Troy has been principal at Hamlow for five years where, according to his Superintendent, he is "a valuable member of the administrative team" and "is developing into an excellent administrator."

Troy's support for the award included letters describing him as "a leader who sees the "big picture" of what education is about and helps others see that vision;" "he places "kids first"for the Hamlow community;" "Troy has always been willing to go above and beyond, and showed that recently at school, when you could find him pitching in to serve the school meals when short handed;" and "He has even played Chess with me, but I won the first match? He makes all of us feel special."

In addition to his regular principal duties at Hamlow, Troy is a member of ASCD, on the Waverly Preschool Board of Directors, Region I President (2003-04), and in his spare time during the summer, a YMCA T-Ball coach.

Congratulations go out to Troy on his recognition and a big thanks for all he does to model the role of the elementary principalship. The members of the profession are proud of him and the job he is doing for children.

- - Around the Region - -



National Distinguished Principals Honored!

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) honored 65 National Distinguished Principals from the United States and several countries at several prestigious events in Washington, D.C. in early November. This year Andrew Heady, Principal at Abraham Lincoln Elementary in Hastings, NE and his wife Jan represented Nebraska's outstanding principals this year.

Drew is truly an exceptional principal who cares first about the needs of his students and his staff. It was my privilege to learn more about Drew as a professional educator, a powerful leader, and a gentle, caring person. His passion for teaching and learning is clearly evident in both his words and his actions.

These principals attended several special events where they were held in high esteem and treated with great respect and honor by dignitaries, association leaders, and CEOs of major corporations. They were honored at a special reception in the Diplomatic Suite at the US Dept. of State and at an exquisite formal dinner. We were able to tour the White House as well as attend a special briefing with the Assistant Secretaries of Education. In a rare event, we were actually asked our

opinions about NCLB and the impact it was having on our schools. While we all agree with the essential concepts of this law, some of the details are proving to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Having this opportunity to begin the dialogue about these issues was indeed a landmark event.

The NDPs were asked their opinions about many things and to share their beliefs and the strategies they use to create such high performing schools. It was most obvious that they are servant leaders who have a clear focus and work in collaboration to help every child reach high goals. They work closely with parents and find ways to build a caring community. Spending time with these principals was indeed a highlight for me.

It is time to submit your application or invite one of your esteemed colleagues to be a candidate for this award. I strongly encourage you to consider this special way to honor your school, your students and staff, and your community. It will truly be one of the most significant highlights of your career!

Mary Kay Sommers
Principal, Shepardson Elementary, Fort Collins, CO
NAESP Board Director, Zone 7

