

HIGH LEVELS OF LEARNING

by Tim Hoffman, Director of Secondary Education, Bellevue Public Schools, NASA President



Hoffman

As your 2004-05 President of the Nebraska Association of School Administrators, I keep asking myself the question, "What can I do that will possibly improve student performance in the classrooms of our Nebraska schools?" I wish I would have picked an easier question to answer. I do have a longtime belief that is validated by at least some educational leaders today that I will try to share.

Many of us in the daily business of school leadership feel the majority of our time is occupied by the day to day opera-

tions and tasks of running a district or a school building. How do we improve student achievement in our districts with so little time left to dedicate to the task? Obviously, we all try to make every decision based on what is best for students in our schools. But how do we make our schools be focused on learning for students, teachers, and others who work in our buildings? We must change what drives instruction in the classroom to address achievement for all students in our schools. Everyone in our systems must know what to do if any student is not learning what we expect all students to know and be able to do.

Our schools must have a plan that

addresses the success of all students and our plan must be everyone's highest priority. If a student does poorly on any assessment, his/her teacher must have a plan that continues to support the learning process and provides time and instruction for the eventual success of that student. At the same time, this plan must continue to challenge all students toward greater academic and social success. If this plan was only as easy to carry out as I have made it sound, we would have left no child behind years ago.

As Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour tell us in their book, *Getting Started, Reculturing Schools to Become Professional Learning Communities*, this is a major shift in the culture of our schools. I believe our Nebraska schools have made great strides in answering "What do we really want students to know and be able to do?" and more recently, "How do we know when students have learned or mastered what we want them to?" The question we have rarely been able to answer is, "What is our plan for the students who have not

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HOW DO YOU MAKE SURE THE STUDENTS GET THEIR PROPER SERVING OF BEANS?

by Steve Baker, Assistant Superintendent, Elkhorn Public Schools

Like so many educators, my decision to become a teacher was simple. I had a passion for the subject matter. In my case this was music. I also had a deep love for children. That's why thirty years ago I accepted the offer to become the director of instrumental music with the Elkhorn Public Schools. Ten years into my career I had the opportunity to become an administrator; the assistant principal at Elkhorn High School. Although this position provided daily contact with students, the issues weren't quite as positive as I had experienced as the band director and I was provided the "opportunity" to meet many new students that I didn't even know attended EHS. Prior to that experience I thought discipline problems were students forgetting their instruments. Oh

how little I knew living in my sheltered bandroom at the other end of the building.

Fourteen years ago my career took me down a new path that presented the greatest professional challenges I have ever experienced. As the district's assistant superintendent, my primary responsibilities include budget management and overseeing the operations of the facilities, plus as one board member stated, "making the superintendent look good." Very early in my new career I was labeled the "bean counter." I vividly remember spending a few days with my predecessor; a man that had spent more than three decades doing what I was about to begin. Words and phrases such as TANs, ADM, ADA, heat pumps, boil-

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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.



CHARTING STARS FOLLOW-UP: DATA INFORMS DECISIONS

by Pat Roschewski, Director of Statewide Assessment

“You gotta have data.” The above phrase was spoken by a Nebraska educator in the past year and recorded as part of the Comprehensive Evaluation of STARS, Nebraska’s School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System. The educator was right. Schools and school districts collect data to make improvements in student learning, and so does the Nebraska Department of Education. Just like school districts, the NDE has collected data in each of the last three years to make continuous improvements in its system for standards, assessment, and accountability and in the way it serves Nebraska schools. The reports from all three evaluations are accessible through the NDE home page: www.nde.state.ne.us and

clicking on the STARS link from the menu on the left.

In the last issue of *NCSA Today*, Dr. Gallagher, the coordinator and principal investigator of the STARS evaluation shared a summary of the research team’s findings in the third year of the evaluation of STARS, Nebraska’s system for standards, assessment, and accountability. These data over the last three years plus all of the input provided by advisory groups, by educators throughout the state, by the educational service units, and all of the partners in this process have served to inform the decisions made at the Nebraska Department of Education and have resulted in changes, adjustments, and what we hope are improvements in the

process and in our support of schools. The State Board of Education and the Commissioner have insisted that STARS be built by and reflect and honor the professional judgment of Nebraska educators.

In fact, with the exception of decisions required by federal legislation, the decisions made in the last three years about STARS have been based on the data collected from the input of the evaluation and the interaction with Nebraska educators. The following decisions were made and actions adjusted and shaped with the help, input, support, and advice by teachers and administrators:

☞ **“Staying the course – consistency in approach”**

- Integrating NCLB into STARS
- Policy development protecting the work that has been done in Nebraska school districts

☞ **Improved communication**

- Multiple methods: electronic, written, broadcast, face-to-face
- One-on-One consultative visitations
- Accessibility and responsiveness from NDE staff
- Multiple advisory groups

☞ **Increased professional development**

- “Chats”
- Assessment literacy sessions – Stiggins and others
- Trait-based writing training cadre
- One-site scoring of statewide writing (with statewide scorers)
- Pre-portfolio Submission sessions
- Data Analysis sessions
- Panels sharing “Best Practices”
- “Assessment of the Assessments” training
- Focus on integrating assessment into the school improvement process

☞ **Streamlining/Readjustment of processes and requirements**

- 5th grade standards in science and social studies, optional 4th grade
- STAR Standards (Standards That Are Reported)
- Revision and adjustment of assessment and reporting schedule
- Sample portfolios
- Electronic portfolio submission
- Portfolio options, re-examinations, and “no submission” years (if the ratings are sufficiently high)

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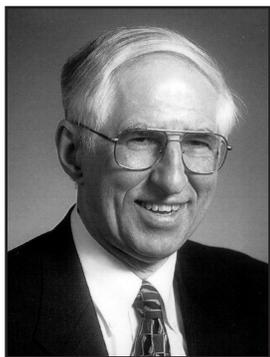
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PERSPECTIVES

by Jerry Sellentin, Ph.D., Executive Director



Sellentin

THANK GOD, IT'S MONDAY!

Yes, you read it correctly. Gallup research shows 75 percent of the workforce's approach to work is exemplified by the familiar "Thank God It's Friday" and regard their work as a mere job. However, there are so many administrators who love their work and find personal and professional fulfillment in their contribution to education.

As Leaders of Learning, you can make a positive difference in this year's Education Week's (Nov. 14-20) theme, "Celebrating the American Dream" by adopting the motto "Thank God It's Monday" every week of the year. William Butler Yeats writes, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." We need to keep the fire that Yeats writes about ablaze within ourselves and

challenge others in our schools with the enthusiasm and passion for learning.

I believe Steve Baker's article captures this concept well when he says, "Look at yourself in the mirror and know that you have made a huge difference in the life of a child that is our future."

Emerging Superintendent Workshop

If you are thinking of becoming a superintendent, I would encourage you to attend the Emerging Superintendent workshop on December 9th at the NCSA LeRoy Hoehner Conference Center.

Emerging Administrators

I'm sure at some time in your career someone suggested you should become an administrator. I would encourage you to suggest to a teacher who you know would be a strong administrator to attend the Emerging Administrators'

workshop on January 15 and January 22, 2005 at the NCSA LeRoy Hoehner Conference Center. Please contact Kelly at kelly@ncsa.org for registration information.

UPCOMING EVENTS...

November 9-10

Governor's Summit on Workforce Development

7:30 a.m.
Lincoln - Cornhusker Hotel
for more information:
www.NebraskaWorkforce.com

November 11-12

NASES/NDE Joint Meeting

1:00 p.m.
Lincoln - Cornhusker Hotel

November 15

Assistant Principals Conference

8:30 a.m.
Lincoln - Cornhusker Hotel

November 17-19

NASA/NASB State Convention

Omaha - Holiday Inn
for more information:
www.nebr-schoolboards.org

November 29

NASES Legislative Update

8:00 a.m.
Lincoln - Cornhusker Hotel

November 30

Legislative Preview

8:00 a.m.
Lincoln - Cornhusker Hotel

December 9

Emerging Superintendents Workshop

9:00 a.m.
Lincoln - NCSA Offices

For more information on any of these conferences or to register online please visit www.ncsa.org

NCSA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

October 20, 2004



- A final report was given on 2004 Administrators Days. Registration was 1006
- NCSA is completing the demolition of the property 1014 - 1020 K Street, west of the NCSA building for a parking lot
- NCSA reviewed [Section II of article VIII - Governance] of its By-Laws and directed staff to revise to incorporate the rules and regulations of the Nebraska Department of Education, purpose and standards of the Professional Practices Commission and the respective codes of ethics of national affiliate organizations
- Beginning with the 2004-2005 year, NCSA will conduct an audit every 3 years with a comprehensive review being done in the subsequent years by a CPA. The audit report was accepted by the board
- Jerry reported on the Information/ Communication Committee's first meeting.
- A plaque was presented to the NASBO Executive Board for recognition of financial support in updating the LeRoy Hoehner Conference Center with an audio visual system
- NCSA's 35th Anniversary Celebration was discussed
- A presentation was given on Early Childhood by David Ludwig, NAESP State Representative and Mary Drew, NAESP 2004 Distinguished Principal of the Year
- A presentation was given by Rex Schultze, Attorney for Perry, Guthery, Haase & Gessford on recent retirement issues



CLIMBING MOUNTAINS

by Barbara Heckathorn, Centennial Public Schools, President of NASES Region I

Last summer I climbed to the top of Mt. Mitchell near my daughter's home in North Carolina. The vista on that clear summer day was incredible. As I looked down the mountain, I could see clumps of trees and patches of grass scattered among rough, dark rocks, deep shadowy gullies, and steep rocky slopes. Looking out toward the horizon I could see for miles through the crystal clear sky. Now as I write this I can visualize autumn trekking down that mountainside, turning leaves to crimson and gold, relentlessly preparing the mountain for winter. Layers of deep snow would soon bury the gray rocks and soften the sharpness of the crags. And, just as surely as autumn creeps down the mountain, a few months hence, spring will crawl back to the top of the mountain revitalizing all things living as it melts snow on its journey to summer, once again revealing the rough, the sharp and the shadowy.

A few years ago the Public examined the view from the top of Mt. Education. A few looked out to see a most positive sight. Their view was of an increasing number of students taking ACT tests, a growing percentage of students receiving high school diplomas, and math and reading scores creeping upward. Many more looked down from the mountain and saw unsightly crags: students without equal educational opportunity, parents withdrawing their children into the crevices of home-schooling, issues of bullying, media claims of low standards, and issues of inequitable financing. On balance, public education was not perceived in a very positive light.

Public education exists, subject to the public's discretion. Two years ago Congress, responding to public discontent about education, enacted No Child Left Behind. Rarely in the history of this Nation has education experienced such an all-encompassing blanket of Federal Legislation.

Educators at both the state and local level have spent the last two years "digging out" from under this blanket. Nebraska teachers have been retrained

in the process of constructing valid and reliable assessments. Teachers have become adept at curriculum/assessment alignment. The data from those ongoing assessments will be used to drive classroom instruction. Once again we have our sights set on the summit of the mountain. The path we must take is neither straight nor smooth. We have encountered the jagged edges of English Language Learners. Boulders of low-scoring disaggregated groups have appeared. The gray shadows of a two-track system—one for the college bound and another for the rapidly growing numbers of children living in poverty with only a minuscule chance to attend college—cloud our system. Our trek back to the top of this mountain will not be an easy

trip, but then the path of little resistance is probably a path with few results. Even as we devise interventions to improve learning opportunities for all students, we must guard against taking a path that is so narrowly focused on the alignment of curriculum/assessment that has been carried over from the 20th century, that we neglect to engage in the debate over the broader question of "What are 21st century literacy skills?" I submit that students not only need equitable opportunities to learn today, they also must be provided opportunities to be engaged in a curriculum that is designed to be responsive to a world in transition and not re-tread of old curriculum. This trip to the top of the mountain promises to be extraordinary. 

HOW DOES OUR HEALTH PLAN WORK?

We all know that the cost of medical care is rising – we read about it in the paper, and most Americans have seen their own health insurance premiums, co-payments, and deductibles go up. Have you ever thought about why health care costs are rising, or what you might do to help keep costs in check? If you're like most people who have health insurance coverage, you probably haven't. Understanding the basics of how health insurance works and how to make the most of your own health plan can help keep health care affordable for you and all Americans.

Health insurance companies use historical data and analysis to predict the medical expenses for any given group of individuals (for example our EHA) and use this as the basis for setting health insurance premiums. They need to set premiums high enough to cover the expected cost of health care claims, but low enough to be competitive and affordable. However, national health care expenditures are expected to nearly double over the next ten years. That's largely due to increased use and cost of pre-

scription drugs, advances in medical technology and treatments and the increased use of those medical treatments.

As the demand for medical services has increased, it increases the cost for everyone in our health plan. These rising costs are passed on to our company in the form of increased premiums. Insurance companies are working with employers to adjust services offered, as well as co-payments and deductibles, to minimize the impact of rising costs. We all know we'll pay more – but there are things we can do to help control how quickly health care costs rise.

Taking time to understand your health plan can help save health care dollars for you and for all Americans. Make sure you understand your plan benefits as you work with your doctor. For example, many health plans offer a reduced co-payment if you choose FDA-approved generic prescription drugs. Because the average total cost of a generic drug is three times less than the brand name, it helps keep costs down for everyone in your health plan. 

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Kim Peterson, State Board of Education

“A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the type of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove...but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”

Who hasn't heard this commonly used quote or seen it on a multitude of products to buy—from t-shirts to key chains, pillows to bumper stickers? As I reflect on my years of service on the State Board of Education, and nearly ten years as a state licensed family child care provider, I am reminded that what we do really does impact the lives of children across our state on a daily basis. We may not realize it as we are doing our important work, the seemingly endless tasks that encompass the profession of educating children of all ages, but we do make a difference!

When I was first asked to submit an article for this publication, I struggled with what to write. We hear over and over again about essential education, NCLB and various other policy issues – almost in ad nauseam. Hopefully, the opening quote coupled with the following personal story will help remind all of us of the important role we play in the educational process.

I have seen first hand how administrators and teachers make a difference in the lives of their students, at times probably not even realizing the lasting impact they are having on those students. This past May, I was at the wake service for Joe Chase, a 35-year veteran of the Omaha Public School system as both a teacher and later, an administrator. It came at the time in the wake service where people could come forward to share their memories of Joe. After a moment of everyone wondering who might come up, a woman proceeded to the front of the chapel.

I was sitting with Joe's family, and we all looked at each other as if one of us would know whom this person was coming forward. She steps up to speak, nervously at first as she doesn't know anyone else there, and tells us a touching story about how she was an English student of Mr. Chase's nearly thirty years ago at OPS. She spoke from the heart about how she had developed a love of reading that she directly attributed from having Joe as her teacher so many years ago—a love of reading that she has now passed down to her own children.

She wanted to let those attending know just how much of an impression

Joe had made in her life as a result of his teaching. She had not stayed in touch with her teacher from so many years before, but upon learning of his passing, felt compelled to attend the service to reflect upon how he had touched her life as a student. Not only did Joe's love for his profession affect the multitude of students that he taught, he has now indirectly touched the lives of future generations. This woman's courage to get up in front of a chapel full of strangers made a lasting impact on many people who attended the wake service. Very few professions can claim to have the same life-long effect on individuals that education does!

It is inspiring personal stories like this, that remind me just how important the task of educating Nebraska's students is. The work you do every day is crucial to the success of our students, and ultimately, the success of our great state. Though I'm sure there are times when you would rather be doing something besides filling out paperwork, attending meetings or any of the other multitude of responsibilities you have as an administrator and educator, just remember — you will make the world a better place because you were important in the life of your students!

Nebraska Schoolmasters Club Announcing... 2004-2005 • \$1000 Schoolmasters Scholarship

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 principalship endorsement, and one for a candidate gaining qualification as a superintendent.

Please read the criteria and consider this excellent opportunity

Qualifications/Selection criteria:

- Be teaching or administering in a Nebraska Department of Education approved school
- Hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university
- Make application and be accepted in a graduate program for a master's degree in educational administration or an endorsement for the superintendency
- Fully intend to seek an administration 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 positions held in current or former positions**

Application deadline - February 14, 2005



TORNADO RECOVERY 101

by Roy Baker, Norris Superintendent

My wife and I took shelter in our basement the fateful night of the F4 tornado that struck the Norris schools on Saturday, May 22. We monitored the progress of the storms on the TV in my basement weight room. When I stepped outside to take a look around, it was pouring, yet stiflingly hot. I had an uneasy feeling about the night. Shortly after 10:00 p.m., our director of maintenance called me on his cell phone from the parking lot of the school. Keith had been called by emergency officials who had disaster victims from Hallam on their way over to use the Norris Schools as a mass care shelter. With no electricity, the school grounds were enshrouded in darkness, but as Keith shone his headlights on the southwest corner of the High School, he could see that the auditorium was simply gone. Given the strength of a tornado needed to tear off the roof of the auditorium and flatten the walls, I had a sinking feeling that at a minimum, the roofs would be off all our buildings, a premonition that proved to be true.

I quickly called all of our administrative team and board members I could reach, and left a message for those not at home that our schools had been hit by the tornado. Several of us went out to the school campus and surveyed the incredible damage with headlights and flashlights. Assistant Superintendent Galen Boldt and I made an incursion into the High School building and found water and debris everywhere, and evidence of structural damage. Things looked even more sobering in the daylight Sunday morning.

I spent the rest of the night Saturday thinking of the people that I would contact the next day, and began formulating a plan. The Hershey-Blanchard model of situational leadership came to mind, and it clicked in with me that in an extreme crisis such as this, authoritarian leadership is not only okay, it is most appropriate. While we have one of the best administrative teams anywhere, and while we are blessed with great board members, we could not afford to be heading off in different directions. There

was going to be just one quarterback in the huddle, and I deemed that the best person to be in charge would be me. I also knew that it was critically important to quickly establish and maintain good communications with our staff, board, and community.

We held an emergency board meeting in my kitchen on Sunday morning at 9:00. By that time I had made calls to contractors, John Bonaiuto re ALICAP insurance, and others. We laid out the rudiments of the plan that we have ended up following closely over time. Our legal counsel, Rex Schultze, put the steps in motion for the board to enact the Emergency Management Act (81-829.36 to .75) which enabled us to bypass normal bidding requirements. We were also allowed to amend our budget and exceed the budget limitations. The board passed a resolution authorizing me as superintendent, and my designees, to enter into any and all contracts and agreements necessary to expedite the reconstruction and equipping of our school facilities.

It times of crises, there is never too much communication. The administrative team met with staff periodically at a community church. We rounded up home email addresses, and began sending out late-night updates daily at first, tapering off in frequency as the days and weeks went by. I also wrote a weekly article for the local newspaper as one avenue of keeping the patrons of the district updated. As soon as we procured generator power and could get the District's servers up and running, we put out regularly updated pictures and updates on our web site. The TV, radio, and print media all took a high interest in our story, and we were happy to work with them to put out good information to the public. We established good relationships with the media, and perhaps as a result, virtually every story that went out had a positive, feel-good spin. Ours was a story of a school and community that pulled together after adversity, and of a speedy, near-miraculous recovery. The facts that school had let out for the summer the day before, and that no one was

killed or injured at our school, made it possible for our people to quickly work through the grieving process and to adopt an upbeat mental state of mind about our prospects of rapid recovery.

Every square inch of our school buildings were impacted. All rooms were totally gutted and new interiors, lights, and wiring installed. In several areas, walls needed to be rebuilt and new roof structures put in place. Through outstanding work on the part of Sampson Construction, we were able to start school on September 7, the day after Labor Day. We have rented twelve portable classrooms, each with two classrooms, to augment the spaces in our buildings that we were able to complete by September 7. The arrangement has been quite satisfactory, given the circumstances. During the month of November, we will be able to move back into all the other areas of the buildings with the exception of the auditorium, which has a May 1 completion target date.

Total damages will exceed \$25,000,000. The insurance company has treated us fairly, and in many cases has given us the benefit of the doubt. Serendipitous opportunities presented themselves following the tornado. The district was facing around \$3 million in updating costs over the next five to seven years that have now been taken care of by the insurance company, including replacement of all of the rooftop units on our all-electric schools, a fire suppression sprinkler system for the high school, all new roofs, new gym flooring, carpeting, lights, wiring, voice over IP telephone system, seven new buses, replacement of small vehicles, and more. We also are taking the opportunity to reach into our own reserves and expand the band room, auditorium, bus barn, and have upgraded all our outdoor structures. The students, staff, and patrons of the Norris School District have been wonderful throughout. The common view is that our District will emerge stronger and even better than before the tornado. We thank our colleagues across the state for your support and offers of help. 

AN EDUCATION AGENDA FOR THE NEXT PRESIDENT

by James O'Hanlon and Doug Christensen

It wasn't that many years ago that educators complained that the political world ignored the education world. It is far from the case now. In fact, it's difficult to tell today whether politics is embedded in education or education in politics.

Without question, our president for 2005 through 2009 will have a focus on education as one of his most important agendas. As educators, we want nothing more than to have the president be successful in his efforts to improve the quality of education our youth receive. What follows is our definitely unsolicited advice for how the president can develop an agenda that will have a lasting, positive effect on our schools.

• Recommendation No. 1: Take No Child Left Behind to the next level.

NCLB is based on the sound premise that schools will improve if there are targets at which to aim and accountability for success in so doing. Its weakness is that it is based currently on a one-size-fits-all compliance paradigm. This may have been the necessary starting point, but it will not get us to every school working for improvement.

The next level for NCLB is to maintain the focus on accountability but broaden the definition to include both planning for improvement and reporting results. This will allow states and school districts to set goals that will lead to the most improvement in student performance. Every school should be responsible for documenting that it is carrying out a school improvement plan on a continuing basis as well as demonstrate that improvement of achievement has occurred.

• Recommendation No. 2: Provide federal funds through grants to states.

Funding decisions being made for the whole country in Washington inevitably will ignore local needs and opportunities and thus be limited in their ability to improve schools. It is the states that are in the best position to know how to use federal funds most effectively.

Historically, federal funding has been provided through many different and rarely coordinated programs. They often do not take local situations into consideration with the result that well-intentioned programs do not achieve what they could. Providing overall grants based on statewide school improvement plans, including specific targets for student achievement, will enable the development of coordinated, long-term programs and greater student success.

• Recommendation No. 3: Focus the audit of the use of federal funds on the results of the state's school improvement programs.

Regardless of how federal funds are allocated for the support of education, there must be some kind of audit of their use. Historically the emphasis on auditing the use of federal funds has been through financial accounting rather than attention to educational outcomes achieved. This puts the emphasis in the wrong place.

If federal funds were provided according to a state-approved plan for school improvement, the audit of their use then could be on the outcomes of that plan. This would reduce the financial accounting tasks and direct the audit to how well targets were reached and how funds were used to do so.

• Recommendation No. 4: Support research on implementing best practices in schools.

More is known about best practices than is carried out in schools. The current administration has emphasized the need for research-based programs. This emphasis should be broadened to include studies about how to implement best practices to have maximum effect on student learning.

• Recommendation No. 5: Be a cheerleader for teachers and administrators.

The "education establishment" currently receives a lot of bashing at the fed-

eral level. This bashing is very counter-productive. Our schools are staffed by tens of thousands of highly dedicated professionals who work diligently to produce student success at high levels.

The important work in the schooling of our children and youth always will be done by educators who see students on a day-to-day basis. Not considering their voice to be important will surely result in the failure of any agenda. Political criticism of our educators and our schools will neither improve them nor result in higher achievement for our students. Programs that support the work of teachers will.

Rowing and Steering

Our recommendations are all do-able. They build on current federal education practices. The president and federal government, states, local school districts and educators are all after the highest quality education for our children and youth. That can best be accomplished by being partners with each doing the work it does best.

Some things can be accomplished at the federal level—setting directions and high expectations, providing funding that supports these directions and expectations, publicizing results and jaw-boning. But if the needed culture of reinvention is to thrive in our schools the federal government can only steer the education boat; it cannot row. The rowing must be left to those in the states and local schools who are doing the work.

We hope the next president will establish an education agenda that will steer us to greater success in our schools. Certainly the need for high quality education has never been greater in this country and it will take the committed effort of all to meet that need.

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FLSA

by Kelley Baker, Attorney, Harding Schultz & Downs

The Department of Labor's revisions to the regulations of the Fair Labor Standards Act (Act) took effect on August 23, 2004. The Department attempted to bring the regulations up to date by modernizing the definitions of employees who are exempt from the Act such as executives, administrators, professionals and computer employees. The regulations replace the outdated 30-year-old tests for minimum salaries and 55-year-old tests for duties of exempt employees.

Though the changes to the regulations will have only a modest effect on school districts, their greatest value may be to focus administrators' and board members' attention on complying with the Act's general requirements regarding the payment of minimum wage and overtime. The Act and regulations are often more complex than they appear, and administrators and school boards should consult with a specialist in the Act when making judgments about the classification and compensation of employees as exempt or non-exempt under the new regulations.

Essential Requirements. The Act requires employers to pay employees minimum wage and overtime unless they are exempt from the Act. To be exempt, an employee must (1) be paid a salary of at least \$455 per week (up from \$155) and (2) perform certain duties (described below) that vary with the type of position.

Learned Professionals. The learned professional exemption applies to teachers and some other employees such as school psychologists, registered nurses, and athletic trainers. To be exempt as a learned professional, an employee must be a person whose:

- Primary duty is work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction.

To be exempt as a teacher, an employee must be a person whose:

- Primary duty is teaching, tutoring, instructing, or lecturing in the activity of imparting knowledge and who is employed and engaged in this activity as

a teacher in an educational establishment.

Though the Department changed the definition of this test very little, it removed the requirement of consistent exercise of discretion and judgment.

Executive Employees. The executive employee exemption usually applies to department supervisors of classified employees such as office managers, custodial and maintenance supervisors, transportation managers, and food service managers. To be exempt as an executive, an employee must be a person whose:

- Primary duty is management of the enterprise in which the employee is employed or of a customarily recognized department or subdivision thereof;

- Customarily and regularly directs the work of two or more other employees; [this may be on a full-time equivalency basis] and

- Has the authority to hire or fire other employees or whose suggestions and recommendations as to the hiring, firing, advancement, promotion or any other change of status of other employees are given particular weight.

Employees who spend more than half their time performing exempt work are usually exempt. Those who spend less than half their time on exempt work may be exempt depending on (1) the relative importance of the exempt duties compared to other duties, (2) the time spent on exempt work, (3) the employee's relative freedom from supervision, and (4) the relationship of the employee's salary to the wages paid to other employees performing the same kind of nonexempt work. The Department broadened the definition of "management" to include "planning and controlling the budget" and "monitoring or implementing legal compliance measures." The Department defined "particular weight" broadly in the context of school districts and wrote: "...although state law may vest the school board with the exclusive authority to discharge an employee, such an action is precipitated by a department supervisor who evaluates the employee's performance and recommends the action and the superintendent's recom-

mendations to the board is based on the department supervisor's recommendations."

Administrative Employees. The administrative employee exemption usually applies to school administrators, business managers, human resource directors, etc. To be exempt as an administrator, an employee must be a person whose:

- Primary duty is the performance of office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers; and,

- Primary duty includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance.

The Department did not change the definition of an administrative employee much, and the changes should have little effect on school districts. Most academic administrative employees are already explicitly exempt. The requirement that administrative employees exercise discretion and judgment "with respect to matters of significance" is new. There is no clear definition of matters of significance" and the test may be difficult to apply to some employees.

Computer Employees. The computer employee exemption combines statutory and regulatory wording from the past 14 years, and the new regulations differ little from the former requirements. To be exempt as a computer employee, a person must be paid at least \$455 per week in salary or \$27.63 on an hourly basis and be a person whose primary duty consists of:

1. The application of systems analysis techniques and procedures, including consulting with users, to determine hardware, software or system functional specifications;

2. The design, development, documentation, analysis, creation, testing or modification of computer systems or programs, including prototypes, based on and related to user or system design specifications;

3. The design, documentation, testing, creation or modification of computer programs related to machine operating systems; or

4. A combination of the aforementioned duties, the performance of which

[continued on page 10]]

PROPER SERVING OF BEANS...

(continued from page 1)

ers, pneumatic controls flowed from his lips much like I used to speak of the proper way to perform a John Phillip Sousa march. I found myself alone, overwhelmed by what I didn't know, and for the first time in my career, I was distanced from the students.

To date I have survived and know just enough about heat pumps and boilers to be dangerous. You wouldn't want me to try and fix a circulating pump that has a bad bearing, but I do know whom to call to get it fixed. Many of the lessons I've learned that deal with the "mechanics" of the job have been taught by colleagues that have far more knowledge and experience than I do. One of the most wonderful experiences of my position has been getting to know other bean counters and sharing challenges and victories.

The mechanics of this position can be contrasted with the knowledge it takes to teach a particular subject. Any principal will verify that knowledge of subject matter does not make for a great teacher. Passion to teach without passion for the children does not alone equate to becoming a master teacher. Consequently the ability to count beans does not necessary result in the desire to serve the beans. The challenge many of us face is making the connection between counting beans and serving beans. If that love for children that drove me to become a teacher is still present, then my daily focus must be upon making sure the students receive a proper serving of beans. I would like to offer a few suggestions on how I try to connect my daily decisions with the children while still keeping a careful eye on that ever-decreasing jar of beans.

Most central office administrators were once classroom teachers, but sometimes it's easy to take our eyes off the students and get so wrapped up in the budget, lids, increasing or decreasing enrollments, the need to RIF teachers, this little matter of NCLB and state standards, what those folks in Lincoln are going to do to us this year, or a petition drive to fire the head football coach. When the pressure mounts I offer this advice from a golden oldies love song,

"Try to Remember". Try to remember why you became an educator in the first place. The decisions we make DO have a direct impact upon the students. The recommendation to the board of education to purchase a new language arts



curriculum or make that school bus run for one more year and delay the purchase of a new vehicle is not an easy one, but perhaps becomes a little more focused if we remember the faces of the children. For this example there is no simple solution. If the bus is unsafe the decision is obvious, but unless that's the situation we must carefully evaluate how to get the most beans on the student's plates.

Need some help remembering? Perhaps you're one of those seasoned administrators and your own children are grown up and left the nest. If this is the case, go sit in a kindergarten class for an hour. Take the time to read to a group of elementary students or speak with a high school economics class about those tough budget decisions you must make and ask them for advice. If you're feeling really brave help supervise a middle school lunch period. Although thirty years in education qualifies me as being seasoned, some might say ripe, my wife and I are blessed with an eleven-year-old son. I see the face of one of those students eating the beans we serve everyday.

We must consistently see the connection between our decisions and the

students. For example, on my desk is a very powerful computer. From it I can control the temperature of every classroom in the school district. If I'm only a "bean counter," this winter when gas rates sky rocket I might be tempted to drop the set point to 60 degrees. After all, doesn't everyone own a sweater? However, if I'm also a "bean server" my decision will focus not only on the jar of beans, but also on those eating the beans.

A second bit of advice is don't try to be the only one that serves the beans. Surround yourself with competent caring principals and then empower them to make budgetary decisions. In Elkhorn each of our principals manages an instructional budget. In almost every situation the principal makes the decision on how these funds are spent. These are the professionals that see the students daily and are the best equipped to decide how to serve the beans in their school.

There are likely some central office administrators reading this article that were growing hungrier by the minute with all this talk about beans, but suddenly lost their appetite. "You don't know my principal" might be the words muttered as he or she ponders a requisition to purchase blue bowling balls while bowling is not a part of the physical education curriculum. How can I trust that judgment?

Early on as a teacher, then as an assistant principal I learned some basic principles for working with people of all ages. I believe people will always respond to honesty and clear expectations. Students need to know what the rules are, how they will be graded and when the assignment is due. They then need a teacher that follows through with these expectations. Likewise, administrators need to work with their staff and board of education with complete honesty and clear expectations. Who knows, maybe those blue bowling balls are for teaching Newton's law of motion in a high school physics class.

The challenges facing your district are very likely different than those of your colleagues in neighboring districts. Some of us face rapid growth while others must decide which school to close or

(continued on page 10)



SOWING THE SEEDS FOR CHANGE: COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP, PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES, AND THE STRATEGIC USE OF DATA—BREAKING RANKS II

The idea for comprehensive change may not begin in the principal's office, but it most assuredly can end there either through incomplete planning, failure to involve others, neglect, or failure to create conditions that allow a new order of things to emerge in the high school. Creating those conditions is often the first challenge—and sometimes it must start within the principal's own thinking and interactions with people.

Recommendation:

1. The principal will provide leadership in the high school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction, and focus for student learning

2. Each high school will establish a site council and accord other meaningful roles in decision making to students, parents, and members of the staff to promote student learning and an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and

ownership

3. A high school will regard itself as a community in which members of the staff collaborate to develop and implement the school's learning goals

4. Teachers will provide the leadership essential to the success of reform, collaborating with others in the educational community to redefine the role of the teacher and to identify sources of support for that redefined role

5. Every school will be a learning community for the entire community. As such, the school will promote the use of Personal Learning Plans for each educator and provide the resources to ensure that the principal, teachers and other staff members can address their own learning and professional development needs as they relate to improved student learning

6. The school community will promote policies and practices that recognize diversity in accord with the core values

of a democratic and civil society and will offer substantive ongoing professional development to help educators appreciate issues of diversity and expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives and experiences

7. High schools will build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance and evaluation of educators

8. High schools will develop political and financial relationships with individuals, organizations and businesses to support and supplement educational programs and policies

9. At least once every five years, each high school will convene a broadly based external panel to offer a Public Description of the school, a requirement that could be met in conjunction with the evaluations of state, regional, and other accrediting groups. 

PROPER SERVING OF BEANS...

(continued from page 9)

when to consolidate. Some districts have budget authority but no levy authority. There are districts with the greatest need to pass a bond issue and the least amount of community support, while we have communities that respond more favorably to a lesser need. Yes, we are all different...yet we are also the same.

Our sole reason for existence is identical, the students. I also believe we have a united purpose for becoming educators. We care about children! The statement that the children are our future is far more than a clever saying, it is a truth we hold close to our hearts.

Beginning around the first of the calendar year we enter the whine season. We will be tempted to whine about state aid, lids, negotiations, health insurance increases, the CIR, a new board of education member or two that wants to make sweeping changes, unreasonable

parents and patrons, how the press is covering state standards and many additional topics.

Let me close with this thought. The reality is we won't have as many beans in our jars as needed to provide the educational opportunities we know are best for our students. There will always be those in the community and on the staff that will not agree with every decision we make. There are groups we can attempt to influence, but will never be able to control. What you do control is how you approach these truths and more important, how you respond to them. Keep your eyes upon the students and make decisions that place the most beans on their plates. Then look at yourself in the mirror and know that you have made a huge difference in the life of a child that is our future. 

FSLA

(continued from page 8)

requires the same level of skills.

The Department eliminated the requirement that computer employees consistently exercise discretion and judgment and perform work requiring theoretical and practical application of highly-specialized knowledge. The regulations point out that employees who manufacture or repair computer equipment or whose work is highly dependent on, or facilitated by, the use of computers and software programs are not exempt as computer professionals.

School districts throughout the nation have been sued in the past few years for violations of the Act, and the awards and settlements have been in the tens of millions of dollars. Schools should use the issuance of the new Act's regulations to review their classification and payment practices to make sure they are in compliance. 



CONGRATULATIONS TO...

☞ **Mary Jane Tonjes**, Bertrand Community School, 2004 Paraeducator of the Year

☞ **Cindy Mittan**, Beatrice Middle School, 2004 Paraeducator of the Year

☞ **Brenda Zabel**, Westside High School, 2005 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

☞ **Kathryn Gifford**, Kearney High School, Finalist 2005 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

☞ **Susan Goochey**, Burwell Elementary, Finalist 2005 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

☞ **Karen Hastings**, Westridge Middle School, Grand Island, Finalist 2005 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

☞ **Mark Wragge**, Principal, Fillmore Central, on being named the NAESP Outstanding New Principal of the Year

☞ **Larry Bornschlegl**, Retired Principal at Hastings Middle School, on being named the NSASSP Distinguished Service Award Winner

☞ **Bill Heimann**, Principal, Wakefield High School, on being named the NSASSP Outstanding New Principal of the Year

Retirements:

☞ **Richard Stephens**, Superintendent, Boone Central Schools, effective as of July 1, 2005

☞ **Don Pieper**, Superintendent, Dorchester Public Schools, effective as of July 1, 2005

☞ **Duane Tappe**, Administrator, ESU 15, effective as of July 1, 2005

NSASSP Longevity Awards 2004

15 year award

Chuck Francis

Rick Johnson

Kevin Kirwan

Kevin Madsen

Jerry Riibe

Roger Severson

John Weitzel

20 year award

Jerry Bexten

Blaine Friesen

Gene Hobart

Steve Joekel

Kent Mann

Dave Melick

Gale Retzlaff

25 year award

Mike Harvey

30 year award

Dan Seifried

NAESP Longevity Awards 2004

25 Year

Bob Bruckner

Tom Hain

Mike McPherron

Richard Kaiser

20 Year

Nicholas Blake

Rhonda Gdowski

Bernard Gordon

Dave Strong

15 Year

Jennifer Drahota

Harriet Gould

Drew Heady

Jim Jeffres

Mary Lieske

Joli Munch

Ron Parks

Candy Spurzem

Roxy Voorhees

Patricia Zeimet

NSDLAF+ NOTES #19

The creation of Nebraska statutes to allow cooperation among governmental units has resulted in a variety of benefits. While the fiscal advantages of such activities are usually obvious, a more important result may be the enhanced communication and pooling of expertise on common issues. For example, a cooperative between a local school district and the local power agency resulting in the school district gaining utility planning guidance will have a long term result in energy efficiency. By the same token, savings in energy benefit the utility provider in lessening the need for capital expansion.

Using a similar premise the Nebraska School District Liquid Asset Fund (NSDLAF+), formed in 1988 under the inter-local cooperation provisions, has also resulted in enabling a collective of school districts and Educational Service Units to utilize the financial management assistance of a large financial advisory firm. Local boards have realized the benefits when administrative personnel change allows the district to have in place a consistent on-line financial management tool with the accompanying expertise provided.

For information on the benefits to your school district, educational service unit or community college for participation in NSDLAF+, contact Cliff Dale, Senior Marketing Representative, PFM Asset Management LLC, 402-483-1678, or dalec@pfm.com 

SYMPATHY

☞ **Clint Kimbrough**, Superintendent, Humboldt Table Rock Steinhauer Unified School District #7, on the death of his father

☞ **Laurie Kimbrough**, Principal, Humboldt Table Rock Steinhauer, Unified School District #7 on the death of her father-in-law

☞ **Jessie Myles**, Multicultural Education Director, Nebraska Department of Education on the death of his sister

☞ **Kirk Gottschalk**, Principal, Nemaha Valley Schools on the death of his mother



CHARTING STARS FOLLOW-UP...

(continued from page 2)

☞ Continuous monitoring and evaluation of portfolio review

- Outside evaluations of the portfolio review process
- Involving Nebraska educators annually in the review
- Improving and videotaping the portfolio reviewer training

Based on the third year report shared with the State Board of Education in August, the Nebraska Department of Education will be using that data to inform its upcoming decisions and determine next steps. What can educators expect of STARS in the future? One need only examine the data to see the action plans that are underway. Nebraska educators can anticipate that NDE's action steps will be focused on the following findings and recommendations:

- 1) Continue to focus professional development offerings for teachers and principals on working with data.
- 2) Use local talent to model the building of data processes and the integration of data into K-12 school improvement, involving all staff in the district.
- 3) Continue to educate various constituencies about the nature and purposes of STARS.
- 4) Partner with schools to experiment with alternate, creative uses of time.
- 5) Continue to assist districts in developing assessment of the highest possible quality.
- 6) Target assessment literacy opportunities for all educators but especially those teachers and administrators in the middle and high school grades.
- 7) Continue working with the measurement community to develop appropriate metrics for the kind of data generated by STARS.
- 8) Retain focus on multiple assessment measures and teach districts the process for determining sufficiency in assessment.
- 9) Sponsor a "Leaders of Learning" council to promote the role of leaders in learning.
- 10) Conduct an evaluation of the NDE to determine its capacity to support

schools in their work.

The last four years have been filled with challenges and triumphs. Much progress has been made but much remains to be done. Just like Nebraska school districts, the "next steps" of improvement cannot be made without first collecting the data and then analyzing it, determining the answers to three questions:

What do we see in the data? (factual)

What might this mean? (hypothesis)

What are we going to do about it? (action steps)

With the help of Dr. Gallagher and the research team, much of the analysis has been done. What remains are the action steps toward improvement. Many of the next steps are already underway and others remain to be accomplished. Dr. Gallagher indicates in his report the conversations across Nebraska have changed. In the first year of the study (2001-02) he said, educators were asking, "Why do we have to do this?" In year two of the study (2002-03) the educators were asking "Can it work?" In the third year of the study (2003-04) Nebraska educators were asking, "How can we make it work for us?" As we enter this next year, NDE would ask Nebraska educators to help identify the appropriate answers to the question, "How can we improve STARS?" Standards, assessment, and accountability are here to stay. What we make of it is up to the educators and policy makers working collaboratively throughout the state.

Nebraska educators can anticipate that their efforts will continue to be honored and their work meet both state and federal requirements. Emphasis will be placed on data and its use in school improvement, leadership of learning, professional development and assessment literacy. Educators can anticipate a strengthened emphasis on all-staff involvement in K-12 school improvement efforts: curriculum, assessment, instruction, and data analysis.

Data is important; data analysis provides a roadmap for improvement, but a system's collective response to the data is what makes a difference. Such is true as the NDE and districts respond to data whether it is about Nebraska's STARS or

data about the performance of Nebraska's students. Only through the partnership of our efforts can we truly improve and make progress toward the goals each of us has as Nebraska educators: equitable opportunities and successful outcomes for all Nebraska students. 

HIGH LEVELS OF LEARNING...

(continued from page 1)

learned or mastered what we expect of all students?" Too often these students are left behind without a plan. Educators must value the success of all children the same as they value the success of their own children. Every teacher should be able to share his/her plan, as well as the school's plan, for each student's academic success.

This plan must be about student learning, not just about teaching lessons. Educators must put their plan for learning as the highest priority in their classroom and their schools. Our challenge as school leaders is to place student achievement (learning) for all students as our top priority. We need to be administrators of learning for our communities. By doing so we must provide the teachers and staff of our schools with the resources to ensure all students are learning at high levels.

One of these resources is time. The fact is we all have the same amount of time to budget daily. We must decide if we will use our time to educate some of our students or all of our students. We must dedicate time to our highest priorities first and then fill in the schedule gaps with our other tasks. Teachers must be given the resources to support all students. We must support teachers and schools as they design and carry out their plans for the success of all the students, not just those that were successful on their first or second attempt.

My hope is that we all do something that improves the performance of each student in the classrooms of our communities. I believe that if learning remains our focus, we will be celebrating a successful year in the summer of 2005. 

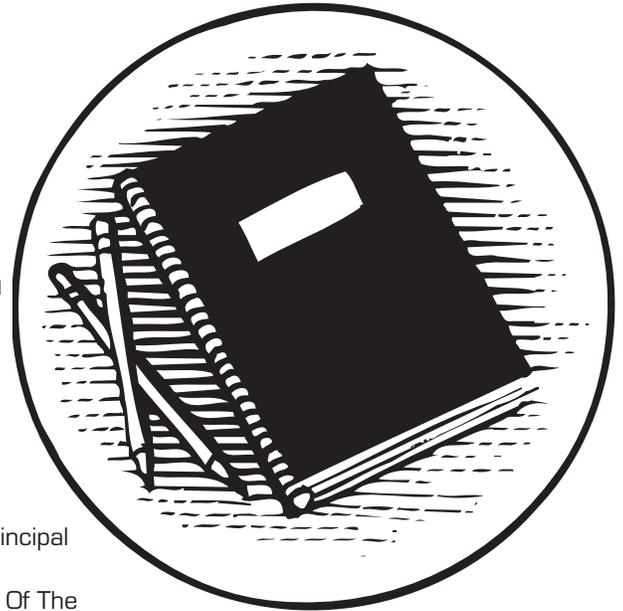
Book Review by Ron Joekel

EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS: POSITIVE PRINCIPLES AT WORK

written by James O'Hanlon and Donald O. Clifton

Scarecrow Education Press, ISBN 1-57886-132-2 (2004)

www.scarecroweducation.com



As one might expect, the book presents a theme of effective principals that resemble highly efficient business managers in their adherence to the tenets of positive psychology, and their competitiveness, optimism, and reflective nature account for much of their success.

The following tenets of "positive psychology" have been identified by the Gallup Organization from case studies of effective managers:

- Building on success gets greater return on investment than working to eliminate failure.
- Building works better than fixing.
- Basing your work on a concept of the "good life" leads to success.
- Investing in others makes you feel good.
- Responding to positivism is more natural for people than responding to Negativity.
- Working to broaden and build people leads them to have more and better ideas.
- Building positive emotions in the organization broadens and builds personal resources of the organization's members.

The authors conducted a series of interviews of principals in focus groups and also via telephone interviews with selected principals identified by NASSP and NAESP professional organizations. Data from this group was compared with a sample of principals in Nebraska, to determine if there were real differences in how principals work. Both approaches documented that the principals studied were in fact a special group.

The data obtained is presented in nine chapters with the following headings:

1. Does It Make A Difference?
2. What's The Day Of A Principal Like?
3. What's The Effective Principal Like?
4. What Guides The Work Of The Principal?
5. What's Most Important To Effective Principals?
6. What Do Effective Principals Celebrate?
7. How Do Effective Principals Deal With Adversity?
8. What Makes The Effective Principal Feel Successful?
9. Can You Find An Effective Principal For Your School?

A series of examples are presented in each chapter to illustrate the points the authors are making. Practicing Principals can identify with the examples and the data addressing each of the questions posed by the chapters heading. It will be reassuring to principals that what the authors found in their study supports previous research on characteristics of effective principals. For example, the Effective Schools Research identified the role of the School Principal as a major component in effective schools. There are a plethora of leadership studies focusing on the characteristics of leaders that present similar findings.

A quick read of 74 pages, the book is packed with good data that will help every practicing principal feel good about

themselves if they fit the descriptions! I especially liked the information indicating that effective principals are reflective. I have always believed that reflective practice is a characteristic of good/effective educators at all levels, not just principals.

There were several things missing in my opinion that I would have liked to see given more attention. The first was in regard to the role of the principal as "instructional leader" in their respective schools. Beginning with the Model Schools Project of NASSP in the 1960s, identifying the principal as the instructional leader, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on helping principals become truly instructional leaders. A commitment to students was identified under the heading helping students succeed, which of course is magnanimous. Other studies take commitment to a level where principals are advocates for students to the point where their actions are guided by moral action of what is right and best for the student(s).

A recommended reading for a wide audience of practitioners, parents, school board members, and anyone considering becoming a principal.

NCSA's Inclement Weather Policy

If school is called off in the city where an NCSA event is being held due to inclement weather, the event will be considered canceled.



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Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

3	NAESP Region III	2:00 p.m.	Wayne State College	Wayne
4	NASES Region V	9:00 a.m.	Perkins	Sidney
5	NAESP Region I	12:00 noon	Chances R	York
9	NSASSP Region II	5:30 p.m.	German American Society	Omaha
10	NASA Region V	12:00 noon	Country Club	Alliance
10	NSASSP Region III	2:00 p.m.	ESU #8	Neligh
10	NSASSP Region I	5:30 p.m.	Country Club	Seward
11-12	NASES/NDE Joint Meeting	1:00 p.m.	Cornhusker Hotel	Lincoln
17-19	NASA/NASB State Convention	10:00 a.m.	Holiday Inn	Omaha
17	NASA Executive Board	12:00 noon	Holiday Inn	Omaha
19	NASA General Membership	9:00 a.m.	Holiday Inn	Omaha
19	NAESP Region IV	8:45 a.m.	UNK	Kearney
29	NASES Legislative Update	8:00 a.m.	Cornhusker Hotel	Lincoln
30	Legislative Preview	8:00 a.m.	Cornhusker Hotel	Lincoln

DECEMBER

1	New Principals	9:00 a.m.	NCSA	Lincoln
1	NAESP Region II	5:30 p.m.	Champion's Club	Omaha
2	NAESP Executive Board	9:30 p.m.	NCSA	Lincoln
8	NAESP Region I	11:00 a.m.	Malcolm Elementary	Malcolm
9	Emerging Superintendents	9:00 a.m.	NCSA	Lincoln
10	NASES Region III	12:00 noon	Sports Denn	Norfolk

February 10-12 - ASBO Leadership Conference - Boston, MA
 February 17-20 - AASA National Convention - San Antonio, TX
 February 25-28 - NASSP National Convention - San Francisco, CA
 April 15-19 - NAESP National Convention - Baltimore, MD



The NAESP Link

The State Association Newsletter for Elementary School Principals
November, 2004



Character Education...An Awesome Responsibility!

Beth L. Welke

K-2 Principal

Blair Community Schools

We all want to turn out "Kids of Character". But these days our plates are full and it's hard to know where to begin. So, is it easier to just look the other way and hope for the best? I would challenge all of us to take action instead. If we don't take the challenge...then who will?

What do we mean by the word character? Kevin Ryan and Karen Bohlin in their book, *Building Character in Schools*, provide a historical definition of the word character:

The English word *character* comes from the Greek word *charassein*, which means, "to engrave," such as on a wax tablet, a gemstone, or a metal surface. From that root evolved the meaning of *character* as a distinctive mark or sign, and from there grew our conception of character as "an individual's pattern of behavior...his moral constitution."

Each and every school day we work with children on academic issues. We strive to meet curriculum goals and benchmarks. We dedicate ourselves to academic excellence. After all, grades are important. Schools are assessed on how well they score on state and national tests. Newspapers report our success across the state. Yet, we as educational leaders know that students can make straight 'A's in school and still flunk life.

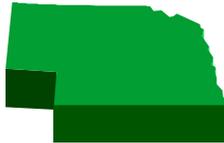
So, we must also work each and every day to build 'Kids of Character'. We must model respect and responsibility, caring and fairness, kindness and citizenship. Our students' eyes are upon us waiting to see how we will react, how we respond and how we care. They watch each day to see how we give to others, how we serve others in our school and our community and how we show respect.

Modeling good character demands a serious intentional effort on the part of everyone within a school environment to model, as well as teach and help

children develop character. It will require that we consider not just the curriculum, but also the messages we send and the patterns of behavior we expect. Character Education is not something we can take lightly. It is an awesome responsibility!

Character education is not another thing to be added to the plate. It is the plate.
—Dr. Kevin Ryan

Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals' Executive Board is now accepting nominations for President-elect, Federal Relations, and Secretary. Please email Kristy Carlson with your nominations (kcarlson@lps.org).



Region Notes

Region I

Region I officers met in Malcolm at 11:00 am on the 20th of October to discuss upcoming events and some administrative awards.

All of Region I is invited to, "Chances R" in York on November 5th for our annual Fall Social. The event begins at 11:30 with a social time and is followed by lunch and a few special speakers.

Region I officers will again meet in Malcolm on the 8th of December at 11:00 a.m.

Have a wonderful Fall.

Randy Page
Malcolm Elementary School

News from Region II

Region II Elementary Principals met for their "Welcome Back" meeting on September 15th at the Brass Grille in the Old Market. After enjoying a social hour and buffet dinner the group watch a video produced by National Geographic. The video program was inspirational and gave us all another perspective of leadership.

The annual Student Leadership Conference was held October 18th at UNO. Two keynote speakers along with many breakout sessions were held throughout the day. Over 200 students from Region II elementary and middle schools attended.

Principals from Region II are encouraged to join us on December 1st at the Champion's Club on West Maple Street in Omaha for our Central Office Recognition dinner. Watch for details to be mailed to your school around the first of November!



Region II Welcome Back Meeting

Region III

The Region III Elementary principals met on September 22nd at the Northeast Community College Life Long Learning Center in Norfolk. This first meeting was held in conjunction with the Region III Secondary Principals. At this meeting principals heard Katie Matthews, NAESP President, Troy Loeffelholz, NASSP President and Lynn Moeller, last years state president for NASSP discuss the issue of Advocacy and how principals can be advocates for students and their profession. Mike Dulaney also gave all principals an update on some of the legislative issues that will be affecting educators this year. During this joint meeting principals were also taught how to use the PLAC (Principal-Legislative-Action-Center website). This website allows principals to voice opinions and give suggestions to elected officials in an efficient and easy-to-use manner.

After the joint elementary/secondary meeting we split into our elementary group and had a business meeting. Scott Dodson and Katie Matthews discussed the issue of early child education and the impact that the kindergarten entrance age requirement argued in the legislature last year, had on the whole concept of early childhood. The next Region III meeting is scheduled for November 3rd at Wayne State College. Principals will be learning more about the elementary education program at Wayne and will be able to give Wayne State professors feedback regarding the needs that today's elementary teachers will face.

Cory Worrell
Principal-Region III

Region IV

UNK and Region IV Elementary Principals sponsor...

"How to Be Me, No Matter What!"

Youth Leadership Conference

Friday, November 19th, 2004

UNK Student Union "Great Room"

The annual conference theme listed above will be presented by "The Gratitude Guru," Mary Kay Mueller. She is the author of two books, the most recent being Taking Care of Me: The Habits of Happiness. Today, her training programs motivate business leaders, educators, students and health care professionals from around the world with the keys to happiness, health and success. Mary Kay is a regular radio and TV guest as well as a success coach, mother of two and a musician. All this and more come together in her heart-hitting presentations to encourage and enlighten those who are ready for a positively powerful experience.

The January meeting is rescheduled for January 18th at UNK "Clubhouse". There will be round table discussions in the morning and guest speaker, Mike Dulaney will be speaking about retirement issues and early entrance age.

News from Region V

Region V Principals held the first meeting of the year at the Eagles Club in Bridgeport. In the morning, we had a joint meeting with our secondary colleagues and shared an outstanding program presented by John Lammel from UNL Department of Ed.Ad. Jerry Sellentin, Executive Director of NCSA, also provided Region V Principals with a report. We all enjoyed a delicious fried chicken dinner home cooked by the ladies of the Eagles Club in Bridgeport. After lunch we divided our groups into elementary and secondary principals to have our individual business meetings.

At the elementary level we had 19 principals in attendance at the meeting. A main topic of discussion was Membership. We believe that Region V is the principals' organization in western Nebraska that provides collaboration opportunities, support and interaction with peers in the same line of work. Each administrator brings a fresh and unique perspective to any organization or group and because of that we need all principals to be part of our discussions and dialog. Also, the western part of our state sometimes gets "lost in the political shuffle" and we need to raise a collective and informed voice to get heard. These are reasons membership in our organization is important. We shared ideas for recruiting new members. After the meeting we sent out a recruiting email and enlisted 8 new members to Region V. We now have an all time high membership total of 37 members! We are proud of Region V Elementary Principals who are truly "The Best in the West!"

Our next meeting will be held at Valentino's in Ogallala on January 26. We plan to begin viewing the NAESP video series purchased for each region by NCSA.



Your Executive Board hard at work in Kearney on Sunday, October 24th during the All Principals' Conference.



NAESP Executive Board

President, Katie Mathews
Past President, Scott Dodson
Secretary, Sarah Williams
Federal Relations Coordinator, Steve Wilson
Region II President, Beth Welke
Region IV President, Jill Clevenger
NARSA Representative, Ruthelen Sittler
NDE Representative, Sharon Meyer

President-Elect, Susan Anglemeyer
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State Representative, David Ludwig
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Region III President, Cory Worrell
Region V President, Mary Derby
Ex-Officio Board Member, Jerry Sellentin
Public Relations Coordinator, Mark Murphy