

NEBRASKA SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER WANES AGAIN

by James E. Ossian, Wayne State College

Introduction

After keeping track of Nebraska school superintendent turnover for 27 consecutive years, I am still waiting for the numbers to reveal some dramatic trends. I have stopped short of applying any multivariate analysis to the data, because of my limited expertise in inferential statistics. Such a procedure would no doubt generate more elegant information, but I doubt that it would change my bottom-line observation, which is that in some years there are more changes in superintendent positions than there are in other years. Hardly a dramatic observation.

The average number of superintendent changes over 27 years, though ranging from 31 to 55, remains at an obstinate 41. And there is only small variance when the data are sorted by

decades: 1980s = 39; 1990s = 43; 2000s = 41. Of course, the rate of turnover has edged up because of the decline in the number of public school districts; 41 changes in 320 districts in 1980 would calculate to 12.8%, whereas 41 changes in today's 256 districts would calculate to 16%. The "Rule of 85" retirement legislation probably accounted for the higher average number of superintendent changes in the 1990s; however, this welcomed piece of legislation did not prompt a mass evacuation from the leadership ranks as many, including myself, predicted.

Many Nebraska superintendents continue to work beyond the "Rule of 85" retirement age, and several, after a year of retirement, resume service as a school district administrator. Why this is so would provide an interesting thesis

topic for an enterprising graduate student. Some reasons come to mind: Higher superintendent salaries, exorbitant health care costs, the perceived insecurity of social security, and boredom.

The New Year

There will be 34 public school districts with high schools that have a new executive leader to begin the 2005-2006 school year. For those who left the superintendent ranks, 20 retired, 10 assumed other superintendencies, two of which were out of state, and two moved to a principal position. Two superintendent jobs were lost as a result of district mergers.

Median and average tenure in position, 4.26 and 6.18 years respectively, have edged up from last fall's numbers of 3.83 and 6.12, when there were 46 changes in district leadership positions. Sixteen school districts will have a novice superintendent, and 120 of 256 (47%)

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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.

SHARING EXPERTISE FROM "WITH-IN;" BUILDING ON STRENGTHS

by Susan Anglemyer, Principal, Sandoz Elementary School, President, NAESP



Anglemyer

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) provide an opportunity for all teachers to come together for the common goal of improving student achievement.

Consistent dialogue and learning occur resulting in improved instruction.

Fortunately, Nebraskans develop assessments at the local level reflecting the state standards. Each district aspires to reach established bench-

marks. The rigor of the curriculum is only part of the equation. A student learning the information so that they can retrieve and apply new knowledge depends on quality instruction.

Although the term "strength based" is not used formally to describe the PLC instructional strategies that is what this process truly reflects. Teachers must get in the habit of consistently looking at student performance on a regular basis. Establishing common pretests, informal checks for understanding, and post

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT

by Stuart L. Simpson, District Business Manager, Alliance Public Schools

During my years as a business manager, I sit through leadership team meeting discussing budgets, curriculum and emergency response. Districts struggle to make sure taxes are spent appropriately to handle the budget set by the board. Curriculum directors are making sure teachers instruct the points established by the state, and administrators are making sure buildings are secure so all students have a safe learning environment. These areas are very important, but when the meetings are concluding and administrators discuss needs in general, they point to the importance of parental involvement. Parent involvement becomes words you hear that to an untrained person, you think, where have I heard this before. This is similar to discussing income taxes without your CPA sitting next to you and interpreting the tax law. What if

you were the parent who is involved and how would it affect you? My wife and I were those parents and still are the parents that see the fruits of being involved and will be for our lifetime.

Parent involvement to an accountant is making sure you have paid your lunch money for the month or providing what the principal needs to make sure the teachers are happy on an in-service day. You then hear in the media, that reading to your child, helping them with homework and talking to your child at the dinner table is part of this involvement. I said yes we do all that and we have a successful daughter in college, but we now have one in first grade and we ask are we doing everything we need for her success in school. You are now thinking what issue is he addressing that every parent should know?

Five years ago we were blessed in the

adoption of our daughter Jordynn. She started to grow and during the process we noticed that sounds were not affecting her like they did us. We contacted our local physician, audiologist and then Boys Town. She was diagnosed as being profoundly deaf. You could say we were a little shocked, wondering what our next step would be considering the remoteness of the area where our family lives. We asked questions on deaf education and programs available for her. We had her in our special education preschool working on her speech, but more was needed. My wife started calling, asking questions about speech, cochlear implants, and continual development.

We knew living in Western Nebraska that she needed to hear and that would make her successful in our community. The closest implant center was Denver, but what would happen after the implant? My wife asked, "How would we work on developing her speech." The professionals directed us to a speech therapist working with cochlear implant patients and specifically auditory-verbal therapy to develop her speech. You are now asking how this can relate the schools and parent involvement?

Working with our Special Education Department and specifically our deaf educator, on a monthly basis we drove to Denver to get her implant reprogrammed and then for a two hours speech therapy session worked on the various sounds and patterns needed to help our daughter speak correctly. Our deaf educator went periodically to learn the newest technique in auditory-verbal therapy with a cochlear implant child.

We continued to drive and learn more and more about how we could further develop our daughter's speech. She was a three-year-old child, who went to speech therapy one hour each day and preschool every afternoon to help in developing her learning skills and speech, language, social and academic skills. I would see her bounce off to school and ride the special education bus daily. Sometimes the bus driver and teacher were the best people in the world.

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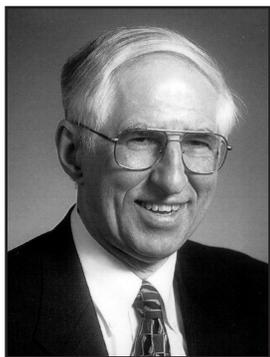
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PERSPECTIVES

by Jerry Sellentin, Ph.D., Executive Director



Sellentin

STAND UP FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

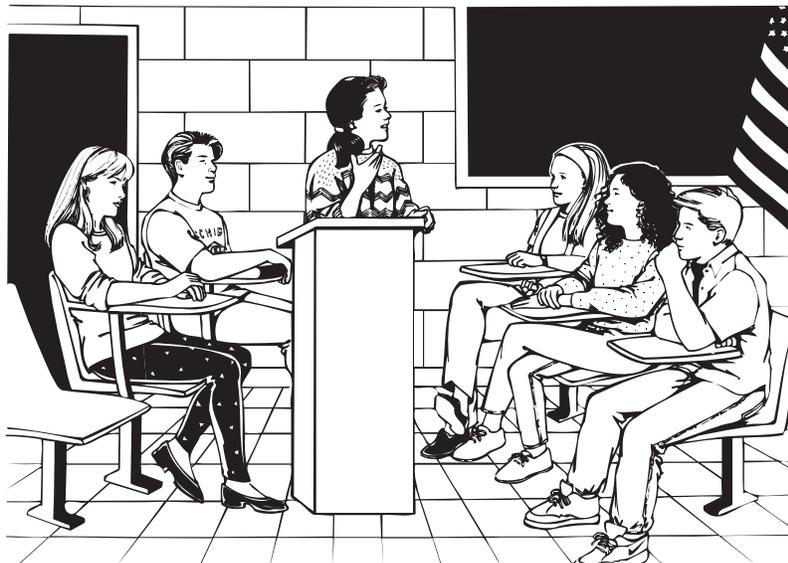
Criticism of public education has become the name of the game by most of the media, some government leaders and some education experts. Negative reports about education continue to indicate public schools don't meet state standards or federal accountability requirements. It can lead the pupil to believe that public education is in worse shape than ever. As Administrators, we need to stand up for public education. Today's students are taking harder courses and achieving at higher levels. Schools, especially in Nebraska, make great efforts to ensure fully credentialed and well qualified teachers are in the classroom. Granted there are areas for improvement in public schools including reducing the dropout rates, having all students achieve higher standards of academic success, and the need to address social and economic factors which affect some students ability to learn.

I would encourage you to read the 37th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools published in the September 2005 issue of the Phi Delta Kappan as a source of information to take a strong position on standing up for public education. If you are not a member of Phi Delta Kappa International, I encourage you to join. The publication, "*Phi Delta Kappan*," is worth the \$85 membership fee. Membership information can be obtained by calling 800-766-1156 or go to their web site www.pdkintl.org. The Executive Summary of the poll indicates: The grades the public assigns the schools remain as high as

ever and are truly impressive when public school parents give their evaluation, the public continues to express a strong preference for change through the existing public schools, support for choice shows no sign of increasing and could be said to be lagging; and it is the public schools to which the public turns for closing the achievement gap."

In another report dated August 2005 from the Center on Education Policy which is an independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools states there is good news about public schools. The Center highlights a number of indicators to include: More Children are attending full-day kindergarten. High School Students are

cent over last year: High school student scores on the SAT went up this year. Mean scores of 574 on the verbal portion of the test and 579 on the math portion were well above the national mean verbal score of 508 and the math score of 520. Nebraska's average test score on the ACT test rose to 21.8, up from 21.7 last year. The national average test score was 20.9. Nebraska had the highest average score of the 13 states where at least 70 percent of graduating seniors took the test. Nebraska public schools are a source of pride and as administrators we need to stand up for public education and tell our communities about the quality education which is provided.



Public Education is the backbone of our democracy, and as such, we need to be aware of attempts to undermine it as is being done with the U.S. Department of Education in the manner suggested for requesting financial assistance for K-12 and post-secondary schools following Hurricane Katrina. Clearly, massive federal assistance is needed and it is very important that relief flows quickly to schools and districts. The concern is the Senate's Enzi-Kennedy bill which includes a \$488

Taking a More Challenging Curriculum, Achievement Gaps are Narrowing, Student Achievement Has Gone Up in Math. Younger Students are showing Gains in Reading Achievement. This report gives Administrators more reasons to stand up for public education and share the good news.

In Nebraska we can celebrate the good news of public education with the following recent accomplishments: Eighty-six percent of 4th- through 8th- and 11th-grade students were rated proficient in writing, an increase of 3 per-

million school voucher initiative. This amount represents nearly 20 percent of the total suggested emergency education supplemental appropriation. Stand up for Public Education and contact Senator Chuck Hagel (fax 202 224 5213) and Senator Ben Nelson (fax 202 228 0012) expressing the need to help students and schools effectively and quickly because the assistance is needed now! It is unwise to include a major policy of a voucher initiative in a bill designed to provide relief assistance.





CHARTING STARS: VOICES FROM THE FIELD

by Jody Isernhagen, Associate Professor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
and Leon Dappen, Assistant Professor, University of Nebraska-Omaha

INTRODUCTION

Over the past four years, Nebraska educators have acquired a new language previously unknown at the classroom level. Teachers now write and revise STARS assessments used to measure Nebraska content standards. Assessments are based on the six indicators of high quality assessment and school districts develop an assessment portfolio that is based on the clear guidelines for writing assessments that measure state or local standards.

Each year a comprehensive research study has been conducted about the STARS process. The fourth year STARS Comprehensive Evaluation Project (CEP) focused upon the impact of STARS on assessment literacy, use of data, leadership, and external agency support as they relate to the three configurations—collaborations, consortia, and individual districts. These configurations became apparent as schools struggled to implement the STARS process. Each school district determined the best configuration to assist their district with implementation of the STARS process. Pat Roschewski, Director of Statewide Assessment, for NDE, defined the configurations in the following manner:

Collaboration – A group of districts that work together to develop and/or share individual assessments and submit individual assessment portfolios to NDE. All portfolios for districts participating in collaboration are sent to the same reviewer.

Consortium – A group of districts that work the STARS process together, use all the same assessments, and submit a single assessment portfolio to NDE. There are three consortium models: Online consortium, Panhandle consortium, and “Other” consortia.

Individual – A district that develops its own assessment system and submits independently its District Assessment Portfolio to the NDE.

Research Design and Methodology

The fourth year primary study was a mixed-methods design. The study began with a broad survey in order to generalize results to a large statewide population of educators. Secondly, open-ended interviews were conducted to collect



detailed views about the STARS process in each of the configurations.

Approximately 2000 surveys were sent to teachers, principals, superintendents, assessment coordinators, and ESU staff developers. Nebraska educators across the state were given voice during the 169 interviews conducted following the survey during the 2004-05 school year. The interviews were conducted based on the results of the survey in an effort to better understand the impact of the STARS process.

RESULTS

Survey results indicated strong support for the STARS process across all three configurations. The average mean for all items for each survey category for all configurations ranged from 3.6 to 4.3 on the five-point Likert scale with “1” representing “none of the time” and “5” representing “all of the time.”

The interviews supported the five themes examined on the survey as well as providing five additional themes. The themes helped to paint a picture of what collaborations, consortia, and individual districts looked like as they grew in their knowledge of assessment, collection and interpretation of data, and application of

their new learnings to instruction.

Theme 1: Total Support

In the area of total support, all configurations ranged from 3.90 to 4.58 on the five-point Likert scale. There was a perception of strong district support for the STARS process across all configurations. Educators shared their support for STARS as practiced in and perceived from each configuration. Teachers indicated that STARS had made them better teachers regardless of their own personal level of experience.

Principals in all configurations indicated that educators were more comfortable with the STARS process now that many are trained and have had time to implement the change. But...“Transition takes some time. They’re more at ease than what they were a couple years ago, which is good.”

Theme 2: Assessment Literacy

In the area of assessment literacy, all configurations ranged from 2.65 to 4.46 on the five-point Likert scale. There were some statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding assessment literacy of all districts participating in the STARS process. Collaboration and consortium districts were significantly stronger than individual districts regarding local district development of assessments. Collaboration districts were also stronger in teacher collaboration for the design of assessments. Individual districts were significantly stronger than either collaboration or consortia in the development of the STARS portfolio and using the same grade-level assessments to meet the STARS requirements.

Assessment literacy was evident in the common vocabulary used by educators in all configurations. One principal said, “I think our staff is light years ahead of where they used to be in developing assessments. I think they think more about planning backwards. In other words, they say, what are we assessing

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and then how do we get our students to that? I think they're more concerned with what they're assessing and how students are progressing."

Teachers demonstrated growth in assessment literacy in all configurations by stating that the process had become easier over time and their ability to identify what needed to be changed and revised had improved. Many districts were developing their own assessments in a collaboration or within their own district. Some districts were using assessments from a common bank or pool. However, data from this study indicated that teachers in districts using questions from a common bank or pool were involved in developing and selecting the individual questions for their assessments. On the other hand, some teachers did reveal that their curriculums sometimes did not match the assessment items being used to measure the standards.

Theme 3: Data

In the area of data, all configurations ranged from 2.36 to 4.58 on the five-point Likert scale. There were some statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding data, district scoring, and interpreting all STARS assessments. Individual districts' perceptions were significantly stronger statistically than both collaboration and consortium districts. Consortium districts had a slightly stronger perception of timely return of data than either collaboration or individual districts.

Districts in all configurations were making data available to district educators in a variety of disaggregated formats. However, not all data was scored in the same way nor was it always provided to educators in a timely manner. Data was being interpreted in a wide variety of ways, but data was not always being used for instructional improvement.

Some school districts were in the early stages of using data and still needed assistance as noted by a superintendent, "I think we've only begun to understand how to read data. And data for the most part has scared us because we

didn't really know how to make as much out of it as we could." Some districts were large enough to have the expertise needed to solve data problems while other schools lacked the needed expertise or resources and saw data management as a huge obstacle.

Theme 4: Instructional Impact

In the area of instructional impact, all configurations ranged from 3.48 to 4.42 on the five-point Likert scale. There were some statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding instructional impact in the alignment of curriculum to state standards and modifying instruction in cases where students did not perform well on assessments. Individual districts had a stronger perception than both collaboration and consortium districts in curriculum alignment, establishing benchmarks for meeting state standards K-12, and aligning lesson planning to assessment data and state standards. Consortium districts had a stronger perception in teachers modifying instruction than did collaboration and individual districts. Consortium districts' perceptions were slightly less than collaboration districts when considering curriculum alignment to state standards.

In the establishment of benchmarks for meeting state standards K-12, collaboration districts were significantly lower than both consortium and individual districts. Lesson planning, alignment to assessment data, and state standards were also significantly lower for collaboration districts than consortium and individual districts.

Strong evidence from educators across the state for all configurations indicated that schools have aligned their curriculum to state standards. However, there was little evidence to support K-12 benchmarks within the state. Teachers spoke of aligning their lesson plans to assessment data, but their instruction was sometimes not modified as a result of student performance.

Principals said that they believed that teachers were making the link between data, student achievement, and improving learning by sharing data and infor-

mation as evidenced by this statement from a principal, "Communication about student achievement and learning is at an all time high. Linking the STARS process to school improvement was a significant step to the improvement for student learning."

Theme 5: External Support

In the area of external support, all configurations ranged from 2.73 to 4.23 on the five-point Likert scale. There were some statistically significant differences in perceptions regarding external support provided to districts. Collaboration districts' perception of the NDE providing assessment training for teachers was significantly lower than consortium and individual districts.

Our research indicated strong evidence that external support was being provided by the ESUs and the NDE for all configurations. However, beginning teachers reported limited knowledge of assessment requirements and the STARS process. Additionally, schools reported that external support was provided by local workshops, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Buros Center for Testing, North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement, Assessment Training Institute (Richard Stiggins), and Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).

External support for technology regarding assessment data collection and analysis was limited. Much of the data collection, scoring, analysis, and reporting was not centralized and lacked uniformity. Leadership from both the NDE and the ESUs is needed to make data management more efficient and accurate.

Theme 6: Accountability

Most language arts and math educators in grades 4, 8, and 11 demonstrated great ownership for the STARS process and were accountable for student learning. STARS has raised the bar for teachers and students while improving student learning at these levels. However, teachers expressed the feeling

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CHARTING STARS...

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that “Other teachers, who have not had to participate, are uninformed of the process and the tremendous amount of work that goes into it.” Educators emphasized that “all” teachers need to be involved in the STARS process. Most educators emphasized the growth that had occurred for both teachers and students due to their involvement in the STARS process and meeting the accountability requirements established by the NDE and No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Some concern was expressed by teachers and administrators that the portfolio process was cumbersome and took time away from teaching. Other educators indicated that the portfolio process did not truly measure the quality or rigor of the individual classroom assessments but instead measured the process that was put into place to develop the assessments.

Theme 7: Leadership

Teachers were feeling empowered and administrators were stepping up as instructional leaders in all configurations. New instructional leadership skills were emerging not from just principals and superintendents but from teachers in the field as illustrated by this statement, “And throughout the entire process we’ve made revisions on a yearly basis trying to see what we can do to make those assessments more successful, not only for teachers, but also for our students and their needs. Within my building, I’ve been a leader as far as helping other teachers understand the assessment process.”

However, buy-in across the board remains an elusive goal as some teachers and administrators struggle with STARS and the implementation of standards, assessment, and accountability on a daily basis. One principal said, “But what I’m finding over the years, this whole conversation about standards and STARS is becoming really standard operating procedure, even from the veterans who are really resistant to it. I think it’s one of those things that over time have pretty much taken over the school culture.”

Theme 8: Professional Development

Professional development was evident for teachers of language arts and math in grades 4, 8, and 11, principals, superintendents, and assessment coordinators across all configurations. The ESUs responses supported the evidence that districts were participating actively in professional development and having conversations at the district level concerning STARS.

Staff developers shared that teachers have different conversations today than they had in the past as evidenced by this statement, “If the teachers could hear themselves today compared to five years ago, they would not even know they were the same teachers. Their vocabulary, their literacy in the assessment world, their ability to figure out how to get it all together, their reporting, their knowing about how to make things reliable, they just had no idea that they could stretch like that.” Teachers indicated that the opportunity to dialogue with other teachers was the greatest benefit of participating in the STARS process.

There was a major concern voiced by all educators in the survey and interviews about the time and resources it takes to train educators in the process and maintain the most up-to-date assessment knowledge to better implement the process across all configurations.

Theme 9: Challenges and Obstacles to Success

As with the implementation of any new initiative, there were challenges to be faced and obstacles to be overcome across all configurations. The primary obstacle facing the implementation of the STARS process was “time.” This is not a new issue but an ongoing issue identified as early as 2001 by Gallagher in the initial comprehensive evaluation report. Educators initially needed time to learn the new skills associated with building an assessment and accountability system within their own school districts. Once the new skills were learned and implementation began, many other challenges arose as the STARS process became increasingly embedded in the day-to-day work of the school.

Time was identified as an issue by teachers, principals, superintendents,

assessment coordinators and staff developers in every interview conducted. Changing the school calendar or length of the school day to give teachers additional time to provide quality assessment and reporting of student achievement was one suggestion for increasing time.

Other challenges and obstacles included were: ownership and participation by all grade level teachers; coping with continuous change that invokes conflict concerning philosophical issues that impact student achievement; providing the opportunity for all students to learn before being tested as some students are unable to master advanced subject matter called for in some standards; reducing the number of standards being reported in reading and math as in science and social studies; providing tests that are appropriate for all learners, i.e., Special Education and English Language Learners; the appropriate use of summative and formative assessment; a reconsideration of the use of the STARS portfolio as the way that school districts validate their assessment systems; development of a statewide policy and/or decision on how many times a student can be re-tested before reporting final data to the state; assistance with technology and data management issues at the school and district levels; and finally, a feeling that a state test should be considered (as expressed by a limited number of research participants).

Theme 10: Next Steps for Success

As educators continued their implementation of the STARS process within their school districts, many of them shared thoughts about the next steps to make the process more successful and manageable. They shared ideas about the need for ensuring that all students had the opportunity to learn by guaranteeing that all districts in configurations align their curriculum to match standards and the assessments that measure those standards; changing school schedules to provide increased time for mastering content or remediation for students not showing mastery of standards; increasing credit hours for graduation in major content areas; offering courses more frequently or before the

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RIGHT THINGS TO BUILD ON

by Doug Christensen, Commissioner of Education



Christensen

We've got more than a few things right. We know pretty well who or what we are and who or what we are not. And this is a good thing.

Our basic values are among the things we've got right in Nebraska.

For most people, family comes first. Community comes second. How each is defined is not the point. How ever they are defined, family and community tend to come first before anything else.

These are right things and these are good things.

Nebraskans rarely want our families and communities to change. Neither do we want anything to disrupt the well-being of our families and communities nor do we want anything to diminish or do harm to them.

Because we hold family and community so tightly and because so much of how we live our lives is connected to family and community, we rarely give any thing up if it relates to family and/or community. And, if we do give up something related to family and/or community, we usually don't do so without a fight. We often are willing to "go to the mat" if that is what it takes to protect our sense of family and community.

One example of how tightly we hold family and community values and how strongly we respond to changes affecting them shows up in the issues and actions surrounding reorganization of schools into K-12 districts. We see another example in the metro-Omaha school annexation issues and actions. Clearly, we are very protective of families and communities. And we should be.

We should never question our commitment to family and community. But we should always be careful how we respond to ideas for change, proposals that challenge the present status, and conflict over differing points of view. We

must take great care to find ways to hear all voices, not just a few. We must be careful when protecting the present to not trump any consideration of something new or different. Otherwise, we will not know what's best or if there is a better way. We need to find ways to let everyone who cares find and share their voice.

Isn't this what families would do? Wouldn't they listen to each other? Wouldn't they decide the greatest good for all? Isn't this what communities should do and what states should do?

Shouldn't we listen to each other? Shouldn't we respect each other?

Shouldn't we care for a n d

protect each other? Shouldn't we hear all the voices?

In the specific examples of organizing schools into K-12 districts and of the school annexations, the opposing sides are coming from the same value base. However, one side wants to protect the present and what they now have and the other side wants a different future and wants to make it just as secure for them. Neither side is right or wrong. Neither side is good or bad.

Each of these conflicts are laden with deep issues about families and communities and the outcomes of any policy decisions will be important to our well being as families, communities and as a state.

If "we" as communities, and a state,

have any hope of finding solutions to this or most any other problems or challenges we face, we need to behave as families would and engage each other in finding answers to the following serious policy-level, high-impact questions that often lie below the surface:

What opportunities should be available to all of our children?

Is there an "essential education" to which all children are entitled regardless of gender, family income, color of skin, and/or disability?

Is there an "essential education" which all schools should offer regardless of size, location or wealth?

Does it matter if schools are integrated and aligned K-12, in terms of learning sequence, governance and finance?

Does it matter what size of student population the school building serves?

Does it matter what size of student population the district serves?

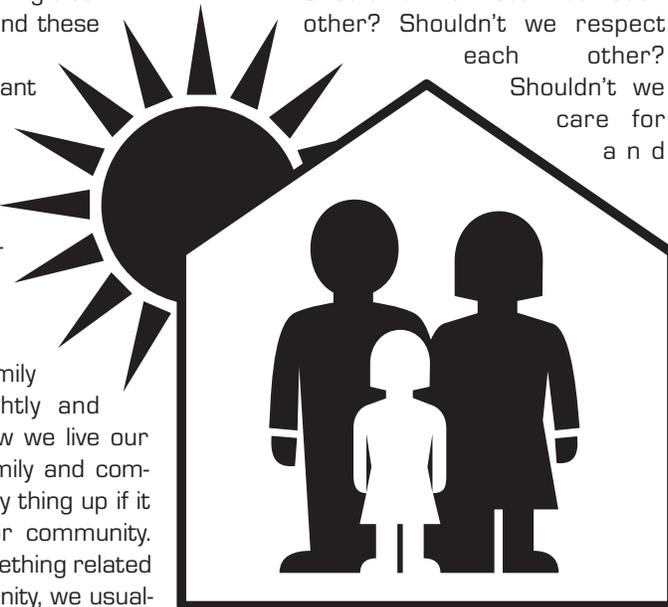
Can schools or districts be too big or too small?

Does it matter if the demographics/diversity of a school or school building reflects the neighborhood or the community being served?

Failure to get below the surface and confront these questions and failure to take a family approach to engage each other in answering them is likely to keep us stuck in the past, and not considering all three options of the past, the present or the possibility of a different future. Failure to address these questions ensures that some are left behind; that someone will be denied an opportunity; and that someone won't have the same future as others enjoy.

We just can't let that happen. Nebraska is about all of families, all of our children, all of our communities, and all of our schools.

We've got something else right in Nebraska besides family and community priorities. We are a state for all of us, not some of us and we need to keep it that way.





THE CLASS OF 1968

by Don Fritz, Administrator, ESU #6

I recently pulled my old high school yearbook off the shelf, "The Orange and Black," Class of 1968, home of the Falls City Tigers! While thumbing through the pages, I began to reminisce about the teachers at FCHS. Of course, I had my favorites and my not-so favorites. It started me thinking about my own career and educators around me.

When I met with my ESU #6 staff in pre-service, I had them bring their yearbooks and I took them through a series of activities with it. After a few introductory (and possibly embarrassing) activities, I individually had them identify one of their favorite high school teachers and identify two or three attributes of that teacher. We then collated those attributes as a group. The resulting list had attributes like, "caring," "treated students with respect," "taught more than content," "encouraged independent thinking," and "made everyone feel special." Most of the list really dealt with effective attributes; only one dealt with "content knowledge." Since these were qualities that my staff apparently admired, I then had them reflect on this question, "How would your students, or those you work with, say you compare to your favorite teacher?" We did not share the reflections publicly, but the responses could be especially insightful in a small, safe environment.

We then reflected on a student from their high school whose "now" is very different from their "then." I asked, "How was this student treated by teachers and other students?" "What had changed?" "Are there any lessons to be learned from this?" The staff really had some excellent responses: "We can never assume the future (of our students)." "Every conversation (with students) really matters." "Teachers impact students (both negatively and positively) in ways we can never imagine."

I then asked the staff to tell their own story from high school to now. "Would anyone be surprised?" How did the expectations of your teachers and other students differ from your own expectations?" "Did anything change?" "What

lessons can be learned from your story?" I gave teachers time to reflect and there were many interesting and sometimes emotional stories of people and events that impacted them. All of us have had what the Gallup Organization calls, "moments that matter," where someone made a difference in our lives.

Michael Fullan, in his book, *Leading in a Culture of Change*, talks about Moral Purpose and the role it plays in a successful organization. Simply put, Moral Purpose revolves around the fundamental belief that we can make a difference in the lives of others (exactly how varies with each of us). Moral Purpose drives all of us in varying degrees. Fullan argues that successful people, regardless of the profession, have an unwavering focus on Moral Purpose and organize their actions around it. It focuses both the means and the ends of our daily efforts.

From a leadership perspective, helping our teachers and staff "rediscover" or "refine" their moral purpose creates energy, commitment and hopefully, passion. Leaders not only help staff find purpose, but also help them align that purpose to the vision, mission, and core beliefs for the organization. This is important because Fullan believes that Moral Purpose is the key element in the success of any organization.

Too often, we do not take the time or have the opportunity to revisit "why we do what we do." Using the high school yearbook as the vehicle, I tried to help the staff at ESU #6 reflect and eventually define their own moral purpose. The realization that each of us really does make a difference in the lives of others is very powerful (and a little scary)! It is a tremendous opportunity and a tremendous responsibility. 

UPCOMING EVENTS...

October 6 Safety Manual Workshop

8:30 a.m.
Westside Community
Center – Omaha

October 11 Student Discipline Workshop

8:30 a.m.
Holiday Inn – Kearney

October 13 New Principals Workshop

9:00 a.m.
NCSA – Lincoln

October 14 Student Discipline Workshop

8:30 a.m.
Holiday Inn – Kearney

October 17-18 NARSA Fall Event Omaha, NE

October 18-19 – NELI
NCSA–Lincoln
18 – CBA–UNL Campus
11:00 a.m.
19 – Gallup
University–Omaha
7:30 a.m.

November 9-10 NSASSP State Convention

Holiday Inn – Kearney

November 14 Assistant Principals Conference

8:30 a.m.
Cornhusker Hotel –
Lincoln

November 16-18 NASA/NASB State Convention

Holiday Inn – Omaha

December 1-2 NASES/NDE Joint Meeting

Sandhills Convention
Center
North Platte

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



CENTURA'S JOURNEY IN DEVELOPING EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

By: Steve Wilson, Principal, Centura Elementary School

Early childhood programs have gained much needed attention in Nebraska in the last few years. I sometimes wonder why it took so long. What we accomplish with young children and their families is the foundation upon which everything else is built in terms of formal learning at Centura. Centura has been involved with early childhood programs for the better part of 17 years. When I came to Centura Elementary School in 1988, one of the first things I did was to assess the needs of the community, our students and teachers. Through months of questioning, observations and listening to people talk about the needs of our student body, early childhood issues were by far the most prominent of all discussions. There were very few quality support systems in place for young children in our district, and those circumstances had a profound effect on what these same kids could (could not) take advantage of when they reached Kindergarten and beyond. The question was how could Centura Elementary better support younger learners?

We began discussing realistically how we might support younger learners. Our discussions surrounded all-day-every-day Kindergarten and a preschool. As I visited with various members of the Department of Education, we set our sites on first developing a preschool to support our younger learners and their families. At that same time, during a visit with Harriet Egertson, she asked what I was doing with my K-3 classrooms. Were they developmentally appropriate? Did I (and my teachers) understand what age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate instruction looked like; moreover, did we provide these things throughout each and every day? I couldn't answer all her questions without going back and doing my own research in my K-3 classrooms and assessing my own early childhood education knowledge base.

What I found was that our K-3 classrooms did, for the most part, reflect the appropriate instruction, activities and

structure for this age of student. This also was the beginning of the transformation of my own knowledge base of early childhood issues in the elementary school. I learned from my most talented teachers who had the early childhood endorsement and from a number of publications on early childhood education, as well as from other professionals in the field.

OK, now that I knew more specifically what I was getting myself into, I needed to find a way to make it all happen at Centura Elementary School. As with every school, funding was going to be an issue. I think I talked with anyone who might know of a possible way of funding a new preschool at Centura.

During that period of time, I was keeping the Board of Education informed of our efforts. Centura board members had legitimate concerns about getting involved with a preschool program, but they allowed me to continue with the development of a plan.

At this same time, Marilyn Peterson from the Department of Education had worked on developing a way to fund early childhood programs in the schools by combining Title I, Special Education and Head Start funding with local school district funds. The State Board of Education approved this program in the fall of 1992, and Centura set out to fund a preschool program using these multiple funding sources.

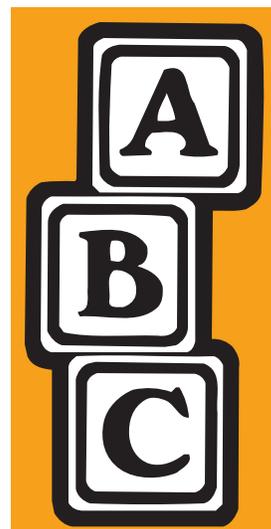
Along with some additional funding through local grants and Centura's budget, we started our preschool program in January 1993. There were many obstacles along the way, but we persevered in an arena where there were very few programs to serve as models. In 1996, Centura Public Schools entered into a partnership with Central Nebraska Community Services and received a state-funded grant to complete a partnership with Head Start. This collaboration accomplished two valuable outcomes; it added a parent educator and paraprofessionals to our preschool staff and it brought Centura's program

into compliance with all Head Start performance standards. That partnership was—and continues to be—one of the best decisions. In fact, the strength of

our program is the partnership with CNCS. Our preschool program now serves 40 children and their families and has a waiting list every year to serve more children.

In the fall of 1998, Centura Elementary School transitioned into an all day every day Kindergarten program. After many discussions with faculty, parents, and the Board of Education, we committed to all day every day Kindergarten. The largest obstacle we had in transitioning to all day Kindergarten was adding the additional classroom. We made room for our preschool and all-day-everyday kindergarten by transforming classrooms that were once occupied by special education and Title I staff. We combined a special education classroom and a Title I classroom into one room as these teachers were doing more class within a class, and much of their work was now being performed in the regular classrooms. We continue to use creative scheduling for our specialists to serve our students in the regular classroom as well as their own classroom that is now shared. We emptied storage closets to accommodate staff offices and smaller instructional spaces. We did eventually build an additional office/classroom in our library to accommodate our speech pathologist's needs for student confidentiality and a quiet learning environment. The entire staff and faculty are fully supportive of our efforts despite that many had to make classroom sacrifices to accommodate these programs.

(continued on page 13)





NASPA AIDS IN HUMAN RESOURCE ISSUES

by Gary Bolton, Assistant Superintendent, Fremont Public Schools



Bolton

I don't know about you, but I have always appreciated the ironic wit of Andy Rooney on *60 Minutes*. One Sunday evening, he was pontificating upon how things had changed over the years: station wagons were now sport utility vehicles, duplexes were now townhouses, and used cars had suddenly morphed into certified, pre-owned vehicles. Some of those changes have been substantive, while others are just about semantics and euphemisms. Of course, no one could argue that most things are far different than they were years ago – and education is no exception. As I began my 34th year in education this August, like other veterans, I realized that while it seems that a few aspects of education appear never to change, many other areas have seen tremendous restructuring.

My current role as an assistant superintendent for the Fremont Public Schools requires that I supervise K-12 administration and operations. However, my major function is overseeing “personnel,” which has now evolved into “human resources.” Whatever terminology is used, it comes as no surprise to anyone that the personnel function has expanded tremendously over the years. While in larger districts a team of individuals may administer these duties, for most Nebraska districts, it is simply one more obligation that the superintendent must wrestle with—often on a daily basis. The task becomes even more daunting with the consideration of the complex legal issues that exist within the realm of human resources.

As we all know, the world of employment law has burgeoned into a virtual minefield in recent decades. To avoid potential mistakes or inappropriate actions throughout the hiring process (including advertising, applications, interviews and job offers) or during discharge or termination actions, it becomes critical for administrators to be cognizant of all aspects of employment law. The pitfalls are many, and coupled with the fact

that the majority of lawsuits filed against school districts relate in some fashion to unlawful employment practices, the burden is even greater on school district administrators. Boards of Education depend upon their administrator(s) to have sufficient knowledge of personnel legalities and to follow appropriate personnel practices that will reduce the possibility of lawsuits. In today's world, that entails keeping abreast of recent court cases, attending school law workshops, and conferring with legal counsel. Unfortunately, the list of “alphabet soup” laws (ADA, FMLA, FLSA, FERPA, HIPPA, etc.) makes it a constant challenge to keep up with what is truly legal and appropriate. With the additional and essential tasks of maintaining up-to-date policies and employment handbooks, conducting background checks, investigating claims of sexual harassment, protecting employees' privacy rights, and ensuring that job descriptions meet the legal “litmus test,” it is little wonder that we sometimes find it difficult to sleep soundly at night.

I remember a General Motors commercial from a few years ago that stated, “This is not your father's Oldsmobile.” Well, human resources today is not your father's personnel function. Times have changed, and the need for school district administrators to have an excellent working knowledge of employment law – or their legal counsel's phone number on speed dial – is imperative.

With the recognition of this need, I would like to take this opportunity to let administrators across the state know about an organization that was formed in 2004 by some district level administrators who oversee human resources for their districts. That organization is NASPA, which stands for Nebraska Association of School Personnel

Administrators, and it is an affiliate of AASPA, the national organization. The purpose of NASPA is to create a network of administrators who deal with these issues on a daily basis and, for the most part, it comprises their only function. Larger districts have a tremendous advantage when there is an in-house person who keeps abreast of all the employment law issues for the superintendent. However, most superintendents across the state are in districts that are too small to employ such a person, and the personnel duties are a weighty addition to their already crowded plate. Even though NASPA began as an organization of human resource folks, a few superintendents have either joined or have attended the NASPA summer workshop in June. This annual workshop provides an excellent opportunity to discuss personnel issues and to build a network of resources that are a phone call or an e-mail away when personnel issues arise. Certainly, this does not replace contact with legal counsel, but it does allow you to see how other districts address similar issues and to be proactive in this area. If you can see how this would be a benefit, you might consider attending the next NASPA Conference, which will likely be scheduled for late June 2006 in Nebraska City.

In summary, while there is no guarantee that you will never make a mistake related to employment law, there are certainly steps you can take to reduce the odds that your mistake will be a costly one. Take employment law issue seriously, talk with other administrators in other districts about what they are doing, and above all, be sure to consult legal counsel when appropriate. The phrase, “times have really changed,” is certainly true in the world of education and employment issues. 

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

 Congratulations to the following schools on their successful elections for school bonds: Brady, Freeman, Grand Island, and Waverly



FOCUS ON POSITIVE STRENGTHS

by Chuck Chevalier, Superintendent, Auburn Public Schools

When I was a head football coach at York, we were rated #10 once and had an upcoming game with Pius X, coached by Vince Aldrich. A reporter asked me what we were going to change for the game with Pius. I told him I wouldn't answer that question unless he would promise to ask Vince Aldrich the same question. He began to laugh.

I realized that I had to get our players that week to focus on our strengths and what we controlled, rather than Pius' strengths. I have remembered that coaching technique over the last five years as Superintendent in Auburn. Our focus on instruction, as well as a unique funding plan, have helped our school district provide improved learning opportunities.

During the last five years, because of cuts in state aid, the levy lid, decreasing enrollment, three unsuccessful levy override elections, and slow assessed value appreciation, we have made several drastic cuts. We have "riffed" over ten percent of our staff and closed two buildings. It has been very difficult.

In the middle of this mess, our admin-

istrative team decided that we needed to keep our focus on teaching and learning. The state was helping us keep a focus on standards and assessment, but we required more. We decided to start the Great Teaching Program (GTP). (We stole the name from Nebraska Wesleyan.)

With a focus on differentiated instruction (DI), we developed a two-prong attack. First we sent staff to DI national conferences in the summer. This last summer was the third summer, and now we have about 45 percent of our teachers who have attended a conference. These teachers come back and lead the DI inservice for the rest of the staff during the school year.

Secondly, staff wrote GTP development grants for improvement in instruction. These grant awards support teachers developing plans, activities and/or DI assignments. GTP grant award winners also presented to the rest of the staff. We funded these efforts by awarding stipends, paying for travel, and buying teaching resources. The money for these projects came from HAL grants,

Title II, Title V and the Auburn Public Schools Foundation. This summer we paid almost \$25,000 in stipends beyond our Star Grants. Perhaps we should have used those monies to replace staff or equipment that was cut, but we believe strongly that we needed a program to move us ahead, rather than keep us even.

The time and effort to infuse DI into our schools has really been a testament to the dedication of our teachers and administrators; however, to some degree it kept the focus on instructional improvement rather than our funding problems. It hasn't been all rosy, and our staff and kids continue to be affected by the cuts, and this has made it even tougher to keep our focus, but in my mind it saved us during the toughest times.

By the way, we lost to Pius that week. I realized that it was tough to beat a coach when he had a stadium already named after him! Since then, I have also realized that it would be nice to pass a levy override! 

SHARING EXPERTISE FROM "WITH-IN"...

(continued from page 1)

tests are essential so that when analyzing progress there is a clear focus. Data drives the discussion and teachers are on an even playing field regardless of the length of their teaching tenure. The focus sways from "my" students to "our" students because teachers are helping each other. Teachers learn to apply instructional strategies that work. "Strength based" instruction becomes a reality when individual student achievement soars to new highs.

After teaching in four districts before becoming an administrator, from small districts with less than 70 students K-12 to large metro districts with thousands of students, I can see plenty of benefits from this "strength based" approach regardless of district size. Every district has a teacher or two we consider "workshop-aholics" that seldom apply the strategies they have learned or seldom

have the highest student achievement. Maybe you really do have a "STAR" teacher who is a "workshop-aholic", better yet. When teachers get into PLC teams what matters most is the evidence of good teaching. Many teachers know the instructional strategies that are proven to work, but this process allows for ongoing professional development and accountability in a relevant personal setting, your school.

Obviously, jumping into a PLC framework would be worthless without appropriate planning. Teachers need to:

- Know the researched-based rationale for working together in teams on instruction.
- See the benefits of collaboration for themselves and their colleagues.
- Know how a PLC meeting differs from other types of planning meetings.
- Establish firm "team norms" includ-

ing productive collaborative approaches, risk taking, collegiality and leadership development.

- Know how to analyze data.
- Know how to determine goals.
- Know how to identify successful instructional practices
- Develop a plan to increase teacher expertise and improve quality of instruction.
- Consistently review progress.

Professional Learning Communities provide an opportunity for improved instruction reflecting the practices used by your best teachers and resulting in improved student achievement. Consider the positive impact of providing training and time for the PLC process in your school district, Sharing Expertise From "With-In," Building On Strengths!





NEBRASKA SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER...

(continued from page 1)

will have executive leaders with four years or less tenure in the current position, counting the 2005-2006 school year:

The Veterans

The number of Nebraska superintendents serving 20-or-more years in the same school district averaged 23 from 1987 to 1996, with a high of 28 in 1991, but that figure has declined to seven for each of the past two years. The stalwarts in this select group include: Russ Hoppner, Hampton (35); Benje Hookstra, Spalding (28); Randall Anderson, Crofton (27); Keith Fagot, Loomis (26); Mike Cuning, Sutherland (23); and Larry Wilbeck, Deshler, and Norm Yoder, Henderson (21).

There are a few in the 15 to 19-year tenure slots who might still aspire to the two-decade plateau: Doug Ackles, St. Paul, and Dennis Gray, High Plains (19); Craig Pease, Ashland-Greenwood (18); Don Betterman, Plainview, Dave Jones, Oakland-Craig, and Larry Turnquist, Harvard (17); Ed Kasl, Louisville, Doug Nollette, O'Neil, and Dallas Watkins, Dundy County (16); Fred Boelter, Creighton, Roger Breed, Elkhorn, Larry Harnisch, Wood River, Dan Jantzen, Thayer Central, George Robertson, Mead, and Tom Sandberg, Axtell (15).

Looking ahead, there are six superintendents with 14 years of tenure in position, three with 13, two with 12, seven with 11, and eight with 10.

McPherson County, Gayla Fredrickson, Elgin, and Katherine Meink, Keya Paha (5); Renee Jacobson, Plattsmouth, and Amy Malander, Cedar Rapids (4); Vicki Caldwell, Newcastle, Cindy Huff, Hitchcock Unified, Joan Reznicek, Red Cloud, and Marlene Uhing, Seward (3); Susan Gourley, Lincoln, Jamie Isom, Valentine, Lana Sides, Banner County, and Caroline Winchester, Loup City (2); and Cindy Wendell, Holdrege, and Alberta Moore, Sandhills (1).

For at least four of these women, administration is a family affair. France Blanchard's husband Bruce is the superintendent at Santee; Renee Jacobson's husband Tom is a professor of educational administration; Vickie Caldwell's husband Richard is the superintendent at Sergeant Bluff, Iowa; and Marlene Uhing's husband Bob is the administrator of ESU 1 in Wakefield.

Trends and History

I remain confident in only two predictions regarding the Nebraska school superintendency. One, there will be more women superintendents, because the overwhelming majority of public school educators is female and the numbers of women in graduate programs preparing for the school superintendency are increasing. Two, the number of Nebraska public school districts will continue to decline, particularly in rural areas. Although there is the continual vexation of scarce finances, the major

problem is a decrease in student population. According to the U. S. Census, the median age in virtually all Nebraska rural counties is in excess of 40. Those folks, except for grandchildren, are done raising kids.

The table below provides some superintendent turnover data that encompasses a quarter of a century. In 1980, Keith Fagot at Loomis and Randall Anderson at Crofton were just beginning their careers as school district leaders. Benje Hookstra at Spalding had logged three years in the top job, and Russ Hoppner had already chalked up a decade of experience as superintendent at Hampton. None of the four at that time had to contend with equalization formulas, STARS, or NCLB.

They no doubt recall, as will many other Nebraska educators, the old sages of that era who had served for 20-or-more years in the lead educator's position. They included: Kermit Belau at Gibbon (20), Will Brawner at Dix (28), Jack Burger at Silver Creek (25), Mel Doeschot at Tekamah-Herman (20), Alan Friesen at Henderson (29), Max Ingram at Bartley (32), Vaughn Phelps at Omaha Westside (22), Hal Saum at Elm Creek (21), Don Stroh at Millard (26), and Lee Todd at Grant (35).

*"What is past is prologue." -
- Shakespeare, The Tempest*

*"The man who reviews the old so as to
find out the new is qualified to teach others."
-- Confucius*

Women Superintendents

The number of Nebraska female school superintendents remains at 16, representing 6.53% of the total of 245 individuals. One woman retired and was replaced by another who reentered the profession at the district leadership level. If the past few years are any indication, the number of female superintendents will increase, albeit slowly. Nebraska will need to double the numbers of women school district executives before it approaches the national average of 14%.

Nebraska women superintendents in the fall of 2005 include: Virginia Moon, Ralston (8); France Blanchard,

**Nebraska Public School Districts with High Schools
Superintendent Data Comparisons: Fall 1980, 1995, and 2005**

<u>Item</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>2005</u>
School Districts	320	288	256
Number Superintendents	320	283	245
Median Tenure in Position	*	3.96 yrs.	4.26 yrs.
Average Tenure in Position	6.36 yrs.	6.88 yrs.	6.18 yrs.
Supts. w/ 1-year Tenure	43	52	34
% Turnover	13.5	18.0	13.3
Supts. w/ 20 + yrs. Tenure	10	21	7
Women Superintendents	1	5	16

* - Not calculated.



PARENT INVOLVEMENT

(continued from page 2)

Nightly we would read to Jordynn as we had heard that reading daily would help your child, and we wanted to make sure she was ready to learn when she went to kindergarten. Parent involvement at home and on the road, making sure she could hear, talk and be ready for school seemed like a full time job.

It came down to one big question last year. Would she be ready to be a successful student? The teachers, deaf educator and principal said that she would be ready and successful in school. It was a struggle for us to say yes, since we didn't want anyone to look at her any differently or act any differently toward her.

The first day was hard for mom and dad, but for her she went bouncing off to school waving goodbye, ready to learn. We have now gone through one year and the teacher, deaf educator and administrator say she is doing fine and a few target areas are still in need of improvement, but only because all the students are not at that level. Jordynn wears her implant from when she wakes up till she goes to sleep.

One last thing is we have two deaf students at our elementary school that have implants: our deaf educator has made this comparison, and one student has an implant and is deaf. Jordynn has an implant and has a speech problem.

Parent involvement, yes we have seen and lived it. Reading and helping with homework are some items, but do you see parents go out of their way to make that little difference in their child's life, so the school can be there for academics and learning. We are blessed that with the help of our special education department and deaf educator we got the services that she needed and then we made sure as parents we took those opportunities and used them to make our child ready for school. The funds our special education department spent for 2 years, now are paying off, 45 minutes for speech and other than that she is just another child of 22 in a classroom that is ready to learn each and every day. No one in the classroom to sign to her; no one is needed to make sure she heard the directions, no one there to work with her on her assignments, just her teacher. 

CHARTING STARS...

(continued from page 6)

senior year; development of policies on re-testing of students prior to reporting; providing assessments more appropriate for all learners i.e., Special Education and English Language Learners; finding time and resources to support continued dialogue and rewriting of assessments by teachers; reducing the number of standards reported in reading and math; and finding alternatives to the portfolio system currently used by NDE for ensuring a quality assessment system.

Suggestions regarding data included creating a data management system that was more manageable and allowed for more timely return of data with the help of technology. The theme of professional development prompted suggestions that educators be provided with continued training in the use of data and the interventions needed to support all students needing additional assistance and that the responsibility and accountability for assessment literacy be shared by all grade level teachers providing benchmarks for meeting all standards.

CONCLUSION

The future looks bright for continued growth and success for the STARS process if the challenges can be turned into successes and the obstacles can be minimized. A superintendent cautioned that we shouldn't be "afraid of the future, to pull back, to say, this didn't work, or make the modifications to put into prac-

tice what we expect of our educators. If, in fact, the strategy is not paying the dividends or the results, not to hesitate to pull that off the table, to say, let's regroup."

For the last four years, Nebraska educators have created new learning through professional development and dialogue. They have developed and refined assessments, collected and analyzed data, and implemented best instructional practices with the support of external agencies. Successful learning communities have been formed in school districts where teachers dialogue on a regular basis, trying to wrestle with the problems that have arisen from the implementation of STARS. They have a wealth of experience to offer teachers across the nation about what true classroom assessment is all about and how student learning has been impacted positively by their own personal growth and the growth that has occurred for students.

Six supplementary quantitative studies were conducted in 2004-05 that generated additional recommendations for STARS. These results and more in depth results from the study can be found on the NDE website.

I would like to thank all educators that willingly participated in the fourth year study. Your participation has helped "to light the candles that bring forth a new era of excellence, understanding, and accomplishment" (Dlugosh, NCSA, 2005) in our great state. 

CENTURA'S JOURNEY...

(continued from page 9)

The years of putting together a comprehensive early childhood program were long and difficult, but the benefits to students far out weighed the headaches. The bottom line is that our efforts in early childhood programs have paid big dividends in student performance. Over the past ten years, we have tracked students who participated in our program and have found evidence that these students perform better on State Standards, standardized achievement tests and local criterion referenced assessments; they also do better socially than their non-preschool counterparts. Our preschoolers that have spe-

cial needs are also less involved with Special Education and Title I programs. If you were to ask any of our staff and faculty, the answer would be the same, our early childhood efforts work. The Board of Education that was in the beginning skeptical of the program's funding structure has now become one of the strongest advocates of our efforts.

Schools can be more successful at meeting the high standards of academic achievement when they support young children and their families in appropriate ways in the very beginning of a child's academic career. It is cost effective, and, more importantly, it builds a life long love of learning in all children. 



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Calendar of Events

OCTOBER

5	NCSA Executive Board	9:00 a.m.	NCSA	Lincoln
5	NSASSP Region II	5:30 p.m.	German American Society	Omaha
6	NASES Region V	9:00 a.m.	Perkins	Sidney
6	Safety Manual Workshop	8:30 a.m.	Westside Community Center	Omaha
10	NAESP Executive Board	9:30 a.m.	NCSA	Lincoln
11	Student Discipline Workshop	8:30 a.m.	Holiday Inn	Kearney
12	NASA Region III	9:00 a.m.	Lifelong Learning Center	Norfolk
12	NASA Region IV	10:00 a.m.	ESU #10	Kearney
12	NAESP Region I	2:00 p.m.	Thayer Central Intermediate	Hebron
13	New Principals Workshop	9:00 a.m.	NCSA	Lincoln
14	Student Discipline Workshop	8:30 a.m.	ESU #3	Omaha
17	NAESP Region II	8:30 a.m.	Milo Bales Center - UNO	Omaha
18	NELI	11:00 a.m.	UNL - CBA Building	Lincoln
19	NELI	7:30 a.m.	Gallup University	Omaha
19	NASA Region I	4:00 p.m.	Evening with Friends	Milligan
26	NASES Region IV	12:00 noon	ESU #10	Kearney
28	NASES Region III	12:00 noon	Sports Denn	Norfolk

NOVEMBER

4	NAESP Region III	2:00 p.m.	Lifelong Learning Center	Norfolk
9-10	NSASSP State Convention	6:00 p.m.	Holiday Inn	Kearney
9	NSASSP Executive Board	1:00 p.m.	Holiday Inn	Kearney
9	NAESP Region I	6:00 p.m.	Valentino's	Beatrice
14	Assistant Principals Conference	8:30 a.m.	Cornhusker Hotel	Lincoln
16-18	NASA/NASB State Convention		Holiday Inn Central	Omaha
16	NASA Executive Board	12:00 noon	Holiday Inn Central	Omaha
18	NAESP Region IV	8:30 a.m.	UNK	Kearney
18	NASA General Membership	9:00 a.m.	Holiday Inn Central	Omaha
30	NAESP Region II	5:30 p.m.	Champions Club	Omaha

DECEMBER

1-2	NASES/NDE Joint Meeting	9:30 a.m.	Sandhills Convention Center	North Platte
1	NAESP Executive Board	9:30 a.m.	NCSA	Lincoln
7	Legislative Preveiw	8:00 a.m.	Cornhusker Hotel	Lincoln
15	Emerging Superintendent	9:00 a.m.	NCSA	Lincoln

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

October 21-24, 2005 - ASBO National Convention - Boston, MA
 November 11-12, 2005 - CASE National Convention - Scottsdale, AZ
 February 9-11, 2006 - ASBO Leadership Convention - Pittsburgh, PA
 February 23-26, 2006 - AASA National Convention - San Diego, CA
 March 17-19, 2006 - NASSP National Convention - Reno, NV
 March 31 - April 4, 2006 - NAESP National Convention - San Antonio, TX
 April 6-9, 2006 - CASE/CEC National Convention - Salt Lake City, UT

The NAESP Link

*The State Association Newsletter for Elementary School Principals
October, 2005*



Mentors – Why They are so Important Kurk Wiedel, Region I President

I recently returned from a national mentoring conference in San Diego, CA. Needless to say, the city alone provided the reason to attend. However, I soon began to realize the importance for me personally to be in attendance at this conference. I, like most of you, have had many mentors in my life. These individuals have impacted most every part of my life. So much that I feel strong enough to encourage each of you to look at what mentors have done in your career and what they can do for your students.

As an administrator, we often need someone to talk to when situations arise. We rely on other feedback to either reassure decisions made or to assist in making the decision. We also need someone to vent frustrations when things are not going so well. I am unsure if I would still be in administration without the support of my colleagues, my mentors.

As a teacher, we also relied on those around us to give that support and help needed to make for a successful classroom. Sometimes it was a veteran teacher, while other times it might have been the secretary. Needless to say, to survive those first years of teaching, someone helped each of us by mentoring us through those times.

Undeniably, the most important area that mentors are needed is for the students. Mentors play a critical role in our students' lives. Teachers are often the first mentor for a student. They give positive direction by teaching both the academic skills and the skills that deal with life: respect, responsibility, caring, honesty, etc. How they react to situations and especially what they say guides the student's moral development. However, teachers cannot be the only mentor for a child. Children need responsible adults to assist in this development. While parents should fill this role, it is not happening in all families. Data clearly shows that youth have a real need for positive role models. As administrators, we need to search out to our community to find these people who will fit this role.

There are many resources available for schools on what to do to incorporate a mentoring program in their school. A simple internet search will provide much guidance for this endeavor. One of the best sites that I have seen on mentoring is from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (www.nwre.org) There is a large amount of information that will support schools in starting and sustaining a program.

Like each of us, a mentor can and will make a difference in the success of a child. It might be the one component missing from the child's life. This is a component that we do not want them to miss.

Region Notes

Region I

Region I began work on bringing a Leadership Conference in October to the student leaders in each school. Due to scheduling issues for this year, plans are underway to begin this annual event in the Region for the 2006 – 2007 school year. Doane College will be the host to this event on October 17, 2006. Mark your calendars now to keep this important date and opportunity available for next school year.

Region I will hold an Elementary Principal / Superintendent Appreciation Meeting and Dinner on November 9th in Beatrice at Valentino's starting at 6:00. The Superintendents in attendance will be honored along with the announcement and recognition of our Region's Outstanding New Principal and the Distinguished Principal Award nominees. All Region I members should look for more information by e-mail during the first week of October.

Region III

A Joint NAESP/NASSP Region III meeting was held in Norfolk on Wednesday, September 21, 2005. State Senator Ron Raikes and Jerry Sellentin, Executive Director of NCSA each shared a few words with our group. Following our Jt. Meeting, Elementary and Secondary Principals met with their individual groups. Susan Anglemyer, NAESP State President, was introduced to NAESP members. She shared information on Early Childhood Education, the importance of attending our legislative gathering in Lincoln on February 27 and 28, 2006, and membership benefits. Cory Worrell was presented with a plaque in appreciation for his service during the 2004-2005 school year. Ron Brandl was selected as Region III Nebraska Distinguished Principal nominee and Cory Worrell was selected as a nominee for the Outstanding New Principal of the Year Award. Scott Dodson shared information on the Principal Liaison Initiative and Dave Ludwig presented information on NAESP membership. Plans are beginning to be made again to host a Youth Leadership Conference at Wayne State College this school year. Special Committees were also formed to support the work of our group. Thank you to all of you for willingness to serve. The next meeting of Region III Elementary Principals will be held on November 2, 2005 at 2 p.m. at

the Lifelong Learning Center in Norfolk. The topic will be Early Childhood Education. Marcia Corr, NDE, Steve Wilson, Centura Principal, and Susan Strahm, ESU 1 Early Childhood Professional Development Specialist, will be presenting. A question/answer period will follow. All members are encouraged to attend. Call a neighboring principal and offer them a ride to our meeting! We look forward to seeing all of you! If you have any questions or know of a principal within our region who has not attended our meetings or has not been contacted, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will extend a personal invitation to them. Thank you. Be Rudloff, Creighton Elementary Principal.

Region IV

Region IV elementary principals met for their fall meeting at Mac's Vineyards in Lexington on September 8, 2005. Guest at the meeting was Bill Kenagy who is serving as a liaison with new principals in Nebraska. Mike Dulaney reported via telephone regarding legislative concerns and items of interest to school administrators. The Region IV goals for this year include:

- Having membership active at the State/National level
- Cooperating with the NAESP to publicize the principalship and continue developing early childhood education
- Continuing to encourage area administrators to join the association. Last year Region IV made "Goal Buster Plus" status.
- Reaching out to others. NCSA is donating \$1300 to the American Red Cross for hurricane relief.

The Youth Leadership Conference is scheduled for November 18. The speaker will be Ron Gustafson, and he is being sponsored by ESU #10 and Hastings Public Schools. Future meetings include our January 25 meeting in Kearney. This is in conjunction with the Region's Aspiring Principals Workshop. The spring meeting is scheduled for April 15 in Hastings.

Region V

The NCSA Region V secondary and elementary principals met in Bridgeport on September 21st at the Bridgeport Civic Center. Program presentations were made by NDE staff member Jesse Myles on Working with Children of Poverty, Wiley Larson, a representative from Tom Osborn's office presented on drug awareness and tech specialist, Roger Adkins from ESU 16 wowed the membership with all the new tech toys that might be useful to principals.

The elementary principals from the eastern half of Region V will be hosting the eighth annual leadership conference for 5th grade students in Ogallala on October 25th.



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