

UNCOVER THE BEAUTY IN EDUCATION

by Terry Haack, President, NSASSP; Principal, Elkhorn Senior High School



Haack

As I drove out to Kearney on Saturday for the All-Principals Conference, I could not help but take in the beauty of Nebraska's landscape. The crisp, clear air of fall on the bright sunlit day allowed all the colors of a changing season to illuminate the roadside. It's hard to believe that even with the harsh summer weather, we are still graced with the many vibrant colors of fall. Absorbing the beauty of fall in Nebraska, I started to think of a lot of things good and bad in my life. When I reflect on my career in education, I can think of a lot of things that I would list as "good." My fondest memories have centered on students. For me, it is the memory of an immature freshman who was always in my office for disciplinary reasons that graduated four years later and is now a successful businessman.

Today's educators cannot be complacent in expanding their knowledge about teaching and learning. The classroom of today is different than yesterday's class-

room for a reason. Education has improved and will continue to grow with the help of strong leadership. This is where administrators will play a significant role. I know all of us at sometime or another have asked ourselves why we entered this profession called administration. Whether we are checking for head lice, picking up trash after lunch or questioning the wisdom of our last hire, at times we have asked, "why, why me?" The answer is because we have been chosen to be leaders. In today's educational climate, leaders have to uncover the "beauty" within our profession.

We can all relate to the "ugly" in education: filing reports, making the call to the parent of a child who made a poor decision, interpreting charts, sorting standardized test scores, the paperwork and more paperwork. All of it keeps

us trapped behind our desks. If we allow ourselves to be buried by the bad in education we will only see the "ugly." The "beauty" in education is the students themselves. They are like the changing seasons. They can be wind blown and in a mess one day, and like a bright sunny day the next. When we as administrators look to make contact with students, we seek to uncover the "beauty" in education. In order to create opportunities for engagement with students, administrators need to handle the management side of the job that takes time to learn and understand. Something a novice can gain by having a mentor with time to share his/her experience.

With the advances made in technology, education does not start and end solely within the classroom. Today's
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KIDS DON'T START AT THE SAME STARTING LINE

by Gene Cosby, Superintendent, Hastings Public Schools

Were you an outstanding student when you were in school? Were all your classmates outstanding also? Did you all have the same interests and do everything well? My grown children went through a phase of reading Nancy Drew books when they were growing up. Nancy was one of those people who could do everything very well. It seems to me that this is the premise of the new federally mandated "No Child Left Behind" Act. All children are to be performing proficiently or with excellence in a number of subjects. The intent of "No Child Left Behind" is that every child in the United States will be proficient in

these basic subjects by the year 2012. If this happens, I will be thrilled; but such a challenge is similar to that of saying there will be no crime by 2012. This federal law focuses on school accountability and higher standards for students; and, obviously, no child is to slip through the cracks. I certainly agree that we want standards, we want success for every child, and we want excellence. The suggestion that all children are quite equal and can excel at everything appears to ignore a number of important issues. Lack of understanding of these issues places education in a state of being out
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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.



TESTING AND ASSESSMENT: ONE PERSON'S PERSPECTIVE

by Carl Dietz, Principal, Amherst Public Schools

Standards, Assessment, Portfolios, State Reporting. When will it all end? For the past four years we have been inundated with assessment issues. For many of us the complex task of recording, reporting, assessing, and revising has become overwhelming. We are in a day and age of accountability and comparability, and our communities will settle for nothing less than perfection.

When I opened the first Stars Assessment packet in 1999, I felt a little overwhelmed. Like many, I said a few choice words to myself and then started making phone calls to get some sort of clarification from other experts. Every person I visited with expressed some of the same feelings of dread. Some even said they would retire before being dragged through all the work ahead of

us. Some did indeed retire while others of us have trudged our way through.

The original purpose of L.E.A.R.N.S. was to: 1) Guide local discussion in implementing standards, assessment, and reporting procedures, and 2) Assist Nebraska public school staff as they plan new procedures for assessment of students and reporting of performance to local patrons and to the Nebraska Department of Education (STARS Planning Guide October 1999). Now, three years later, I feel we have made huge strides toward setting local improvement goals. The process has helped us align our curriculum vertically and horizontally, something that never would have happened without the assistance of the Nebraska Standards. Prior to the state mandates we discussed cur-

riculum at faculty meetings, updated texts regularly, and reviewed the process periodically. But never did we collaboratively develop definite assessment instruments to measure what was being taught nor did we track individual students and the progress of specific grades.

By having teachers discuss openly what they were teaching, we discovered that some concepts were taught at multiple grade levels and others were not covered at all, yet we were still trying to assess these concepts. When teachers in other disciplines studied the state standards, they discovered that many of the standards were assessed in other areas. This helped ease some of the stress placed on core teachers. Meetings were scheduled for the sole purpose of establishing curriculum guides, which matched the Nebraska State Standards. Although this was a huge undertaking, our staff took pride in preparing an accurate and workable document.

School improvement will neither come in the form of 'Block scheduling', nor year-round schooling, nor merely student assessment. Improvement will come in the form of teachers in the classroom teaching what their district has determined is important. Again, assessment alone will not improve achievement. We must go further than merely testing and throwing the results in the drawer (of course after we send the results to the NDE). Let's identify our weaknesses, distinguish what has caused the failure, list steps to take for improvement and then provide training for staff.

In 1987 when Outcomes Based Education was the buzz word and concept for school improvement, I thought we were on the right track. My interpretation of OBE was similar to what we are doing with Standards based instruction. Whether we call it Objective driven, Outcomes based, or Standards based the end result is still student achievement.

We play football, volleyball, soccer, softball games every week, and at every single event we keep score of how our team fares against our opponent. Coaches spend hours tracking statistics

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P E R S P E C T I V E S

by Jerry Sellentin, Ph.D., Executive Director



Sellentin

THE LOSS OF TWO EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

Nebraska's educational community lost two leaders who demonstrated leadership that

can be appreciated for their results, and we can all learn from their passion and experiences.

Ron Oswald was a Superintendent, principal, teacher, and coach for thirty-six years. As Chair of the NCSA Executive Board, Ron set in motion the building of the NCSA offices we occupy today. I can still recall his challenge, "Why can't we own our own building instead of having rent receipts?" Ron demonstrated vision and knew with effort by all concerned, results could be obtained. Ron was a strong believer in developing and supporting others. He went the extra mile as a mentor, advisor, teacher, and administrator in helping others with personal and professional concerns. Ron was the recipient of NCSA's highest award, The Distinguished Service Award, in 1993. Ron knew he was dying and accepted the fact at the young age of sixty. His stay on earth was short, but he accepted this as God's plan. Ron's funeral was on his and Margie's forty-second wedding anniversary. Celebrating his life on that day was a way to celebrate the life they had together and with their family. Family was very important to Ron, as was his faith, education, supporting others, and letting others take the credit. These are experiences we can all learn from. Ron is survived by Margie, son, daughter-in-law, Tom and Vickie, daughters, sons-in-laws, Julie and Monty Scheele, Angie and Greg Morris, Lisa and Justin Cast, and ten grandchildren.

Gary Fisher was the Superintendent at Crawford and the Executive Director of the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association at the time of his death. Gary died September 19 in Rapid City, SD, at the age of fifty-six. Gary Fisher dedicated his working life to education and especially QUALITY rural education. Gary's passion and dedication to rural education was seen in teaching music, as a principal and superintendent, active leader of NRCSA, presenter and organizer of many local, state and national organizations. His influence for rural communities went beyond Nebraska, as he was a member of the Executive Committee of National Rural Education Association. Gary's efforts at the national level were successful in many ways to include bringing the National Rural Education Association Annual Conference to Kearney, Nebraska in October 2003. Family was also important to Gary and he is survived by his wife, Lynda, and two sons, Tabor and Tyler, and two granddaughters.

As educational leaders, we can learn from the lives of Ron Oswald and Gary Fisher and I would like to sum up their leadership in "Leadership Tips" from Leader to Leader by the Drucker Foundation:

1. Timing is (almost) everything. Knowing when to introduce an initiative and when to hold off is a crucial skill.
2. Anything is possible if you share the glory. Giving others a chance to claim credit is an easy and effective way to get results.
3. Trust, once broken, is seldom restored. It is the most fragile yet essential attribute of leadership.
4. Leadership is about building connections. Effective leaders make people

feel they have a stake in common problems.

5. Leaders learn from their mistakes. To succeed, leaders must acknowledge and understand and improve their shortcomings.

6. Confidence - not just in oneself - counts. Most leaders are self-confident, sometimes to a fault; the real gift is the ability to extend faith in oneself to others.

7. Effective partnerships require devotion to one's partners. Attention to the needs of others pays off with energetic commitment.

8. Renewal comes from many sources. Leaders must know themselves and find their own sources of strength.

9. Leaders must be talent brokers. The ability to identify, recruit and effectively manage the best and brightest people is itself a key talent. (Whom are you recommending for NCSA's Emerging Administrators Program starting in January 2003?)

10. Language is one's most powerful tool. Without the ability to communicate, leaders can possess all the other attributes and still fail to have an impact.

AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK IS NOVEMBER 17-23, 2002. Make this an opportunity to extend what is needed every day, week, and month. It is a time to promote the success of education in Nebraska schools from P through 16.

ADMINISTRATORS DAYS: July 30-August 1 in Kearney with Mike Fullan as one of the keynote speakers.

Mark Your Calendars - Administrators' Days 2003

July 30-August 1

Kearney Holiday Inn & Kearney Ramada Inn



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POLITICS AND THE EDUCATIONAL RECESSION

by John Mackiel, Superintendent, Omaha Public Schools

"We can always find the money for new weapons but we aren't finding enough money for education...we spend six times more on our military than we spend on schools."

—Andy Rooney
Common Non-Sense 2002

Whether supporting a candidate or advocating for a school district levy override, this political season has witnessed people acting mainly through circles already established: neighborhoods, professional associations, networks of friends and acquaintances drawn together by common interests. Permeating all of this should be the value of social responsibility, social investment and social justice—each sources of a good deal of our security. A quick assessment of this political season, however, reveals that something is happening throughout our nation, across our state, and within our education communities.

Under the weight of federal dictates, state statutes, judicial decrees and unfunded mandates—public education is being crushed—along with the hopes and dreams of more and more Americans, more and more Nebraskans. The thicker the statute books, the greater the imbalance of power between local school districts and state/federal government. As an education community, we owe it to our children and our children's children to stand united, advocate on behalf of public education, and demand equity for all children.

Money in education matters! Just as money matters in defense, business, medicine, and faith-based institutions. It is time we put to rest the absurd notion that level of funding does not matter for public schools in America. Who gets the money, and for what purpose, has been at the heart of Politics 2002.

Many of us believe that *Brown vs. Board of Education* was decided to force an end to the inequitable distribution of resources and end the separate and unequal schooling that shamed U.S. edu-

cation. But a 21st century glimpse reveals that politicians still pretend that schools ought to be able to equalize life opportunities regardless of grinding poverty in one school district and booming affluence in another.

The same politicians who once called for the abolition of the Education Department have "lifted" the trademark slogan of the Children's Defense Fund—and have declared that no child will be left behind. As child advocates, educators in

against public schools—as if we had been turning away weapons inspectors. It is at this height of standardized test score madness that politicians pontificate about what "all" students ought to know, while threatening sanctions if they don't. Whether "all" students ought to know enough to be in the top 25th percentile—standardized scoring ensures that only 25 percent of the representative population of students that age will get enough answers right to be in the top 25th per-

The same politicians who once called for the abolition of the Education Department have "lifted" the trademark slogan of the Children's Defense Fund—and have declared that no child will be left behind. As child advocates, educators in Nebraska must be aware that as soon as the signatures were secured on HR1—backpeddling on the promises began...

Nebraska must be aware that as soon as the signatures were secured on HR1—backpeddling on the promises began:

- The smallest budget increase in education funding in seven years is in place for 2003.

- Even Start funding will be cut.

- Funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers will be "frozen" [school administrators know a freeze translates to a reduction].

- The Senate, led by Tom Harkin (Iowa) and Chuck Hagel (Nebraska) voted to fully fund the federal share of I.D.E.A. The administration called this effort "costly and unwarranted."

- The budget for elementary and secondary education proposed cutting 56 education programs, totaling \$1.7 billion—the programs targeted to be axed included Civic Education, Dropout Prevention, the National Writing Project, and the fund which supports small schools, art education, community technology centers and gifted and talented education.

- In addition, "sanctions" are being threatened by our government; sanctions

centile. Nonetheless, our government will be "sanctioning" public schools—underfunding of poor school districts and child poverty are never mentioned, just more testing.

During this Education Recession, it appears politicians believe money is best spent on testing rather than on introducing equity into the funding systems. Political rhetoric about "national goals" and "state standards" and "standardized assessment"—with no mention of equality or equity, is most transparent.

Our professional associations, our circles of advocates, must form coalitions on behalf of Nebraska's children and demand policies which legitimately ensure that no child is left behind. National and statewide educational initiatives require a united and direct political assault. We must insist that political rhetoric be turned into something useful—children deserve more than promises. 



SPORTSMANSHIP SUMMIT, A POSITIVE APPROACH TO THE SOLUTION!

by Steve Johnson, Executive Director, Nebraska Coaches Association

The Nebraska Coaches Association (NCA) and the Nebraska State Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association (NSIAAA) will co-sponsor the First Sportsmanship Summit on Tuesday, November 26, at the Kearney Holiday Inn. The intent of the summit is to create a dialogue between those parties involved in creating a healthy competitive environment for interscholastic athletics. Three years ago, the NCA and the NSIAAA, with the blessings of the NSAA, and the cooperation of Awards Unlimited, began awarding sportsmanship trophies at the Girl's and Boy's State Basketball Tournaments. The award was well received and schools qualifying for the state tournament actively promoted good sportsmanship to their fans. From this program, it was determined that we needed to take the sportsmanship philosophy one more step, and that brought about the evolution of the Sportsmanship Summit.

The objectives of the summit are as follows:

- To promote positive student and fan participation in interscholastic events;
- To enhance school and community spirit and support;
- To discuss and share effective event management and crowd control strategies;
- To support community involvement in promoting good sportsmanship and creating a wholesome competitive environment at interscholastic events.

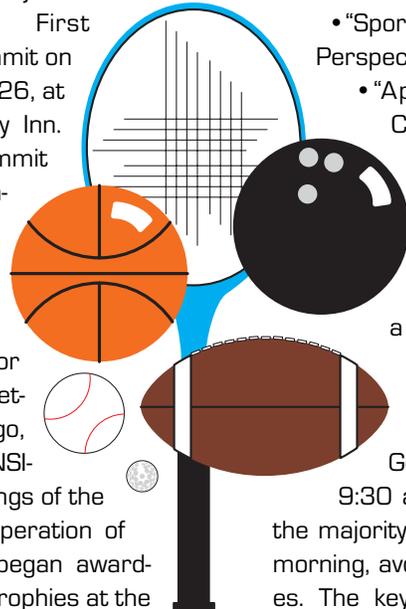
To accomplish the objectives we have scheduled the following topics to be presented during the summit:

- "How to Organize a League

Sportsmanship Program;"

- "What Kids Wish Their Parents Knew;"
- "Three Pillars of Character;"
- "Sportsmanship from an Officials Perspective;"
- "Appropriate/Inappropriate Cheers;"
- "How to Promote Character and Sportsmanship on Your Team;"
- "Sportsmanship from a Media Perspective."

The schedule is set up to begin with registration at 8:45 a.m. with the opening General Session beginning at 9:30 a.m. This will hopefully allow the majority of schools to come in that morning, avoiding any overnight expenses. The keynote will be presented by Harvey Alston, who recently presented at the Nebraska Coaches Association Multi-Sports Clinic and proved to be one of the most dynamic speakers ever at the clinic. We are encouraging schools to bring a "team" of six to eight participants made up of students/athletes, parents, cheerleaders, school administrators, members of Boards of Education, athletic directors, coaches, and media. The registration fee of \$100 per team will include a notebook, breaks, and a box lunch. The sessions will conclude at 2:30 p.m. allowing for "teams" to return to their schools in a reasonable time. Registration forms and schedules have been mailed to schools by the NSAA. Any questions may be directed to the NCA office at 402-434-5675. We hope to have 100 percent participation in this endeavor. 



HOBY IN NEBRASKA

by Karen Oxider, Senior Director of HOBY National Programs

Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY) is an international non-profit youth leadership development organization that "seeks out, develops and recognizes leadership potential commencing with high school sophomores."

HOBY was started in California in 1958 by actor Hugh O'Brian. HOBY Nebraska began a state-wide program in 1980 and has continued their annual program each year serving sophomores attending Nebraska's public and private high schools. In 2002, 264 students from around the state registered to attend the HOBY Nebraska Leadership Seminar. Unfortunately, HOBY's 2002 Leadership Seminar had to be postponed and is currently being planned for the spring of 2003. Those selected HOBY students are still considered HOBY Ambassadors as they were selected by their schools based upon their outstanding leadership potential and community involvement. Although these students have not attended a HOBY seminar, it is appropriate for these students to list their HOBY recognition on their college applications and resumes.

All students registered for the 2002 Seminar, as well as the selected students for the 2003 Leadership Seminar, will have the opportunity to meet in the spring and interact with business leaders and community professionals. There will be no cost for the 2002 and 2003 students attending the spring leadership seminar.

In 2004, HOBY will begin implementing a \$150 registration fee. For the first time in its 45-year history, HOBY has found it necessary to charge the schools for their student's participation in the HOBY program. This registration fee will help continue the benefits and support services provided by HOBY International to the local HOBY volunteers across the country. 



KIDS DON'T START AT THE SAME STARTING LINE

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of balance. The words “balance” and “alignment” are quite similar. If my car is out of alignment, the wheels will start to shake and wobble and my entire car will start to vibrate. The wobbling will eventually wear down the bearings and the axles.

Those of us responsible for the education of our youth today are struggling for balance so the education machine does not wobble, vibrate, and wear out. There are several things that are being ignored, or appear they are being ignored, in “No Child Left Behind.” I need to clarify that I know all rich kids are not from rich environments and all poor kids are not necessarily from deprived environments. There is no question, though, that children whose basic needs are met and who have many privileges are more likely to rise to the educational opportunities offered to them. Those students who barely have basic needs met will struggle to utilize the same educational opportunities.

The point I want to convey is the fact that not all children start at the same starting line. Compare the ten-year-old from the very comfortable, middle-class home with the same-aged child from a home that barely has life’s necessities to sustain him or her. The one has an adequate coat. The other may not have a coat at all. The one has nutritious meals. The other may not have a meal at all, much less nutritious. The one has traveled and learned from those experiences. The other has had no such privilege. The one has huge advantages with technology, and the other has none. The one has loving and supportive parents. The other may have this; but, too frequently, they may not. In other words, they have not started at the same line. Some have further to travel than others. Children from impoverished environments generally achieve at lower levels than children from more enriching environments. Again, it is possible to have all the material needs met and still be in a

deprived environment and it is possible to have only a few material needs met and be from a rich environment.

Which student will do better?



“Franky” comes from a comfortable, but not rich, family. He has plenty to eat, a warm house, supportive and loving parents, and plenty of time to play and have fun with his friends. Franky is at peace with himself and his world. “John,” on the other hand, comes from a home where there is no father. Mom is hooked on drugs and involves John in her habit periodically. Basic needs are not met. John is bright enough but is a troubled youngster with behavior problems. Will we have him proficient by 2012? It won’t be easy!

There is no doubt in my mind that all children can learn. However, the notion that all can learn the same curriculum, in the same amount of time, and at the same level of accomplishment is a joke. Let me illustrate. To assume that all children can learn at the same level and in the same amount of time regardless of preparation to do so is like saying one can mow as much grass with the old roller blade, push mower as can be mowed with a five-foot riding mower. It simply is not so.

I read the following statement written

by a fellow Nebraska superintendent. It is worth quoting: “Research in cognitive brain development shows that environment matters greatly in brain development. These studies clearly conclude that children who are disadvantaged have difficulty with cognitive development, acquiring adequate vocabulary, and learning the sounds required for learning to read.” Are there exceptions? Most assuredly; however, the fact remains that, if a child’s basic needs are not met, he or she has bigger worries than achieving academically.

Five levels of human needs have been identified. The first three are basic and have to do with food, shelter, safety, and belonging. These are a must for a positive self-esteem and ability to blossom in personal growth. Here is another quote from my superintendent friend: “We live in a country where 10.5 million children have no health insurance. More live in poverty. The child poverty rate in the United States is the highest among the so-called developed nations.” In Hastings, more than one out of three students receive free or reduced lunches based on income. Many of these students are good students because, money or little money, the home is a pleasant place to be. This is not always the case. Recently, I was told that there are 5,800 children in Nebraska who do not have parents but are cared for by social programs.

I am for accountability. I am for standards that set the goal for achievement. I am for every child knowing how to read, compute and write well. I do not believe that all children should attend college. I do not believe that all children should look alike and perform alike. I do not believe all children have the very same strengths. I do believe that all children can learn but not at the same rate. I do believe that different children have different strengths and that those strengths should be built on. To be consistent with my earlier illustration, if all children have to go to college, who will

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KIDS DON'T START...

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align the front end of my car? Are there not other needed skills that are very important and do not demand a college education?

If we want to do something for children, we must deal with the societal problem of not meeting basic human needs of children. By legislating that children should learn more faster and by not solving the problems of hunger, shelter, safety, guidance, love, support, and values that work, we do have the cart before the horse and the educational world is out of balance just like a wheel out of alignment.

I close with a question. How can our government demand that all children perform at proficient levels and ignore the root of the problem, which centers around basic human needs not being met? 🗣️

SYMPATHIES TO:

☞The family of **Ron Oswald**, retired Superintendent.

☞The family of **Paul Limas**, retired Superintendent.

☞The family of **Gary Dunn**, retired Superintendent.

☞The family of **Max Hensley**, retired Superintendent of Kimball Public Schools.

☞**Barry Ballou**, Business Manager, Hastings Public School on the death of his Father.

☞**Ron Skwarek**, Principal, Tecumseh Public Schools, on the death of his wife, Neldene.

☞**Sandy Peterson**, Special Education Director, ESU 3, on the death of her Father.

☞**Ryan Rulo**, Assistant Principal, Centennial Jr-Sr High School, on the death of his Father.

☞**Craig Beach**, Director, McKinley Education Center, North Platte, on the death of his Father.

TESTING AND ASSESSMENT...

(continued from page 2)

on their players. Basketball coaches know which opposing player has the poorest free-throw percentage so his players know who to foul at the end of the game. Softball coaches know which players hit well from the right side of the plate and the ones who fare better on the left side. Coaches take steps to improve each of their players' weaknesses and implement drills to help improve deficiencies. Of course everyone knows who is rated number 1 in the nation in college football and many know where their team is rated if they are in the top ten in their respective class. But, where is your school rated in regard to how they fare on CRA or NRA? For some reason we tend to resist the demand by the public to compare students academically.

Although the Standards movement has caused teachers and administrators added stress as well as taking teachers from the classroom to work on developing assessments, I believe eventually it will have a significant impact on schools in the state. 🗣️

UNCOVER THE BEAUTY...

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administrator has to be aware of several issues throughout the state, nationally, and yes, globally. Studies continue to suggest that people believe their home school is better than other's. Yet, we have a legislative process that bases its decisions about the future of education on the state as a whole. Our association has had an influx of new people who feel they can contribute to education as leaders. When a new administrator is overwhelmed with the "ugly" side of education, in part because of a lack of experience, the job may become too difficult to overcome without help. Those of us with a few years of professional experience owe it to the newest members of our association to share that experience.

The basic principle behind the "beauty in education" factor is to engage in activities that require the active participation of the school administrator. Administrators can eat lunch with a group of students, read a book to the first graders, participate in P.E., or join a classroom discussion on World War II. I encourage all of you to contact a colleague, particularly a new member to the association, and help them uncover the beauty in education. We left the classroom not to get away from children, but for the purpose of having a positive impact on a bigger audience of children. After all, it's people, not programs, which drive our profession to greatness. 🗣️



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ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ESUs: ONE PERSPECTIVE FROM A MULTI-COUNTY ESU ADMINISTRATOR

by Margene Beatty, Administrator, Educational Service Unit #16

As a seasoned educator, I have learned not to ask for days without challenges. Instead, I have learned to ask for the wisdom to deal with all that comes my way. Further, there is a force within me that creates constant images of what the future holds and what schools and education must become in order to prepare students to live, work and compete in a democratic society. Therein lies the challenge we face, as administrators, in an environment of rapid change.

An even greater challenge exists for Educational Service Units (ESU) as we attempt to accurately assess the impact of ESU services on the system of education in the state of Nebraska. During a recent meeting of the ESU administrators, Commissioner of Education, Doug Christensen, referred to ESUs as a vital part of the state system of education and encouraged the ESUs to partner with the Nebraska Department of Education and local school districts in a mutual pursuit of academic excellence. These partnerships require that we understand each other's history and focus, a need which leads us to the following questions.

What do we know about intermediate agencies in the nation and, in particular, Nebraska ESUs?

We know that 39 states in the nation have intermediate agencies with various forms of governance and services. Additionally, the American Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA) is one of the fastest growing educational organizations in the nation. We know that P.L. 94-142 (Education of the Handicapped Act) set the groundwork for the establishment of numerous inter-district collaboratives. These intermediate agencies are able to pool money in order to provide services that would be virtually impossible to provide on an individual basis. Furthermore, intermediate agencies can be viewed as a means by which school districts opt to share specialized human, material and technical resources to effect greater efficiencies

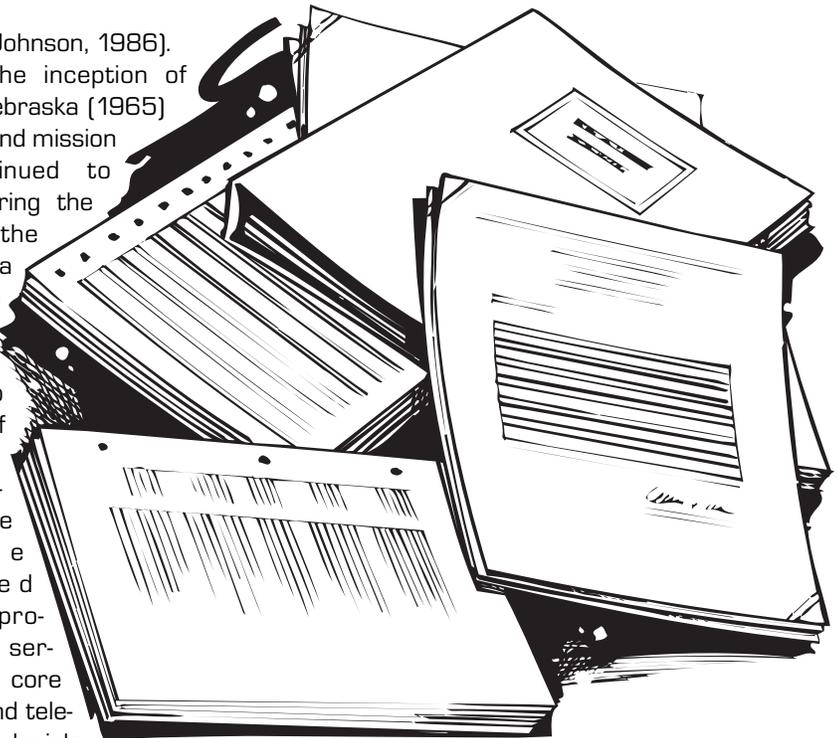
(Hedge & Johnson, 1986).

Since the inception of ESUs in Nebraska (1965) their role and mission has continued to evolve. During the 1990's the Nebraska legislature added telecomputing to the role of ESUs and a 1997 legislative change required ESUs to provide core services. The core services and telecomputing legislation has thrust ESU support into the heart of elementary and secondary education in this state.

What are the sources of revenue for ESUs?

In general, ESUs may: (1) levy up to one and one half cents in property tax;; (2) serve as flow through agencies for cooperative programs such as coop purchase; (3) consort grant funds; (4) contract with school districts for specialized services and personnel; (5) receive state core service and telecomputing dollars to fund staff development, technology, instructional materials and Internet infrastructure.

In order to assure that ESUs are responsive to local school district needs the state statute regarding core service dollars requires each ESU to annually acquire approval of a two-thirds majority vote of the school districts representing half of the student enrollment. This information can serve as a single measure of school district support for the services an ESU provides. Other data collection has yielded additional indicators of the effectiveness of ESUs in the state.



How do Nebraska superintendents view ESUs?

Recently, superintendents in the state of Nebraska were surveyed to determine their opinion of the effectiveness of ESUs and to identify the variables which affect those opinions. The results of two different studies indicate that school superintendents, regardless of school district size or location, view ESUs as effective. However, superintendents with greater tenure view ESUs as more effective than do superintendents with less tenure. Furthermore, superintendent opinions of effectiveness were influenced by ESU staff knowledge of regulatory requirements and subject area expertise, personnel relationships, leadership abilities and a strong work ethic (Beatty, 2001).

What is the improvement process for ESUs?

ESUs have a requirement to conduct a process similar to the School Improvement Process. As a part of this Continuous Improvement Process individual ESUs in the state collect data to

(continued on page 10)

NSDLAF+ NOTES #5

School Districts in Nebraska are actually able to plan and finance major capital improvements to facilities in two ways. First, districts may use a building fund which allows the accumulation of dollars from year to year until enough has been put aside to partially or fully pay for the plan improvements. Unfortunately, in 1966 the legislature chose to limit the ability of school districts to use this method of finance by requiring the building fund tax levy involved to be included in the amount allowed under a restrictive levy limitation.



The second method of acquiring the necessary funds to pay for major capital improvements involves the selling of bonds and using the proceeds. By extending the payment of bonds over a period of time several advantages occur. First of all, the repayment responsibility is spread among more or different taxpayers. Hence, if the repayment schedule extends for perhaps twenty years, the changeover in population using the facilities over this time will also have a responsibility for repayment of the cost of the project. Of course the second advantage for using bonds centers on the cost of borrowing money in relationship to the changing financial environment. Bonds sold during a time of poten-

tial rate escalation will mean the financing of facilities with cheaper dollars and lower impact on future taxpayers.

In any case, it is also important to invest the building fund or bond proceeds wisely during the accumulation or the actual construction phase of the project. In this way interest gained prior to payments on the project can be used to reduce bond indebtedness or to enhance the amount of revenue available. The experience and skill necessary in the investment of bond proceeds during construction should be a consideration just as the experience and skill of an underwriter or architect as the project began. In 1988 the Nebraska School District Liquid Asset Fund (NSDLAF+), through Ambac Securities, Inc., was developed for the purpose of assisting school districts, educational service units, and community colleges by providing skill and experience for important financial management functions.

Cliff Dale, Vice President
 Ambac Securities, Inc.
 (402) 483-1678 or
 cdale@ambacsecurities.com

UPCOMING EVENTS...

November 14-15

NASES/NDE Joint Meeting
 Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln
 For more information contact
 Angie
 angie@ncsa.org

November 18

Assistant Principals Conference
 Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln
 For more information contact
 Angie
 angie@ncsa.org

November 20-22

NASB/NASA State Convention
 Holiday Inn Central - Omaha
 Wednesday, November 20th
 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. -
 Preconference Workshops
 Thursday, November 21st
 8:15 a.m. to 5:20 a.m.
 Friday, November 22nd
 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m.

December 4

Legislative Preview
 Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln
 For more information contact
 Angie
 angie@ncsa.org

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

☞ **Crete Public Schools** passed a \$6.38 million bond issue.

☞ **Springfield Platteview High School** passed a \$6.45 million bond issue.

☞ **Gary Amen**, Superintendent, Pawnee City Public Schools announced his retirement end of 2002-03 school year.

☞ **Bob Hahn**, Principal of Papillion Junior High School announced his retirement end of the 2002-03 school year.

☞ **Joe Micanek**, Burwell Elementary School, announced his retirement effective December 31, 2002.

☞ **Don Wagner**, who has been named Interim Superintendent of Crawford Public Schools.

Please send announcements of retirements, recognition or special occasions to jerry@ncsa.org to share with the NCSA Family.



ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ESUs...

(continued from page 8)

further identify new services needed and to determine which services currently offered are viewed as effective, ineffective, or outdated. Surveys have long been a part of the data collection mechanism for ESUs. Most recently some ESUs have added focus groups and one-on-one interview information to their data collection approaches. Critical questions are designed to gain knowledge about the support or non-support for current programs offered, gather information on school district improvement goals, and garner educators' perspectives of programs and services that need to be provided in the future. An analysis of the information becomes the basis for goal setting within a given ESUs.

Where does the statewide data on content standards and assessment fit into the picture of accountability for ESUs?

From this perspective we have a whole new set of data to examine from which to accurately draw conclusions or admit that correlations do not exist. We have available to us, on a unit-wide basis

through the NDE website, student achievement scores, quality assessment ratings, and statewide reading and writing scores. If the original STARS plan stays in place we will eventually have scores reported in the areas of math, science, and social studies. The million dollar question is: How can ESUs accurately interpret the data, correlate the data to the processes used throughout the state, equate staff development activities to school outcomes, and yield viable conclusions on a state and unit wide basis that can be used to design and redesign quality support for schools in the area of content standards, assessment and accountability? No small task, but one that should pique our attention!

How will ESUs function as a statewide system of education?

Setting fear and competition aside, ESU administrators, as a group, have started their combined journey toward answering this very question and plan to move forward in analyzing ESU strengths and needs as a statewide sys-

tem. No challenge is too great, no future too baffling, if we see solutions as a result of collective thinking and mutual problem solving. We must continue to ask ourselves: What will it take to be able to discuss and find solutions to what matters most to us? From your perspective as administrators, we invite, encourage and embrace the insights regarding how ESUs might continue to develop quality services within a statewide system. From the urban to rural areas, from the educationally challenged to the high-ability learners, from the certified to the classified staff, from the probationary to the tenured teachers, from the novice to the experienced administrator we will continually seek to promote quality and to remain accountable for the services provided. In the process we vow to keep academic excellence and student achievement first and foremost in our minds. 🙌



TEN QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD DISCUSS WITH STAFF

A group of principals has recommended these ten questions that all staff members should be prepared to answer about your school:

- 1. What is the teacher-to-student ratio?
- 2. Does the school have a well-equipped and well-used library or media center?

- 3. Does the reading program balance whole language and phonics?
- 4. How are computers used for instruction?
- 5. What is the school's disciplinary policy?
- 6. What is the teaching philosophy? (Lecturing, group, individual, team?)
- 7. Do professional specialists support the school program?
- 8. How is student progress reported? (Grading practices, portfolios)

- 9. How often are textbooks and classroom materials reviewed and updated?

- 10. How can parents communicate directly with teachers (E-mail, voice mail, face-to-face outside school hours)?

Source: National Association of Elementary School Principals, cited by www.nhspra.org. 8/26/02]



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Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

- | | | |
|-------|--|----------|
| 6 | NAESP Region III, 3:00 p.m., Lifelong Learning Center | Norfolk |
| 8 | NAESP Region I, 12:00 noon, Chances R | York |
| 13 | NARSA Executive Board, 10:30 a.m., NCSA Offices | Lincoln |
| 13 | NASA Region V, 12:00 noon, Country Club | Alliance |
| 13 | NSASSP Region III, 2:00 p.m., ESU #8 | Neligh |
| 13 | NSASSP Region II, 5:30 p.m., German Am. Society | Omaha |
| 14 | NCSA Legislative Committee Meeting, 9:00-12:00
NCSA Offices | Lincoln |
| 14 | NSASSP Region I, 5:30 p.m., York Country Club | York |
| 14-15 | NASES/NDE Joint Conference, 1:00 p.m.,
Cornhusker Hotel | Lincoln |
| 18 | Assistant Principals Conference, 9:00 a.m.
Cornhusker Hotel | Lincoln |
| 20-22 | NASA/NASB State Convention, 1:00 p.m.,
Holiday Inn Central | Omaha |
| 20 | NASA Executive Board, 12:00 noon,
Holiday Inn Central | Omaha |
| 22 | NASA General Membership, 9:00 a.m.
Holiday Inn Central | Omaha |

DECEMBER

- | | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 4 | NCSA Legislative Preview, 8:30 a.m.
Cornhusker Hotel | Lincoln |
| 5 | NAESP Executive Board, 9:30 a.m.
LeRoy Hoehner Conf. Ctr (NCSA) | Lincoln |
| 11 | NASA Region V, 12:00 noon, Gaslight | Gering |

2003 NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

- AASA - February 20-23 - New Orleans, LA
- NASSP - February 21-24 - San Diego, CA
- ASCD - March 8-10 - San Francisco, CA
- NSBA - April 5-8 - San Francisco, CA
- NAESP - April 12-15 - Anaheim, CA



Happy Thanksgiving!

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