

RUDY ON LEADERSHIP

by John T. Brazell, President, NASA; Superintendent, Freeman Public Schools



Brazell

Prior to September 11, 2001 (9-11) whenever I heard the name Rudy I first thought of the pint sized ambitious wannabe football player at Notre Dame. Obviously this memory is because of the movie that bears the same name. To this day "Rudy" is one of my favorite movies. Also prior to 9-11 if I heard the name Rudy, I might think of the youngest daughter from the "Bill Cosby Show." This was one of my favorite T.V. shows of all time.

However, since 9-11 when I here the name Rudy, I now think first of the former mayor of New York City, Rudolph (Rudy) W. Giuliani. About a year ago I read his book titled "Leadership." By reading this book I discovered the strength of this man and how similar his leadership beliefs are to my own. It feels

good to know that ones beliefs are similar to someone who has had so much success.

I found the book to be refreshing, insightful, and an affirmation of my own leadership beliefs. I don't see this as a how to book, but more as a why do we do it this way kind of philosophical book. After reading the book I am humbled to learn about the complexities of running a modern city, let alone rebuilding it after such a catastrophe. Hopefully, I am more prepared to do the right thing should such a tragedy strike near.

Rudy Giuliani's book is a personal account of his journey to becoming an effective leader. He had completed the majority of the book prior to 9-11; however, after the attacks he rewrote the book using 9-11 as a backdrop for illustrating his leadership and management techniques.

Giuliani divides his book into three parts. The first part deals specifically with September 11, 2001. The second part, which is divided into fourteen chapters, discusses his leadership and management philosophies and strategies. The third and final part of the book deals with the recovery after the 9-11 attacks. Although all three parts of the book shed light on leadership, the remainder of this article will look specifically at Part II of the book.

I will not comment on each of the fourteen chapters but rather select important facts and quotes. The first chapter is titled "First Things First." I'm sure this was borrowed from the Steven Covey "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." In this chapter he stated, "One of the best lessons a leader can communicate to his or her staff is that encountering problems is to be expected. But failing to mention problems - or worse, covering

them up- should not be tolerated." Giuliani, on many occasions, stressed communication and being upfront and forthright in all decisions. We all know as leaders, to lead successfully, deception cannot be a part of any leadership strategy.

Another quote in this chapter struck a major chord with me. I believe this quote touched me because I tend to be a more quiet and thoughtful leader rather than an aggressive out spoken leader. His quote is "I, ... do not give points to those who talk to hear their own voices." I believe it is fine to speak when you have something important to say, but to talk just to be noticed, and to ramble on with long-winded monologue does not promote strong communication.

In these times of tight budgets and unfunded mandates I think we must heed what Giuliani quotes as Parkinson's Law. And that is: "work expands to fill the time available." We must keep a close watch on what our employees are doing, and, is what they are doing helping provide an education for the children in our school.

In the next chapter titled "Prepare Relentlessly", Giuliani expresses the importance of preparation. He gives an example of dissecting a blown cross-examination in court. He states that the biggest mistake that lawyers make is assuming too much. He believes that preparation begins at birth where we deal with conflict and problems. Preparation stays with us for our entire lives; it is a never ending process of evaluating situations, playing scenarios, and asking hypothetical questions to gain knowledge that will become useful in the time of need. Preparation is a major rule

(continued on next page)

INSIDE...

| | |
|--|--|
| When Life Hands You Lemons...Make Your Lemonade! . . .3 | |
| When Students Say "No!": Strategies for Managing Resistance4 | |
| Positive Changes7 | |
| The Spiritual Dimension of Leadership9 | |
| Panel Discussion Questions11 | |
| Failure is Not an Option12 | |
| Jeff Foxworthy Notes14 | |

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.



Rudy on Leadership

(continued from page 1)

in leadership. Without it, there can be no leadership.

The third chapter in part II is titled "Everyone's Accountable, All of the Time." This relates well to education. With our standards and assessments we are now being held to a higher standard of accountability. As individual leaders it is our responsibility to ensure that our teachers and support staff are always accountable and working toward improving student learning.

We all know that the success of any organization is in the people. The more qualified the teachers are, the more likely we will have a strong school. Giuliani described why good people do good work. In the next chapter "Surround Yourself with Great People" he states: "Good people act from a combination of altruism and self-interest. The altruistic part

comes from the feeling that you're helping people, that your talents are being used to do good" and, "there's an exhilaration in doing something important, which other people pay attention to and respect." Understanding why good people do good work may help us hire and retain quality employees.

In a later chapter "Reflect, Then Decide" Giuliani indicates that making the right choices is the most important part of leadership. He goes on to state: "I never make up my mind until I have to."

Giuliani's approach to leadership is to organize around a purpose. He takes a common sense approach to achieve a goal, and then holds people accountable. The next quote is a common sense thought; however, following it may be more difficult. In any case, I think this quote sums up what a great leader has to

do in order to be effective. "A leader has to be strong enough to make his own decisions, and stick to them even when they're unpopular; but he also must be self-confident enough to solicit opinions and change his mind without worrying that he'll appear weak."

Rudy also talks about education in his book. Strong leaders know that the future of our society is in the children. Giuliani realizes this and worked to improve the education in New York City. He stated, "the core of my concern about education will be to make the educational system ... built around the children."

I believe we all can learn much from this book that will assist us in being better educational administrators. I strongly encourage you to read this book. Rudy Giuliani relates the preparation that went into developing a strong infrastructure. Then how the preparation responded after the attacks of 9-11. The vast majority of the book details how he worked with the various agencies to hold them accountable. By following his attention to detail and using this to develop a quality school we will be able to focus on why we do what we do; and that is to improve the lives of children. 

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SYMPATHY

 **Kurt Harrison**, Retired Superintendent of Lakeview Public Schools, on the death of his mother;

 **Jim Havelka**, Superintendent of North Bend Public Schools, on the death of his mother;

 **Kent Halley**, Superintendent of Mitchell Public Schools, and **Mike Halley**, Principal of Minatare High School on the death of their father;

 Family of **Howard D. Bruner**, retired Superintendent, of Hershey and Mullen Public Schools.

When Life Hands You Lemons... Make Your Lemonade!

by Nancy Whitney, Director of Human Resources, Elkhorn Public Schools

It is the changing of the seasons in Nebraska this October day. It rained earlier, followed by huge, wet snowflakes, with temperatures in the 40's. The weather in the Midwest keeps you guessing and on your toes as you try to decide just what you should wear for the day as well as what, if any extra curricular activities to participate in. Every season has its own beauty and sounds, smells and sights to go along with it. I love it! After spending the last school year battling cancer, I appreciate every single day I have and notice all the beauty around me more than ever! I was always a nature lover but am even more passionate about my surroundings as well as soaking in the camaraderie of others.

We may hear about all the violence and hatred around us, but I have found there to be a whole lot more of love, giving and kindness out there. I had so many people "there" for me during a very difficult time. I was overwhelmed and taken aback!! It not only consisted of friends, family and my school district community, but complete strangers. People wanted to help any way they could. What a powerful, healing feeling when you know others care.

I never asked, "why me" from the moment I discovered the lump in my breast, through the surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. I had a family history of breast cancer and knew immediately, it was my turn. You can deal with any adversity (which every single one of us has had and will have in the future), as a stepping stone or as a stumbling block. This may sound crazy, but facing cancer head on and experiencing the world of others who are sick and fighting for their lives, was an experience I would not give up. I learned from that experience and have a better understanding of others. I will not ever be able to come close to giving back the abundance of kind words and support I received during my ordeal,

but I will try my hardest!

Humor, you got to have humor to help get you through. Following surgery, I had three drains coming out of my torso for several weeks. I was determined to get



out to the mall one day when I was feeling strong even though I had three "udders" to hide under my shirt. I was sure a clerk was going to stop me thinking I had shoplifted. Can you imagine their expression on their face as I would pull out these three, clear plastic football look alikes, attached to tubing out from under my clothes??!! Oh, yes, and dealing with a bald head was not easy, but I had to chuckle when I went to Wal-Mart to get some groceries, and it was one of those very windy days in the city. I had bought a plastic tub with a lid on it. As I was rolling it out in a cart to my car, the lid went flying across the parking lot. As I reached down to get it, my wig (or "muskrat") flew off and went tumbling, rapidly across the parking lot. Here is a bald woman, chasing her wig across

Wal-Mart's parking lot. When I finally caught up to it, I grabbed it, walked to my car and put it on. Talk about a muskrat!! It was a mess! I followed this adventure by going to a drive-thru ice cream store and ordering a banana/strawberry shake. As the clerk was handing it to me, I noticed it had whipped cream, multi-colored sprinkles and a cherry on top. I knew life was good and everything was going to be all right.

Throughout my treatments, I tried to continue exercising which consisted of brisk walking. One day, I was nearing the end of an hour of walking through the neighborhood and was feeling very proud with my head held high, my shoulders stretched back, when I felt something near my rib cage. Well, I won't go into detail, but I was still learning about support for my breast prosthesis. All I could do was laugh and wondered what the cars going by thought of viewing one side up and one side down! :O)

"No matter what happens, or how bad it seems today, life goes on and it will be better tomorrow. I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one. I've learned that every day you should reach out and touch someone. I've learned that I still have a lot to learn." (Maya Angelou)

I hope that as you face your adversities, you can also learn from it and laugh as I did. Faith, strength, a positive attitude, humor and friends is what made me a survivor! Thanks to all who are there for others and believe enough in themselves to fight for their life when difficult times arise. (Oh, by the way, I have become a look-a-like female "Kramer" as my hair is coming back in very curly and wants to do its own thing.) 



When Students Say “No!”: Strategies for Managing Resistance

by John W. Maag, Ph.D.



Maag

Sally: Ms. Sorensen, can I go to the library during free time?

Ms. Sorensen: Not now, Sally.

Sally (whining): But whyyyy?

Ms. Sorensen: That wouldn't be fair to other students because you went to the library the last two days in a row.

Sally (forcefully): That's a stupid reason! Kathy, Ryan, and Monica have all gone there more than one day in a row. Do you like them better than me? Why can't I go?

Ms. Sorensen (exasperated): Because I said so!

Sally (glaring): No! I'm not staying in the classroom, and you can't make me!

Mr. Sorensen (angrily): Do not talk to me in that manner. Now you're going to the principal's office.

What's Behind the Resistance?

What administrator can't relate to the extremely frustrating situation described above? As an administrator, the problem is now in your lap. You now have to deal with a resistant student and an angry teacher who may not like the way you subsequently handle the situation. As educators—both administrators and teachers—we expect students to do what we ask, in a respectful manner. Why do students challenge our authority? There is no mystery as to why students say “No” to adults' directions. This non-compliant behavior allows them to:

- gain attention
- avoid a task they don't want to do
- or gain power by trying to irritate us

All too often, educators focus solely on the form, or outward appearance, of

a student's behavior and don't stop to think about what purpose it's serving for the student. For example, a student may enter the classroom angry after being falsely accused of tattling by peers during recess. The student may have felt helpless in trying to convince peers of her innocence. So, upon walking into the classroom she may purposely knock a book off a shelf. When her teacher politely asks her to pick up the book she replies, “No, I won't pick up the book! You can't make me pick up the book! No one can make me pick up the book!”

The form of the behavior—knocking a book off the shelf—is the least important aspect for the teacher to address. The student could have just as easily thrown her backpack across the room, refused to do a math worksheet, or yelled at another student. So, what purpose does her behavior serve? Knocking the book to the floor is a way for the girl to feel empowered after feeling so helpless at recess.

Laying the Groundwork for New Strategies

Here are some important preconditions for increasing student compliance:

• First, be aware that some habitual ways of dealing with students, especially punishing them, may actually be making the negative interactions worse—and harder to change. When a student responds to a teacher's direction by whining, throwing a temper tantrum, or just saying “No,” it's common for teachers to punish the student (i.e., administer negative consequences). But students who are highly uncooperative have most likely been punished repeatedly. Students who are continually sent to the principal's office indicates that this tech-

nique is ineffective for both the teacher and the principal. The reason is that if this form of punishment worked, educators would be using it less often rather than more often with a student because the result of the punishment would be to reduce or stop the student's unfavorable behaviors. Furthermore, when teachers and administrators try to administer punishment, it is easy get into a power struggle with the student. Once you find yourself in a power struggle, the student has already “won” by having gotten just what she wanted—to feel in control of the situation by irritating you.

• Second, research tells us that the way you make a request of a student (or adult) can affect how she responds. It's easier to avoid power struggles and get compliance from others if you give them directions in a clear, direct, and specific fashion, using as few words as possible, and give them a reasonable amount of time to comply. By contrast, you may encourage power struggles with others if your commands are vague, overly wordy, and include multiple instructions for the desired behavior:

• Third, before you can try these new strategies to gain compliance, you must be able to create rapport with students. Rapport involves communicating with a student, using her point of view. Here's an example: A student is sent to your office for talking excessively in class. She tells you “all the girls in my class talk. I want to be in style too, so I'm going to talk as much as possible.” You respond, “I think it's important for girls to be in style, and I want you to be in style, too.” This response creates rapport because it validates what the student is seeking. After all, what can she say in response? “No,

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When Students Say No...

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you're wrong; I really don't want to be in style?" Once rapport is created, it becomes easier to obtain compliance.

New Strategies to Encourage Compliance

There are four rather unusual, but more positive, strategies for increasing compliance in, and avoiding power struggles with, others. Although these approaches require you to re-think some ways of managing students' behavior, managing resistance doesn't have to be a complicated, time-consuming, and frustrating endeavor. Students always give us clues on how to deal with them successfully. But you must be looking for these clues and know how to turn them into strategies for managing their behavior. Unfortunately, the older we get, the more stuck we can become in habitual ways of looking at and responding to students' misbehavior. Consequently, we fail to pick up on these important clues that are a key to compliance.

The key to changing a student's resistant behavior is changing the context—either the setting or circumstances—that surrounds her behavior. If you think about it, any behavior gets its meaning from the context in which it happens: A lifeguard's skills have more meaning in the context of a public swimming pool than they do on a ski slope; reading has more meaning in the context of a library than it does in a game of soccer. All behavior is defined by its context. Therefore, if you can change the context surrounding a student's behavior, you can also change the meaning, purpose, and her motivation to engage in the behavior. I'll describe four strategies based on this idea.

Direct a Student to Engage in More of the Behavior

The idea behind this approach is that everyone has a tolerance level for how much of a behavior they want to perform. When we make a student's tolerance level intolerable, she will change the behavior on her own. Recall the example of the principal confronted with the student who wanted to be "in style" by talk-

several days, it is likely that the student will spend less and less time until one day she may say, "I think I'm going to start a new style in class—quiet voice." The behavior was no longer any fun to perform.

Direct a Student to Engage in the Behavior in a Different Location

This approach often can be used along with changing the amount of the behavior. An example of this combination approach would be setting up a whining chair. Whining is one of those behaviors that drives adults crazy. The more we point out to a student she is whining and ask her to stop, the more she whines. How many times have you told a student not to whine, only to have the student retort in an even more whiney voice, "I'm not whiiiiiiiiiiing!"

As in the previous approach, you enthusiastically and sincerely tell the student that there is a new place for whining called the whining chair, where she can get even better at whining. You express your confidence that her whining can improve, but that you're not sure how long it will take. As a result, whining is no longer fun, and the student is more likely to give it up—exactly what we want. Relatedly, administrators can use this same approach with their staff. The author has used this technique successfully with his undergraduate and graduate students who tend to whine toward the end of the semester when multiple projects are due simultaneously.

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Three Important Considerations for Using these Techniques

- *Be aware that these methods involve telling a student to continue performing the unwanted behavior in some way. However, the short term hassle will have a long-term payoff of more cooperative students.*
- *Because you will permit a student to perform unwanted behavior, these approaches cannot be used for behaviors that are dangerous to others (i.e., aggression) or to the student (i.e., self-injury).*
- *Most importantly, you must be able to present these approaches to a student with an attitude that you are pleased she can become even better at the behavior. When you don't respond negatively, there's no payoff for the student in continuing the behavior.*

ing excessively in class. The principal created rapport with her, then scheduled time for her to perform the undesirable behavior. "It sounds like you have a lot of catching up to do compared to the other girls in your class," he told her. "Every day before school starts, why don't you grab the timer from my office, set it for 15 minutes, and practice talking to others just like during class." The principal was not angry, nor did he deliver the standard lecture about the drawbacks of talking in class. Instead, he expressed pleasure that the student had a chance to "catch up" and "be in style" with her classmates.

The student is likely to follow the principal's direction because (1) it was what she wanted to do and (2) the direction was not presented as punishment. Over



When Students Say No...

(continued)

Schedule the Time for the Problem Behavior to Occur

A common problem teachers encounter are students who argue, tease, or otherwise irritate each other—especially when they are to be working. This problem can be remedied by setting aside a certain time for students to argue. A teacher might say to two students, “You two are arguing a lot lately. I have an idea that will stop your arguing or, at the least, help you get better at it. Everyday after school, you two can sit across from each other at the table in my office. I’ll set a timer for 30 minutes and you can both argue as much as you like.”

This approach can be modified for students who swear in class. The teacher initially removes the student from the class to minimize disruptions. However, when class is over, the teacher (or principal) engages the student in the following dialogue:

I had no choice but to remove you from the classroom when you swore. It’s one of the school rules. But I also know how much you enjoy swearing—especially at me. So I’m pretty excited with this idea. When I have some free time, I’ll get you from whichever activity or class you’re in, find a quiet room, and you can swear at me for 30 minutes.

It’s crucial that when first talking to the student after class, you do so in a nonchalant way. You should not be stern nor reprimand him. That attitude will only give the student power and control by being able to push your buttons. Exuding a matter-of-fact way of behaving and also indicating you are pleased that the student has an opportunity to swear eliminates a power struggle.

You then approach the student during a desirable activity such as art class, P.E., lunch, or recess. The reason is because you want to increase the likelihood that he will say “No” to coming with you.

Saying “No” reverses the context surrounding the behavior because normally you are telling him to stop swearing. Now he’s saying he won’t swear at you—exactly what you want! You can then say, “Okay, that’s not a problem. I’ll come and get you again when I have more free time to see if you want to swear at me.” If, on the other hand, the student agrees to swear at you, then he is being compliant with your direction. In that case, find a quiet room, sit across from the student, set a kitchen timer for 30 minutes, and tell him to begin swearing. It won’t take more than 30 seconds before he tires. When this happens, encourage him to continue. If he refuses, let him know that’s okay and he can try again in the future to make 30 minutes of swearing.

There are other ways to modify this approach. For example, a teacher can say to a student, “I’m going to give you a direction to do something you won’t want to do. So, I want you to whine and throw a tantrum now to get it over with before I give you the direction.” This approach also works well with administrators’ staff. At the beginning of a meeting, you may say to your staff, “I’m going to implement a new policy that will require you to change certain ways you currently teach. So I would like everyone to give me all the reasons it will be difficult to change before I tell you the new policy.” This strategy is designed to beat staff to the punch. When you subsequently state the new policy and get excuses, you can then agree with them—thereby recasting the problem and demonstrating how the changes won’t be as difficult as staff first thought.

Change the Appearance of the Behavior

This approach works well when a teacher is trying to tell a student something and she refuses to look at the teacher. Instead of getting upset, the

teacher can instruct the student to place her hands over her ears to ensure she doesn’t hear one word you say. If she follows the teacher’s direction, she’s being compliant. When compliance is obtained in one area it’s easier to get it in another area. At the very least, the behavior is now under the teacher’s control. If she refuses to place her hands over her ears, the teacher may comment that perhaps she wants to hear some of what is being said—and then the teacher can refuse to finish.

Changing Your Approach to Regain Control

Educators can manage students’ resistance in a positive, effective fashion. But they may have to step outside their comfort zone and get creative in their responses to students’ misbehavior. Here’s a final example: A student, upon not getting her way in the classroom pitches a huge fit—a floor mopping tantrum with arms and legs waving madly. The teacher immediately drops to the floor and starts throwing a tantrum alongside the student. The student instantly stops her tantrum, stands up, and says “Ms. Gear, stop that right now!” Whether or not educators have this teacher’s dramatic talents, the general lesson applies: Don’t get stuck in frustrating patterns of reacting to students’ resistance. Often you have more power than you think to change students’ negative behavior. 



POSITIVE CHANGES

by Jane Moody, Special Education Director, Cozad City Schools/ESU 10 Cozad Center



Moody

Here we are two months into the new school year and I think about the updates and changes that continue to happen in the world of Special Education: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Rule 51, Response to Intervention, Improving Learning for Children with Disabilities, and Alternate Assessment to name a few. What does this have to do with positive changes you might ask? I hope it makes us as leaders in Special Education think about how we can continue to have a positive impact on the staff we work with as we ask more and more of them each year.

Let's talk about some positive changes regarding some issues near and dear to Special Educators. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 addresses more accountability, less paper work and parental involvement. Procedural Safeguards (Parents' Rights) are now given to parents once a year. Initial evaluation and eligibility determination is completed within 60 days of the time the parent request was received. Changes in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) may be made without a meeting if the parent and school agree. Parents also have the opportunity to use an alternative means of participation for IEP and placement meetings. In addition, IEP team members have the opportunity to be excused from a meeting if the parent and the school agree and the team member provides written input prior to the meeting.

The Response to Intervention (RTI) process is now an option in determining whether a child has a specific learning disability as stated in Rule 51. The multidisciplinary team may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions as a part of the evaluation procedures. The Severe Discrepancy Process is still an option according to Rule 51. The good news is that multidisciplinary teams now have more than one process to choose

from as they work together to identify students with special needs.

Improving Learning for Children with Disabilities (ILCD) has been in the works since the 2003 2004 school year. This local self-assessment system consists of five phases that work in conjunction with local districts' school improvement efforts. During each of these phases, school districts will be expected to participate in various activities working in collaboration with the larger School Improvement Committee. Prior to the ILCD process, local Special Education teams worked with NDE Special Populations staff through the Program Standards Review System. The ILCD process has brought together educators and parents to view the monitoring process in a whole new light. The collaboration that has taken place and the positive results for school districts are invaluable as we continue to improve programs for all children.

The Nebraska Department of Education's Assessment and Special Populations Offices have recently updated the Alternate Standards and Assessments for Students with Disabilities technical assistance document. Special Educators working with children with significant cognitive disabilities now have a new tool to assist in providing quality assessments linked to the Nebraska standards.

With the many changes occurring in education, administrators must continue to support all staff with positive strokes. Remember, support comes in all shapes and sizes from our friends at local Educational Service Units, the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. I think that most of you would agree with all of these positive changes, we have a lot to be thankful for - Happy Thanksgiving!! 

UPCOMING EVENTS...

November 9-10

NDE Law Conference
Embassy Suites - Omaha

November 15-17

NASA/NASB State Convention
Holiday Inn - Omaha

December 6

Legislative Preview
Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln

December 6-7

NSASSP State Convention
Holiday Inn - Kearney

December 8

Reading 1st Workshop
Holiday Inn - Kearney

December 13

Emerging Superintendents
Workshop
NCSA - Lincoln

December 14

New Superintendents
Workshop
TBD - Grand Island

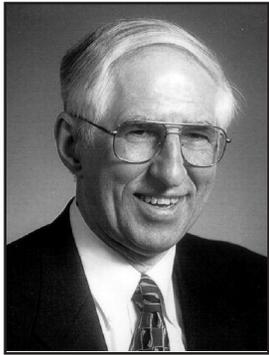
January 20

Emerging Administrators
NCSA - Lincoln

January 27

Emerging Administrators
NCSA - Lincoln

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



Sellentin

PERSPECTIVES

by Jerry Sellentin, Ph.D., Executive Director

Much to be Thankful For

EDUCATION WEEK

November 12-18 is National Education Week. This year's theme is "Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility." The message is highlighted during Education Week but in Nebraska this is what we do 52 weeks of the year. We provide all students with a quality education so they can grow, prosper and achieve in the 21st century. We have much to be thankful for with school board members, teachers, staff, community members and administrators for their commitment to having "quality education" for all students.

NOVEMBER 7, ELECTION DAY

As Americans we have much to be thankful for with the privilege, opportuni-

ty and responsibility to vote. It is also a responsibility to know and learn about the issues and candidates. As your professional association NCSA has provided you with information on two very important issues which will impact quality education in Nebraska: first, 423, the Spending Lid, which should not be put in the Nebraska Constitution; and second, Amendment 5—Early Childhood funding. In addition to keeping you informed NCSA has contributed \$70,000 to the coalition of Nebraskans Against 423 and \$8,000 to Families for Amendment 5 to pass Amendment 5.

THANKSGIVING

Traditionally In November we celebrate Thanksgiving and give thanks for our many blessings. I would like to suggest the following for which we have much to be thankful for:

- Thank you for the work you do to provide quality educational experiences in

your schools in spite of huge obstacles.

- Thank you for the hours and hours you spend doing your job, often in thankless conditions.

- Thank you for staying the course to make changes that are difficult, yet necessary if we are to reach every child.

- Thank you for giving back to your profession and NCSA.

Dr. Troyce Fisher, of Iowa School Administrators, shared with me the prayer of Meister Eckhard who said, "If the only prayer you offer is 'Thank You' that would be enough." Troyce's thinking for that statement is that he was emphasizing the point if we could just be grateful for what we're given, no matter what it is, that would reflect a level of ethical maturity that would serve us well.

We have much to be thankful for as we are there for students and the adults who serve them. Happy Thanksgiving.




The Staff of NCSA
wishes you and your family
a very
*Happy
Thanksgiving*

THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF LEADERSHIP

by Paul D. Houston and Stephen L. Sokolow

Key Three: The Principle of Unique Gifts and Talents



Houston



Sokolow

This is the third in a series of articles drawn from *The Spiritual Dimension of Leadership: 8 Key Principles To Leading More Effectively* by Dr. Paul D. Houston, AASA Executive Director and Dr. Stephen L. Sokolow, Executive Director of the Center for Empowered Leadership. Many of the core values and principles that guide and sustain us as leaders have underlying spiritual roots. We use the word spiritual not in

a religious sense per se but rather to describe ways of thinking, being, and doing that are life-sustaining and life-enhancing both for individuals and organizations. In our book, we describe 8 key principles from an array of 42 spiritual principles of leadership we have identified. The full array is available on our website: www.cfel.org

In this article we will present a brief overview of The Principle of Unique Gifts and Talents.

First, it was fingerprints, then voiceprints and retinal scans, and now DNA shows that each human being is truly unique, a one-of-a-kind original. Yet that uniqueness is not just physical. Minds are unique, and so are spirits. But uniqueness extends even further—each person has unique gifts and talents.

Part of your task in life is to figure out what those gifts and talents are, how to cultivate them, and

how to share them. So, first you have to identify your gifts and talents. Then, once you have a sense of what they are, you need to cultivate and develop them. Finally, you need to share them. As leaders, you are challenged not only to live and model that process but also to facilitate that process in others. As leaders in the field of education, you have the opportunity to facilitate the process of identifying, cultivating, and sharing gifts, both for the people with whom you work and for the children you serve. When you do this, it is empowering for all whose lives are touched.

Middle schools offer a variety of exploratory programs—the theory being that you have to put kids through a lot of different experiences so they can explore many things to see where they might have talents or interests. But as people grow up, they lose sight of the idea that life should be a constant exploration. If you are not willing to try something different, then you're never going to find out what your gifts are.

The most interesting people we know are people who are constantly on a mission, a quest, to learn new things. What they're saying is, "I may discover other things I'm good at and interested in. I just don't know because I've never tried it." On the other hand, we know other people who just don't want to try anything new because they're happy where

they are, and they are stuck in a rut. They have found one or two things they are really good at, and they just keep doing them.

One piece of advice we give to young leaders is never to try to polish the same side twice. If you're good at something, don't keep polishing it. Go polish something else because that way, ultimately, you end up being shiny all over. If you only polish one side, you will have a lot of dull sides left over that you haven't developed. It is a constant struggle to fight against your natural instincts to stay with what you know because you are comfortable doing the things you know you are good at. Most people are much more talented than they will ever know. You may have talents and gifts at a certain level that you just don't ever use, and, at another level, you probably have capacities that you never even tap.

It is important to focus on gifts and talents, both of which are plural. We presume that you have more than one gift and more than one talent and that discovering all your gifts and talents is a life-long journey. At different times in your life—your teenage years, your early adulthood, midlife, or old age—different gifts and talents emerge or come to the fore. Understanding that, you can be alert to clues that you have a talent or a gift in a given area. Life offers an opportunity to discover and cultivate the talents that

you have, but the choice of whether or not to do so is yours. One of the keys to discovering your talents is through openness to your environment, to what other people are mirroring for you, and to what they see as your gifts and talents.

Truly, each of us is

We are continually given the opportunity to learn and to grow and to manifest the gifts that we have been given. We also can gain insight into our unique gifts and talents by reflecting on our life experiences and connecting with our divine spark, our higher or true self.

(continued)



Key Three: The Principle of Unique Gifts and Talents

(continued from page 9)

blessed with unique gifts and talents. We are each a piece in a three-dimensional puzzle of life, striving to figure out where we fit. And just like a puzzle, life is incomplete without us. Each of us is important to the whole. Enlightened leaders help others see the contours of their lives so they can see how they can best contribute to the whole.

Enlightened leaders strive to help others identify their own gifts and talents and then cultivate them, helping them find their place in the puzzle. Some enlightened leaders may even see the gifts that others have before they themselves are aware of them. When we recognize our own unique gifts, we want to share them with the world. Enlightened leaders facilitate this process.

We are continually given the opportunity to learn and to grow and to manifest the gifts that we have been given. We also can gain insight into our unique gifts and talents by reflecting on our life experiences and connecting with our divine spark, our higher or true self. Enlightened leaders are aware of this process and are ever alert to the opportunity to shine light on the potential in others.

It may be helpful to remember that enlightened leaders:

- Have an awareness that everyone has unique gifts and talents.
- Seek to discover and cultivate their own unique gifts and talents.
- Help others to discover and cultivate their own unique gifts and talents.
- Help others to share their unique gifts and talents.
- Use partnership and interpersonal relationships to extend the unique gifts and talents of others.
- Know that our uniqueness contributes to the evolving tapestry of life.
- Know that events and synchronicities help us discover and cultivate our unique gifts and talents.
- Know that the Universe, by which we mean a higher spiritual power, assists us in clarifying our life's purposes. 

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

☞ **Ron Brandl**, Elementary Principal, Neligh-Oakdale Public Schools, appointed, Superintendent of Neligh-Oakdale Public Schools,

☞ **Craig Kautz**, Assistant Superintendent, Hastings Public Schools, appointed Superintendent of Hastings Public Schools,

☞ **Dave Gordon**, High School Principal, Lexington Public Schools, named the Nebraska Speech Communication and Theatre Association's Outstanding Administrator,

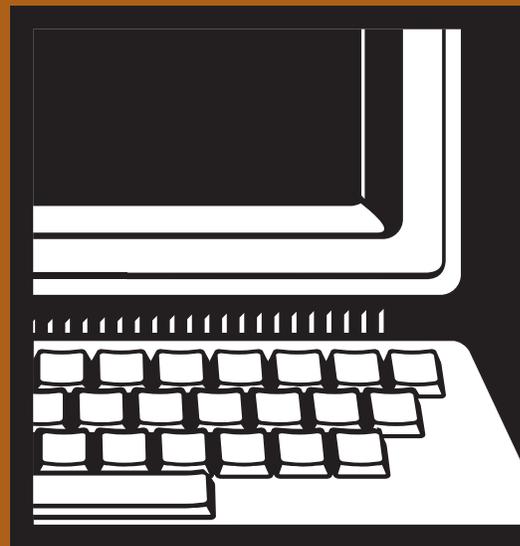
☞ **Daryl Schrunk**, Elementary Principal, Wayne Public Schools, received the "Hero Award" from the Nebraska Funeral Directors Association for his action in applying the Heimlich

Maneuver when he was a principal at Atkinson Elementary-Junior High School.

☞ **Rick Redlinger**, Assistant Principal, Omaha Burke High School, NSASSP Region II Assistant Principal of the year,

☞ **Becky Carlstrom**, Paraeducator, High Plains Community School, and **Dennis Gray**, Superintendent, on Becky's recognition as Nebraska Paraeducator of the Year,

☞ **Peggy Beem**, Paraeducator, ESU #16, and Kris Elmshaeuser, Special Education Director, on Peggy's recognition as Nebraska Paraeducator of the Year



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Administrators



The following questions were used in a panel discussion at the Assistant Principals Conference on September 27, 2006. The panel was led by Cindy Wells, Assistant Principal at Grand Island Senior High.

1. Ruby Payne says that poverty is relative, in that "poverty or wealth only exists in relationship to known quantities or expectations." Can you describe how this notion plays out in your district and community?
 2. Poverty is a universal phenomenon, occurring in all races and countries. "Middle class" in one place and time is not the same as "middle class" in another community. In your research and experience, have you discovered that the definition of class is different in your community from that in other parts of the state? other communities in the United States? How so?
 3. Considering that your community has undergone relatively recent systemic change, can you comment on Payne's assertion that "generational poverty and situational poverty are different?" [i.e. Has the gain or loss of a large industry in your community manifested itself in one or the other of these two types of poverty? If so, how?]
 4. In your opinion, what sorts of "hidden rules" of class do individuals bring with them to the classroom?
 5. Describe what sorts of behaviors those "hidden rules" might lead to in the classroom.
 6. Is there a disconnect between the middle class norms of business and of the classroom and the expectations or rules by which a large number of your students live? Please comment.
 7. How might we go about understanding our students' hidden rules and teaching them the hidden rules that will make them successful at school and at work?
 8. Please comment on Ruby Payne's assertion that "two things that help one move out of poverty are education and relationships."
 9. Payne lists four reasons one leaves poverty:
 - It's too painful to stay.
 - A vision or goal
 - A key relationship
 - A special talent or skillGiven that the school might never be able to understand or demonstrate for an individual when the situation has become too painful, how might we facilitate the student's development in the other three key areas?
 10. In what way(s) are your district and community addressing the various needs of individuals in poverty (financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, knowledge of middle class hidden rules, role models)?
- Shifting gears a bit, what follows is a list of questions on dealing with diversity in traditionally homogeneous Nebraska communities.
11. Demographics: How many students in your district/building have been identified as being English language learners? What are the primary languages represented among them? How has the population of English learners changed over the past five years? The past ten years?
 12. How have your community, district, and school responded to the needs of English learners? What kinds of programs are available? How are your teachers prepared?
 13. Do your school and district make a distinction among the different kinds of English learners? If so, how? If not, do you see a need for such a distinction? Why? Why not?
 14. Do your school and district acknowledge a difference between immigrant minority and involuntary minority students? How might the experiences of each differ?
 15. Does your school have a transformative, intercultural orientation to address the needs of diverse students? What changes, if any, would you suggest to improve educational opportunities for students of diversity at your school?
 16. How do "labels" affect the attitudes about students of diversity in your school?





Article Review by Ron Joekel

Failure Is Not An Option

Author: Alan Blankstein

Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

ISBN: 1-4129-0934-1 (paperback)

This 213-page paperback book has been referenced in a number of recent educational articles, especially in the “reform” literature, so I thought I needed to take a look at it and I decided to use it for my November review. Personally I don’t like the use of the word “reform.” I like to think that we are working for “renewal” of education, and not “reform.”

Capitalizing on the furor that has been created by *No Child Left Behind* and the numerous attempts at what has been termed “school reform” that began with the classic *A Nation At Risk* report; Alan Blankstein picked a title that has caught the attention of the media. Well known educator Michael Fullan said this about the book: *“It is a deeply passionate call to arms, combined with the wherewithal to take systematic, continuous, and effective action. A must read for all those interested in reform because it is simultaneously inspiring and practical.”* Although I didn’t find it a “call to arms,” I did find it interesting to read and I compliment the author for packaging many concepts that most educators are aware of.

The author builds on a foundation that identified courageous school leadership and the professional learning community as the center of effective school reform and offers six guiding principles for creating and sustaining what he calls high-performing schools:

1. Common mission, vision, values, and goals.
2. Systems for prevention and intervention.

3. Collaborative teaming for teaching and learning.

4. Data drive decision making and continuous improvement.

posing challenging questions, and then provides solutions.

There are two concepts presented by Blankstein that I especially liked and felt



5. Active engagement from family and community.

6. Building sustainable leadership capacity.

The first four chapters establish the foundation for courageous action, why failure is not an option, why courageous leadership is crucial and what it looks like, ten common routes to failure and what to do about them, and why and how professional learning communities are central to successful reform.

Having established the philosophical and values base for reform, Blankstein moves into the six principles for reform [identified above]. A chapter is devoted to each of the six principles whereby he goes into detail presenting them by using interesting vignettes and case studies. He does one thing that many of the “reformers” do not do, that being he cites research to support each principle and his presentation. He also does an exceptional job of presenting both sides of all key points. He describes what is wrong and then what right looks like in his opinion. He uses the technique of

he did an excellent job of presenting their importance. The first was what he calls courageous leadership imperative (CLI), and the second is the professional learning community. Chapter two is devoted to the courageous leadership imperative (CLI). He states that CLI not only begins with the “end in mind” (Covey-1989), but it also requires a resounding commitment to that end. Blankstein contends that in reviewing research and the literature on educational leadership and looking at successful leaders the past 15 years, he found that leaders who turn failing schools around and keep successful schools moving forward over time exhibit what he calls “five axioms:”

1. Begin with your core—the intersection of one’s purpose, values and intention.

2. Create organizational meaning—what’s really important to being our best is concentration and focus on something that is meaningful to us. (Kouzes & Posner-1999).

3. Maintain constancy and clarity of purpose—Deming (1986) related that

(continued on next page)



FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION

(continued)

constancy of purpose is made possible by first *clarifying* that purpose.

4. Confront the data and your fears— Jim Collins in *Good to Great* (2001) observed that successful companies consistently and accurately assess current performance with an eye toward improvement.

5. Build Sustainable Relationships— Leaders create relationships, and one of those relationships are between individuals and their work.

The second concept that I liked, building a professional learning community, is presented in chapter four with a discussion of the salient points from the literature and research. He begins with the work of Peter Senge when in 1990 he used the term "learning organization" in

his book titled, *The Fifth Discipline*. Following Senge, there were a number of variations of the concept with terms such as school-based learning community; professional community; professional learning community; etc.. There are many definitions but Nelda Cambron McCabe really put it into perspective when in the *School Administrator*, May 2003, she said: "School districts should not try to simply build a learning community that has as many definitions as there are people defining it! The emphasis should be on restructuring how people work together. That's what ultimately has an effect on the classroom."

Summary: Like *No Child Left Behind*, who could argue against the idea that Failure Is Not an Option in our schools?

Although there is not a lot of new information in the book, the author did an excellent job of bringing the research and literature together with case studies, vignettes, and first person examples to make for interesting reading. They also provide a foundation for his six principles for creating and sustaining high-performing schools. If you are looking for an inexpensive book, an easy read, and one that provided some practical applications to perplexing issues, take a look at this one.

You can purchase the paperback at Barnes & Noble or order it online from Amazon.com. 

UPCOMING EVENTS...

November 9-10

NDE Law Conference
Embassy Suites - Omaha

November 15-17

NASA/NASB State Convention
Holiday Inn - Omaha

December 6

Legislative Preview
Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln

December 6-7

NSASSP State Convention
Holiday Inn - Kearney

December 8

Reading 1st Workshop
Holiday Inn - Kearney

December 13

Emerging Superintendents Workshop
NCSA - Lincoln

December 14

New Superintendents Workshop
TBD - Grand Island

January 20

Emerging Administrators
NCSA - Lincoln

January 27

Emerging Administrators
NCSA - Lincoln

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



Here is what Jeff Foxworthy has to say about Nebraska...

If your local Dairy Queen is closed from September through May, you live in Nebraska.

If someone in a Home Depot store offers you assistance and they don't work there, you live in Nebraska.

If you've worn shorts and a parka at the same time, you live in Nebraska.

If you've had a lengthy telephone conversation with someone who dialed a wrong number, you live in Nebraska.

If "Vacation" means going anywhere south of GRAND ISLAND for the weekend, you live in Nebraska.

If you measure distance in squares of farm land, you live in Nebraska.

If you know several people who have hit a cow more than once, you live in Nebraska.

If you have gone from "heat" to "A/C" in the same day and back again, you live in Nebraska.

If you can drive 75 mph through two feet of snow during a raging blizzard without flinching, you live in Nebraska.

If you install security lights on your house and garage, but leave both unlocked, you live in Nebraska.

If you carry jumpers in your car and your wife knows how to use them, you live in Nebraska.

If you design your kid's Halloween costume to fit over a snowsuit, you live in Nebraska.

If the I-80 speed limit is 75 mph – you're going 90 and everybody is passing you, you live in Nebraska.

If driving is better in the winter because the potholes are filled with snow, you live in Nebraska.

If you know all 4 seasons: almost winter, winter, still winter and road construction, you live in Nebraska.

If you have more hours on your snow blower than miles on your car, you live in Nebraska.

If you find 10 degrees "a little chilly", you live in Nebraska.

If you understand these jokes, and send them to all your Nebraska friends and others, you actually have lived in Nebraska (or any number of other "Upper Midwestern" states).





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Calendar of Events

NOVEMBER

| | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|------------|--------------------------|----------|
| 8 | NARSA Executive Board | 10:00 a.m. | NCSA | Lincoln |
| 8 | NASES Executive Board | 6:00 p.m. | Vincenzo's | Omaha |
| 8 | NASA Region V | 12:00 p.m. | Alliance Country Club | Alliance |
| 15 | NASA Executive Board | 12:00 p.m. | Holiday Inn Central | Omaha |
| 15 | NASBO General Membership | 12:30 p.m. | Holiday Inn Central | Omaha |
| 15-17 | NASA/NASB State Convention | | Holiday Inn Central | Omaha |
| 15 | NAESP Region III | 2:00 p.m. | Lifelong Learning Center | Norfolk |
| 15 | NSASSP Region III | 2:00 p.m. | Lifelong Learning Center | Norfolk |
| 29 | NAESP Region II | 5:30 p.m. | Ironwood Country Club | Omaha |
| 30 | NSASSP Region II | 9:30 a.m. | Blair High School | Blair |

DECEMBER

| | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | NASES Region II | 8:30 a.m. | Elkhorn Public Schools | Elkhorn |
| 6 | NAESP Executive Board | 1:00 p.m. | Centura Elementary | Cairo |
| 6 | Legislative Preview | 8:00 a.m. | Cornhusker Hotel | Lincoln |
| 6 | NSASSP Executive Board | 3:00 p.m. | Holiday Inn | Kearney |
| 6-7 | NSASSP State Convention | 6:00 p.m. | Holiday Inn | Kearney |
| 8 | Reading 1st Workshop | 9:00 a.m. | Holiday Inn | Kearney |
| 13 | Emerging Superintendents | 9:00 a.m. | NCSA | Lincoln |
| 14 | New Superintendents Workshop | 1:00 p.m. | TBD | Grand Island |

JANUARY

| | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| 10 | NASA Region I | 5:00 p.m. | Ameritas | Lincoln |
| 10 | NASA Region IV | 10:00 a.m. | ESU #10 | Kearney |
| 10 | NASA Region V | TBD | TBD | TBD |
| 10 | NSASSP Region I | 5:30 p.m. | Chances R | York |
| 10 | NASES Region I | 9:30 a.m. | NCSA | Lincoln |
| 11 | NASES Region V | 9:00 a.m. | Prairie Winds Community Cent. | Bridgeport |
| 12 | NASES Region II | 8:30 a.m. | Bennington Public School | Bennington |
| 12 | NASES Region III | 12:00 p.m. | Sports Denn | Norfolk |
| 20 | Emerging Administrators | 9:00 a.m. | NCSA | Lincoln |
| 23 | NAESP Region IV | 12:00 p.m. | Central Elementary | Kearney |
| 24 | NAESP Region V | 9:30 a.m. | Valentino's | Ogallala |
| 24 | NSASSP Region II | 5:30 p.m. | Elks Lodge #30 | Omaha |
| 24 | NSASSP Region IV | 5:30 p.m. | TBD | Kearney |
| 24 | NSASSP Region V | 10:00 a.m. | Valentino's | Ogallala |
| 25 | NASES Region IV | 12:00 p.m. | ESU #10 | Kearney |
| 27 | Emerging Administrators | 9:00 a.m. | NCSA | Lincoln |

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

February 8-10, 2007 - ASBO Leadership Convention - Toronto, Canada

February 23-25, 2007 - NASSP National Convention - Las Vegas, NV

March 1-4, 2007 - AASA National Convention - New Orleans, LA

March 29-April 2, 2007 - NAESP National Convention - Seattle, WA