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OCTOBER, 2006

FALLING INTO CHANGE

by Beth Welke, Principal, Blair Community Schools; President, Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals



Welke

As cooler weather begins to move across the country, we again notice that change is all around us. Leaves display new colors overnight. Temperatures begin to fall. A new crispness fills the air as we venture outside. The chirping of birds is replaced by the humming of locusts. Most of us, by now, are used to these seasonal changes. We know what to expect and even look forward to nature's spectacular transformation.

As educational leaders, we are constantly faced with change. Educational change is not always as predictable as the change of the seasons. We aren't always prepared for what is ahead of us or around the next corner. Because we are so often trudging through uncharted

waters, we are unclear of what the end result might be. We sometimes get bogged down and lose sight of our destination. At times, we know where we want to go but are unsure of how to get there.

No one has ever said that leading through change would be an easy feat. In fact, there are plenty of people who have told us just the opposite; that being an educational leader during the change process is often difficult. Michael Fullan, in *Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform* (1993) argues that educational reformers are fighting a battle that is not "winnable" given that the system has a propensity to continually seek change but is inherently averse to it. He suggests new ways of thinking about change that include seeing problems as opportunities, realizing that change cannot be mandated, ensuring that individualism and collectivism have equal power, and designating schools to be Learning Communities.

As we lead our individual committees, buildings or district through change we can rely on the leaders that have paved the road ahead of us. It is easy to give up and go back to status quo. It is easy to look to others or at simpler solutions. It is easy to second-guess some of the decisions we make when we are confronted with negativity. But as leaders we know we must face the difficult paths ahead with courage and determination. We strive to implement changes that will make a difference. For we are educational leaders and we recognize that doing what is best for kids is the ultimate goal upon which we base our decisions!

In the coming month, take time to observe the transformations happening around you. Enjoy the fall! Embrace the changes and lead to make a difference, each and everyday! 

TAKING A MEASURE OF THE MEASURE

by Doug Christensen
Commissioner of Education
Nebraska Department of Education



Christensen

Imagine for a moment that you have a 12-inch ruler in your hands. As an instrument of measurement, we depend on this ruler. We depend on it to be accurate, valid and reliable. The same would be true for a yardstick, and 12-foot tape measure or other similar measuring devices.

The 12-inch ruler, however, has its flaws. If I need to measure something longer than 12 inches, it is possible for errors to creep in. In fact, if I measure something where I have to lay the ruler end to end several times, the width of the line I use to continue my measurement will soon be a factor in the overall length. And, if I need to lay the ruler end to end say 100 times, fatigue of the measurer will soon enter the process. So, our 12-inch ruler isn't universally accurate after all. For things that are 12-inches long, it is excellent, nothing is better. However, measurement of more than 12 inches, and also less than 12 inches, are problematic and prone to estimation and error.

There is an enduring principle of measurement that goes something like this: "measurement freezes the measure and what is measured in place." Don't believe it? Think about the metric system vs. our inches, feet, and yards system. We are probably the only advanced country in the 21st century that does not use the metric system. And, what if the 12-inch ruler was the only measure-

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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.



Initiative into Practice: "Rethinking High School"

by Bob Uhing, Director ESU #1 & Marlene Uhing, Superintendent, Seward Public Schools



B. Uhing



M. Uhing

By now administrators in every high school in the state, if not the nation, have heard the call to examine how well they are preparing high school students for the 21st century. Preparing students for the increasingly competitive global marketplace of the 21st century is critical. Moving Northeast Nebraska high schools forward when "good things" are already happening is not an easy task. In order to help make "rethinking the high school" a reality, a partnership between ESUs 1, 2, 7, 8, & 17, their

partner schools, the Nebraska Department of Education, and Innovation Labs was formed. Currently 19 area high schools have undertaken action in response and continue to wrestle with the challenges of implementing change in their high schools.

Conversations with high school principals and their staff demonstrate the critical importance of schools collecting and analyzing their data when deciding on changing how they presently operate. Not surprisingly, high school staff are finding that their experiences with the school improvement process and the use of data have provided them with helpful groundwork for rethinking high school. In addition to the "normal" data, schools are looking at specific data indi-

cators that address the high school initiative. In general, the data that is being reviewed at the high school level covers four areas: Core Learning, 9-12 Learning, Student Engagement, and Personal Skills.

Core Learning Data includes:

- Percent of students meeting state standards
- Average scores on the ACT
- Percent of students requiring English/math remediation classes in college

9-12 Learning Data includes:

- High school credits earned
- AP Courses
- Number of years of Foreign Language

Student Engagement Data includes:

- Dropout rate
- Attendance rate
- Percent taking ACT

Personal Skills Data includes:

- Participation in school activities
- Time management and organizational skills
- Teamwork skills

In this review, school personnel are using data that is measurable and expressed in objective terms. In addition to looking at annual scores, trend data that shows progress over 3-5 years is examined and analyzed. In determining acceptable scores districts often look at state and national averages as well as local and regional comparisons. Districts also are looking internally and comparing sub-group data for the district.

The Seward Public School District has been fortunate to participate in the ESU partnership to "rethink high school." One of the positives of this joint venture has been the opportunity to compare notes with other districts as to how the rethinking conversations were started

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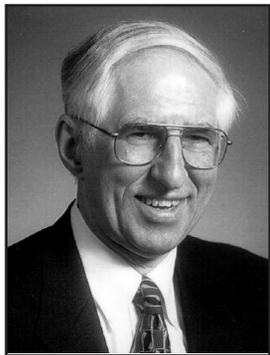
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PERSPECTIVES

by Jerry Sellentin, Ph.D., Executive Director



Sellentin

Public Schools Are Successful

DELTA KAPPA/GALLUP POLL

Dr. Ron Joekel presents a great article on pages 5 and 6 of this issue of the *NCSA Today* of the 38th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll that public schools are successful. As stated by Dr. Joekel, school administrators need to not only be aware that public schools are successful, but use it as a source of strength. "Stand Up For Public Schools" is a slogan of the American Association of School Administrators, and as administrators, we need to continue to embrace this thinking that we have good schools and we can become even better and build on the base of support that already exists. I encourage you to read Dr. Joekel's report and to continue your leadership in helping every child succeed.

SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

The National Center for Educational Accountability has released a framework for schools to help all students reach higher standards. I'm sure the following are practices you are aware of and practice in your school:

- Rigorous course offerings. A question I have is, what is the definition of "rigorous"?

- Higher expectations for students characterized as "average" or "below average"

- More aggressive efforts to enroll borderline students in advanced classes

- More frequent access to the school's top teachers for average students

To access the report visit www.just/4kids.org.

SPENDING LID, 423

Be sure to vote on November 7th and vote NO on 423. This is a spending lid proposal that would provide that state spending be increased only by the consumer price index plus population growth and would then be a constitutional amendment.

The Stop Overspending (SOS) proposal is patterned after Colorado's Taxpayer Bill of Rights, a constitutional spending limit implemented in 1992 and suspended by Colorado voters last fall in response to dramatic reduction in critical public services. Five reasons you need to consider when giving your personal opinion about 423:

1. The spending lid will cause a dramatic increase in property taxes to offset reductions in state aid to education.

2. It will disproportionately impact rural communities because it is tied to population growth and inflation.

3. The inflation rate in the spending lid may reflect the cost of what consumers buy, but it does not reflect the cost of what government buys, especially for education, health care, and roads.

4. This language does NOT belong in the Nebraska Constitution. Nebraska already has a balanced budget requirement.

5. Outsiders such as the Americans for Limited Government are helping to promote and finance 423.

More information is available at <http://newsletter.ncsa.org>.

AMENDMENT 5

You are encouraged to vote for Amendment 5 on November 7th. Amendment 5 is designed to benefit the state's youngest children by providing voluntary access to high quality learning opportunities for kids whose parents want them to be successful. Every school district in the state will get the opportunity to apply for grants from the created endowment. There will be no new taxes or tax increases because public funds will come from the interest earned by existing funds.

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

—Harry Alston

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NCSA would like to thank the following sponsors for making this event a great success:

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Look forward to next year!

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Personalization of the School Environment: Concrete examples of programs you may want to consider for your students

by Kent McLellan, Principal, Morrill High School

Students should be the focal point of every educational environment. After all, the students are why we are in the profession of education. However, I also realize that sometimes with all the requirements that schools face, the focus on students sometimes gets lost in the mix. To ensure that this does not happen at Morrill High School, we have implemented several strategies to personalize the learning environment for our students.

One of the major strategies implemented was a summer school program. The goal of this three-week program is to ensure that students who are struggling in a specific area receive additional instruction in that area based on their current abilities. Using Flex Funding, three staff members are hired as teachers, and the students are selected based on specific criteria for each grade level. The elementary staff identifies our upcoming 7th

graders who they feel may struggle in 7th grade. These students are invited to attend the summer school session, but it is not required. For junior high students, summer school is mandatory if they fail any core class. For high school students, the summer school sessions are optional, but the session does allow students to earn credit for the classes they have failed previously in the traditional school setting. Using the American Education Corporation's A+dvanced Learning System software, the students are pre-tested in order to pin-point student skill deficiencies by grade and subject. Next, instructors prescribe the appropriate curriculum based on each student's specific needs, and as the students work on these lessons, instructors are available to

provide assistance as needed. Upon completion of the assigned lessons, the students' mastery of the content is assessed and if a student needs more assistance, the process is repeated until the student masters the course work assigned. During the 05-06 summer school program, the average student growth from pre-test to post-test was 13.99 percent for the junior high students and 16.59 percent for the high school students. It is

When comparing the ineligibility list from first quarter of the 2004-2005 school year to the ineligibility list from 1st quarter of the 2005-2006 school year, we find that the number of students on the list has dropped from 52 students failing one or more classes at the end of the quarter to 33 students failing one or more classes at the end of first quarter. That is a 37% change for the better, and although there is still room for improvement, this is a significant change.

our intent that this individualized program addresses individual student's needs and provides much needed remediation for anyone who needs it.

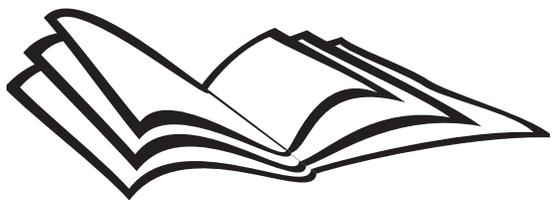
In order to reduce the number of students failing classes, we also initiated a revised Student Assistance Team (SAT) process and a homeroom period so that students could see more academic success. When I first came to Morrill, teachers were referring very few students to the SAT at the Jr-Sr. high level. In fact, I did not have one student referred to the SAT during my first four years as principal, yet many students were failing classes on a regular basis. The first step toward correcting this problem was providing in-service for my staff regarding the purpose of SAT. However, even after the training, I

had very few teachers making referrals despite the fact many students were still failing classes on a regular basis. As a result, I implemented the "Principal's Down List" referral process. I began monitoring our failing list on a weekly basis. If I observed a student failing two courses for three weeks in a row, I personally referred them to the SAT. In the last three years, we have averaged two to three SAT meetings per week as a result of this one strat-

egy. Because of the revised referral process for SAT, not only are more students being discussed at the SAT each year, but some students who needed special education assistance have been identified. If we were following our old processes, I don't believe these students would have been identified as needing these services and may have dropped out or not been as successful as they are now. In

addition to the Down List referral process, we also implemented a "case-manager" concept into the SAT process. Each student referred to the SAT is now assigned a case-manager during their initial SAT meeting. The case manager is then responsible for individually meeting with the student on a weekly basis. During this meeting, the manager and student review the student's progress in his/her classes, how the SAT strategies are working for the student, and any other issues that the two may feel are appropriate. If necessary, the case manager also refers the student back to the SAT if the original interventions are not making a difference for the student. I strongly feel that these adjustments to our SAT process have

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Article Review by Ron Joekel
*The 38th Annual Phi Delta Kappan/
Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes
Toward the Public Schools*

Phi Delta Kappan, September, 2006
Volume 88, Number 1, pages 41-56

Jerry Sellentin asked if I would report on the recently published PDK/Gallup poll in place of my usual book review. Knowing that I have been a part of the Poll for a number of years and my intense interest in education, he thought I would be eager to share the results of the 38th Annual Poll and some of its implications. Boy, is he right, and I welcome the chance to share the poll's information with you. By the way, you can obtain the complete poll by going online to www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpollpdf.htm

For almost four decades, PDK International and the Gallup Organization have been surveying the public about their attitudes toward the public schools. The results are widely reported and each year the media and policy makers across the country pick up on the results. The findings are particularly important to policy makers at all levels, but especially at the local level to guide planning and action in the local community.

A public opinion poll can be used to inform policy makers about the impact of current policies and programs, identify areas where program efforts need a systematic effort to build public support, and point to needed changes. Public opinion is not a substitute for professional judgment and should not by itself drive public policy. In formulating school policy the goal is to provide an educational system that can meet the diverse needs of students to maximize student achievement. When students leave our schools they should be prepared to live productive and satisfying lives in a democratic society. To accomplish this, they need to be prepared to contribute to the economic and social well-being of this nation. This dual emphasis on personal

and public goals creates the rationale for a system of public schools free and open to all.

The poll is always released in August to the national media in Washington D.C. I always looked forward to releasing the poll at the National Press Club, and year after year the same question always surfaced. "What are the major story lines of this poll?" The major story lines of this poll center on: (1) the findings of how people perceive the public schools, (2) how people want improvement to come about, and (3) how it views some of the strategies used in current change efforts (especially NCLB). Of course I can't bring you every detail of the poll results (you need to read them yourself), but I will call your attention to what the results of the 44 poll questions say and what they mean in a general way. By the way, there are tables provided for each of the 44 questions that are reported in the Kappan, or it can be obtained online.

After looking at the poll findings, I am always amazed how the public arrives at an assessment separating reality from myths. Even more explicitly this year, I wonder why the public "gets it" and our leaders in Washington D.C. do not!

Here are some of the highlights of this year's poll:

- The poll continues a trend of strong local support and high marks for their public schools. The public in the poll have been asked to grade their local schools using the familiar A to F scale, then the school where their oldest child attended, and the nation's schools as a whole. The ratings of the local schools this year are near the top of their 38-year range. The marks are even higher the closer people are to the schools. The oft-repeated claim that public support for the public

schools has declined or is declining is a myth!

- When asked where efforts to improve education need to be focused, the public embraces improvement through existing public school systems and generally rejects initiatives to seek an alternative to the public schools. Over 60 percent oppose the use of public funds (vouchers), for children to attend private and parochial schools. Contracting out to private companies the operation of the local school system was opposed by 69 percent.

- The public is aware of the challenges facing public schools and attributes them to the societal problems over which the school has no control, and holds them blameless. However, they want and expect the public schools to address them and be the agent for change. When asked about the achievement gap and the high dropout rates among the poor and minority students, 77 percent blame societal factors and only 16 percent fault the performance of public schools. Preschool programs for at-risk children have the potential to improve their long-term school performance according to 81 percent of those polled. More importantly, two of three Americans indicate their willingness to pay higher taxes to fund these programs.

- There were four questions related to the issue of testing. Since 2000, the percentage of respondents saying there is too much emphasis on testing has steadily risen, but the largest percentage 58 percent believes there is the right amount of testing or not enough testing. That the public is not rejecting testing was also indicated by the fact

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Article Review by Ron Joekel

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that 63 percent favored requiring students to pass qualifying exam to determine whether a student graduates receiving a diploma. However, a large number, 67 percent, see the emphasis on testing translating into "teaching for the test" and they feel this is a bad trend (63 percent).

- Four questions were also included in the poll relating to curriculum issues. The public is divided on the question of revising the curriculum to meet today's needs, but there is majority support 58 percent for a curriculum that includes a broad range of courses. Furthermore, there is majority support for a college-preparatory program for all students 56 percent. There is strong support for four years of mathematics with at least two years of algebra 73 percent.

- In each of the 38 polls, one constant question was asked, "What are the biggest problems facing the public schools?" Discipline was number one for the first 16 years of the poll. Drugs then took over until 1991 when it shared the top spot with financial support. From 1991 to 2000 changes occurred until lack of financial support came back to the top in 2000 and has remained the top problem in each poll succeeding. The order of problems reported this year was:

- (1) lack of financial support/funding/money
- (2) overcrowded schools
- (3) lack of discipline/control
- (4) use of drugs
- (5) pupils' lack of interest
- (6) parents' lack of support
- (7) fighting/violence/gangs

- There were 11 questions in this year's poll specifically aimed at the NCLB ACT.

Nearly six in ten Americans who are familiar with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), believe it has had no effect on our schools or has actually harmed them! Although the poll found widespread support for the goal of NCLB-broad disagreement with the specific strategies abound. When asked whether testing students in only English and math, as currently required by

NCLB, can give a fair picture of a school, 81 percent of the public said NO! And 78 percent are worried that the law's focus on these two subjects will mean less emphasis on other subjects. The poll also shows that two-thirds of those surveyed oppose measuring school success by the percentage of students passing a single statewide test, while 81 percent prefer measuring the improvement that students make during the year.

Unfortunately, leaders in the Nation's Capital do not share the public's view. The myth that the public schools are failing persists and they ignore the solid base of support that local public schools enjoy, and they are surprised when proposals based on the assumption that the public schools are failing do not draw public support. I would like to digress for a moment and point out three examples of recent federal mindset.

1. In 2004, the U.S. Department of Education delayed the release of a study it had commissioned that concluded students in traditional public schools were out performing their counterparts in charter schools in math and reading. When the study was finally released, the department (the study's sponsor) criticized the results. It apparently wasn't the message it wanted to hear!

2. Not too long ago the Department released another study it had commissioned that concluded that students in public schools generally out performed their counterparts in private schools. Again, the department delayed the release until late July, along with "the study was of modest utility."

3. The NCLB Act, despite praiseworthy goals, is embroiled in an implementation plan so ill conceived that the public, speaking in the PDK Poll, overwhelmingly rejects every strategy used. For three years the public (and many educators) have delivered the same message. Unless something drastically changes, it is likely that NCLB, with its bright promise, will do damage to our schools!

In my humble opinion, there is failure in America. It is the political leadership that has failed and not the schools. It is a given that we need better schools. The achievement gap is a national disgrace and a real threat to our economic well being and society as a whole. The public

understands this as demonstrated by the 38th PDK/Gallup Poll, and they indicate they are prepared to support changes through the existing system of public schools. Political leaders continue to ignore the public's desires, and instead inflict punitive strategies on the public schools, and promote alternatives that lack public support. Sorry to get on my soapbox and expound like this, but my experiences on the national level and with politicians in Washington D.C. leave me skeptical and highly discouraged, with the public schools being the whipping boy!!

SUMMARY

The data from the poll clearly show that local schools continue to be viewed favorably by the public. Educators and local leaders need to not only be aware of that fact, but use it as a source of strength. "Stand Up for the Public Schools" is a slogan of a national association, and we need to embrace it by tightening the ties between the schools and the local community. We need to let national leaders be aware that the best avenue for improvement is to start with the realization that we have good schools that must become even better and build on the base of support that already exists.

What can you do as a local educational leader? I propose that you get a copy of the poll, read it yourself if you haven't already done so, and share it with your board of education, your faculty/staff, and the local media. If you don't have access to a copy of the poll, let me know and I will be glad to get you a copy. My address is Ron Joekel, 124 TEAC, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68588-0360.

How does your community feel about these issues identified in the poll? You can conduct your own poll using the PDK questions by developing your own. PDK has a program available (Polling Attitudes of the Community on Education [PACE]) which includes materials, instructions, etc. to assist you. The program costs \$60. I would be pleased to work with anyone who would like to conduct a poll in their community. 



THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF LEADERSHIP

by Paul D. Houston and Stephen L. Sokolow

Key Two: The Principle of Attention



Houston



Sokolow

This is the second 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 eight 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 Attention*.

How many times have your teachers said something like, "Pay attention," or "Are you paying attention?" In the military, people really get serious about it, and say, "Atten-hut, eyes forward, stand erect, stand still, and listen up." Educators know that attention is a key component of learning, but it's much more than that.

Attention is a way of focusing energy—your energy: mental, physical, and emotional—as well as the mental, physical, and emotional energy of others. And if you believe in higher realms of existence, attention is a way of focusing spir-

itual energy. The central tenet of this principle is: Where attention goes, energy flows. If you want something to thrive and grow, pay attention to it. On the other hand, if you want something to wither and diminish, don't pay attention to it; intentionally ignore it.

As with most things, there are exceptions but, as a general rule of thumb, this perspective serves us well.

As leaders, one of the most important choices you make is to decide what you want to pay attention to. In fact, what you want to pay attention to may often not be the same as what everybody else wants you to pay attention to.

◆ You pay attention by what you think about.

◆ You pay attention by what you talk about and what you ask about.

◆ You pay attention by what you write about and what you look at.

◆ You pay attention by what you do.

When leaders pay attention to a person, a situation, or an issue, others start to pay attention to the same things, whether you want them to or not –

therefore, you need to be mindful about what you pay attention to. Leaders are like attention magnets.

Try this experiment. The next time you're in a group setting look to the left and raise your eyebrow—see if others in the group follow your gaze. They'll want to:

- See what you see.
- Hear what you hear.
- Do what you do.

The whole notion of being a role model flows from the Principle of Attention. If no one paid attention to you, none of what you are modeling would make a difference. It wouldn't be emulated. This principle is more complex than it seems because attention is both conscious and unconscious. For an example of the power of unconscious attention, just look at the way Madison Avenue uses subliminal advertising. In other words, even when people are not aware that they are paying attention, the unconscious mind is absorbing vast quantities of information from what is perceived subliminally.

There is a level of attention that seems to flow naturally from observing the leader, but there's another form of attention leaders create by requiring people to work on something, especially if there are penalties and rewards. For example, is anybody paying attention to the requirements of the president's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) initiative in public education?

The Principle of Attention can be used for good or for ill, which brings us back to the Principle of Intention that we briefly described in last month's article. We believe that when your attention is aligned with the higher aspects of your being and with your higher pur-

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Nebraska Superintendent Turnover Numbers Remain Low

by James E. Ossian, Wayne State College

Introduction

Theodore Kowalski's new educational administration text, *The School Superintendent (2006)*, frames the agenda for today's school executive. Those social reformers who espouse equity as a prerequisite to excellence contend that public school leaders must be sensitive to diversity and compensate for the negative effects of poverty, abuse, and dysfunctional homes. In the bargain, other gurus believe that social and political issues should be infused into school reform policies, because many influential people in the private sector still feel that public school officials can be more accountable for results without additional economic resources.

A tall order indeed. No wonder that school superintendents view themselves as being in the continual position of "doing more with less." Gary Marx, in his new book, *Sixteen Trends (2006)*, which was reviewed by Dr. Ron Joeckel in last month's *NCSA Today*, cites a 2000 study by Bruce Cooper of Fordham University where it was reported that 80 percent of surveyed superintendents were at retirement-eligible age. It would appear that the job is open for those aspiring superintendents who are willing to take on the weighty reform agendas of the early 21st Century.

The New Year

There will be 32 Nebraska public school districts that have a new superintendent to begin the 2006-2007 school year. That figure represents the second lowest number of new school executives since the fall of 1979. In 1983, there were also 32 superintendent changes, and the 28-year low of 31 was recorded in the fall of 2002. The average number of changes for the past 28 years is 41.

Median and average tenure in position, 4.22 and 6.15 years respectively, dipped slightly from last year's numbers of 4.26 and 6.18. The six-plus average for Nebraska school leaders is on a par

with national studies that place school superintendent tenure in a single district between six and seven years.

For the 31 individuals who vacated a superintendent position last year, 21 retired, seven assumed another Nebraska superintendency, two took other jobs in education, and one obtained full-time employment outside of education. There are 11 individuals who are beginning their first superintendency, and 123 of 243 (50.6%) will have four or less years of tenure in the same district, including the 2006-2007 school year.

The Veterans

The number of Nebraska superintendents serving 20-or-more years in the same district averaged 23 from 1987 to 1996, with a high of 28 in 1991, but that number has declined to seven for each of the past three years. After the retirements of Russ Hoppner, 35 years at Hampton, and Benje Hookstra, 28 years at Spalding, Randall Anderson of Crofton, 28 years, and Keith Fagot of Loomis, 27 years, have ascended to the top of the tenure ranks. Others in the select 20-plus group include Mike Cuning, Sutherland (24); Larry Wilbeck, Deshler, and Norm Yoder, Henderson (22); and Doug Ackles, St Paul, and Dennis Gray, High Plains (20).

Those occupying slots in the 15 to 19-year tenure categories are: Craig Pease, Ashland-Greenwood (19); Dave Jones, Oakland-Craig, and Larry Turnquist, Harvard (18); Ed Kasl, Louisville, and Dallas Watkins, Dundee County (17); Fred Boelter, Creighton, Roger Breed, Elkhorn, Larry Harnisch, Wood River, George Robertson, Mead, and Tom Sandberg, Axtell (16); Ken Bird, Omaha Westside, Nelson Dahl, Lynch, Steve Deger, Meridian, Scott Maline, Minden, Randy Nelson, Norfolk, and Tom Sharp, Milligan-Exeter (15).

Other numbers for superintendents with double-digit tenure are three with

14 years, one with 13 years, six with 12 years, seven with 11 years, and 11 with 10 years.

Women Superintendents

Women are gaining ground in the Nebraska superintendent field. This fall there will be 20 females leading Nebraska school districts, four more than a year ago and easily the most in the past six decades. Whereas the state percentage of women school district leaders has improved to 8.23, it is still short of the approximate national average of 14 percent.

Nebraska female school superintendents for the fall of 2006 include: Virginia Moon, Ralston (9 yrs.); Gayla Fredrickson, Elgin, and Katherine Meink, Keya Paha (6 yrs.); Renee Jacobson, Plattsmouth, and Amy Malander, Cedar Rapids (5 yrs.); Cindy Huff, Hitchcock Unified, Joan Reznicek, Red Cloud, and Marlene Uhing, Seward (4 yrs.); Susan Gourley, Lincoln, Jamie Isom, Valentine, Lana Sides, Banner County, and Caroline Winchester, Loup City (3 yrs.); and Cindy Wendell, Holdrege, and Alberta Moore, Sandhills (2 yrs.). The six women newcomers in the superintendency are Joan Carraher, Spalding, Candace Conradt, Bruning-Davenport, Holly Herzberg, Hampton, Margaret Sandoz, Niobrara, Amy Shane, O'Neill, and Paula Sissel, Garden County.

Looking Ahead

There are only two persistent trends in the 28 years of data on Nebraska superintendent turnover: fewer school districts and more women school superintendents. Nationwide research studies on school superintendent turnover suggest that there will be a plethora of job openings for administrators seeking the top leadership position. However, given the shrinking number of school districts, those data may not mirror the circumstances in Nebraska.

(continued on page 9)



Nebraska Superintendent Turnover Numbers Remain Low

[continued from page 8]

Although superintendent turnover in Nebraska has been below average for the past two years, there are anecdotal reports from the field that many veterans have already informed their school boards that they intend to retire at the end of this year. It is impossible to predict how many superintendent changes there will be in any given year; that number having ranged from a high of 56 in 1979 to a low of 31 in 2002. But early indications are that many Nebraska school boards will be in the hunt to secure a new educational leader to begin in the fall of 2007.

Does Anyone Want the Job?

Higher education academicians continue to portray the public school superintendency as a nearly impossible job. The person in that position must have the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, and the energy of a superhero. In addition to the complexities of the reform agenda noted earlier, tasks include leading and managing, promoting learning communities, engaging staff and community in developing shared values and vision, making data-driven decisions that are at once strategic and futuristic, and being accountable for quality programs and increased student

performance with diminished resources.

Somehow or another 14,000 individuals, including 243 Nebraskans, all mere human beings, are leading the nation's public education systems and, despite advice and criticism on every front, are making them work. Maybe they are not reading the literature. 

*“The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time.”
— Abraham Lincoln*

Nebraska Public School Districts with High Schools Superintendent Data Comparisons: Fall of 1979 to Fall of 2006

Item	1979	2006
School Districts	317	254
Number Superintendents	317	243
Median Tenure in Position	3.97 yrs.	4.22 yrs.
Average Tenure in Position	6.16 yrs.	6.15 yrs.
Supt. with 1-year Tenure	56	32
% Turnover	17.7	12.5
Supt. with 20+ yrs. Tenure	10	7
Women Superintendents	2	20



TAKING A MEASURE OF THE MEASURE

(continued from page 1)

ment tool for length we had? How long would it take before virtually everything became 12 inches long or some derivative of it? My guess? Probably not long.

Let's go back to our 12-inch ruler. What if what we had to measure was not a flat, straight-line measurement but was circular? Again, we have a valid, accurate and reliable measure in our 12-inch ruler, but it compromises its validity, accuracy, and reliability when applied to situations for which it is not intended. Remember πr^2 ? To find the circumference of a circle (the distance around it), you multiply the radius squared times π . If you remember from your high school math, " π " is an estimation that has an infinite set of numbers to the right of the decimal place. Once again, we could probably easily measure the radius or diameter but using the algorithm to calculate circumference introduces error even though the tools used are accurate, valid and reliable.

One more example. What if we are trying to find out the distance between Lincoln and Kearney? We could use our 12-inch ruler or a yardstick. Or, we could use the odometer on our automobile. Which is more accurate, more valid and more reliable? The odometer is probably least accurate due to being affected by inflation of tires, pavement heat, calibration at the factory, and driving methods (like spinning back wheels on gravel or ice). If I set out to find the distance to Kearney using my ruler, how much error will I introduce when I have to lay the ruler end to end, draw a line and repeat it a zillion times? How much error will I introduce as I get tired of bending over and drawing the line to move the ruler one more time? Given the fact that my odometer is not precisely accurate, the factors of fatigue of the measure and fatigue of the measurer will likely not enter in. Which is the more accurate and reliable measure of this distance? I would opt for the odometer.

The real question here is not how many feet or yards it is to Kearney. Who cares? What use is it to know how many feet it is? It may not even be relevant to know how many miles because what I

probably want to know is how long it will take me to get there. While I can convert the feet/yards into miles and figure the likely speed at which I will be traveling, the odometer reading is much more useable and much more relevant to the question I am trying to answer, "how long will it take to get there?"

So what is the point here? So much of traditional measurement is caught up in this analogy. We assume that standardized tests are like rulers in terms of their accuracy, validity and reliability. In some ways they are. They measure things that are "inch-like" or "foot-like" best but do not measure well the things outside of those dimensions.

Maybe we should focus less on the instruments of measure, focus more on the information they provide and how we use the information. Can we trust that the information we get is the ultimate question of accuracy, validity and reliability?

Measuring learning cannot be done with rulers. Measuring learning takes dynamic measures that change with the outcomes to be learned, with the instruction provided and with the students being taught. Measuring learning requires gathering information from multiple indicators of what students know and are able to do before we jump to the conclusion that learning has occurred (or has not occurred).

If we want rote, content learning then we can use our inches, feet and yards tools to determine if students measure up. If we want learning that is more about thinking skills, problem solving skills and information/technology mastery skills, then our inches, feet and yards tools won't work. We need tools to match the things we are trying to measure.

The tools we need the most to measure "real" learning are most often not pre-manufactured. One does not go to the test store and buy one off the shelf. Dynamic learning requires tools that are built for the purpose and "on the spot." Who best to build these tools? Teachers! Where best to build them? Classrooms! 

Key Two: The Principle of Attention

(continued from page 7)

pose, the Universe, a term which we use in the sense of a higher spiritual power, will try to assist you and support you in many seen and unseen ways. Moreover, increasing the attention you give to your intentions increases the likelihood they will actually become a reality.

We all have the same 24 hours to fill each day. How do we choose to spend that time? We continually make choices about the amount of time we will spend thinking, the amount of time we will spend doing, and the amount of time we will spend just being, as well as what it is we will focus on. Some people or tasks demand our attention while other aspects of our attention are like discretionary income, to be spent as we wish.

Enlightened leaders have insights that guide them in deciding where best to turn their attention. They tend to pay attention to the right things and do so for the right reasons. Our attention is powerful because it serves as a magnet that attracts others and helps us collectively align our energies. What we attend to shapes what we create, and what we create helps shape our reality.

You may want to remember that enlightened leaders:

- Understand the key role attention plays in leadership.
- Focus their attention through thought.
- Focus their attention through action.
- Focus their attention through being.
- Know how to use their time effectively.
- Focus power and energy on important issues and initiatives.
- Know that attention is a magnet for enlisting others.
- Pay attention to get attention paid.
- Keep their focus.
- Minimize distractions.
- Use images, signs, and symbols to focus attention and create common purpose. 



Initiative into Practice: "Rethinking High School"

(continued from page 2)

within each district and the process used to manage change and implement initiatives.

Dialogue with other administrators and ESU staff in the partnership has led us to the conclusion that schools must address this subject in a manner that "fits" their school and community. Each school is working to create a "need" to rethink high school in their own school community, as well as a sense of urgency to address the issue. Each district must determine for themselves what is successful and not so successful in their high school, the challenges and needs that exist within their own context, and what resources are available and what will be needed.

In other words, theory into practice for each school will look different because of different data, different student needs, and the different point in this process for each school. Thus, the "theory" and research may be the same (what the results of research indicate is effective), but the "practice" component of theory into practice will result in different approaches and initiatives, most likely implemented through the school improvement process. For example, South Sioux City started with a programming approach and Seward started with a curricular approach determined not only by the needs, data and interests of our staff and students, but also by the best avenue for each of us to address change. It is likely that the schedule, staffing, and the curriculum will also drive many initiatives.

After reviewing our own school data and needs and examining the research regarding what students need to be successful in the 21st century, a question that has been effective in our discussions is "What would it take?" We asked our staff what it would take in each curricular area to prepare our students to be "college ready" and insure the standards are taught and assessed. Further, what would it take to:

1) implement a reading and writing program in grades 9-12?

2) insure a more rigorous senior year and a more attentive and effective transition year for 9th graders?

3) implement an advisor/advisee program where all students have personalized learning plans?

4) integrate technology into the classroom at a level that is beyond our imaginations?

After the data are collected and analyzed, educators in each system must ask two other key questions. What is the tolerance for change within the school and community? How will the workload to actually make changes be managed? Discussion should begin with the end in mind and with a focus on student needs. We developed implementation plans that establish interim targets to reach the vision, reflected in a five-year plan that establishes priorities for year one, year two, etc.

As we rethink high school, we hope to change the expectations of educators, parents, community members and students regarding what is possible in our schools, but we must be able to delineate where we are going. Can we agree on a single all-inclusive goal that will provide a clear purpose and focus to reform efforts? It is increasingly clear that student success – in college, on assessments, and in gaining access to decent jobs depends on completing a rigorous, college-prep level curriculum, and a challenging program of study is one of the best predictors of achievement.

All students deserve instruction that is guaranteed, pragmatic, rigorous, and relevant. The intention of rethinking high school is to take a comprehensive look (examine practices, procedures, and data) at the high school and make recommendations on how to improve this experience for *all* students. All of us want to improve, but few of us want to change. The fact remains that to improve one *must* change. 

Personalization...

(continued from page 4)

made a difference in helping us better assist struggling learners.

Personalization was one of the main reasons we implemented a homeroom period into our schedule for 35 minutes each day. Not only does the period allow us to provide students with more individualized time with the instructors of the classes in which they were struggling, but it also provides them with a teacher that they will see on a daily basis for the six years they are at the Jr.-Sr. High. As a result, the homeroom teacher becomes a mentor for the student. In order to help students who are failing classes, a weekly homeroom study hall schedule is followed where students are required to go to the teacher of the class they are failing in order to get extra instruction and tutoring. While any student may elect to attend a homeroom study hall for any of their classes, those who are failing a class are required to report to that class during homeroom in order to receive more personalized instruction in that area. This procedure provides the student with a 30-minute study session that addresses the specific needs of that student. Although some students take advantage of the homeroom period more than others, this concept has really helped us to individualize the learning environment even more.

When comparing the ineligibility list from first quarter of the 2004-2005 school year to the ineligibility list from 1st quarter of the 2005-2006 school year, we find that the number of students on the list has dropped from 52 students failing one or more classes at the end of the quarter to 33 students failing one or more classes at the end of first quarter. That is a 37 percent change for the better, and although there is still room for improvement, this is a significant change.

While I have discussed a few of the strategies that I have implemented to personalize the learning environment for our students, there is simply not enough space to cover them all in this article. If you would like more information on these topics or any other programs at Morrill Jr.-Sr. High School, please feel free to contact me via email, mclellan@panesu.org, or give me a call at (308) 247-2149. 



CONGRATULATIONS TO...

☞ **Cross County Public Schools** on passage of \$15 million bond election

☞ **Gibbon Public Schools** on passage of \$16.3 million bond election

☞ **Nebraska Blue Ribbon Schools** recognized by the U.S. Department of Education: **Mitchell Elementary, Alliance Grandview Elementary, South Sioux City Harney Elementary** and **Pinewood Elementary in Omaha**

☞ **Jadi Miller**, Lincoln Public Schools, Supervisor of Federal Programs, selected as one of 14 educators to ASCD Emerging Leaders Program

☞ **Bob and Wilma Arp**, Lakeview High School Principal and his wife, received the Extra Mile Award for their work in going the Extra Mile to educate communities about the dangers of underage alcohol use

☞ **Glen Morgan**, Superintendent, Neligh - Oakdale, announced his retirement effective July 1, 2007

☞ **Ken Anderson**, Superintendent, Kearney Public Schools, announced his retirement effective July 1, 2007

☞ **Mike Moody**, Superintendent, Wakefield Public Schools, announced his retirement effective July 1, 2007

SYMPATHY

☞ **Bill Hoyt**, Retired Assistant Superintendent of Personnel - Westside Community Schools

☞ Family of **Ken Thomson**, Retired Fremont High School Principal

☞ **Ken Bird**, Superintendent of Westside Community Schools, on the death of his mother

☞ **Amy Shane**, Superintendent of O'Neill Public Schools, on the death of her mother

UPCOMING EVENTS...

October 5

New Superintendent Orientation Workshop
NCSA - Lincoln

October 6

Behavior Management Workshop
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
ESU #3 - Omaha

October 11

Hiring Good Employee's Do's & Don'ts
8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - ESU #13 - Scottsbluff
3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. - Sandhills Convention Center - North Platte

October 12

Hiring Good Employee's Do's & Don'ts
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln
3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. - Holiday Inn Express - Columbus

October 17

Hearing Officer Training
8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - ESU #13 - Scottsbluff
3:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - Sandhills Convention Center - North Platte

October 18

Hearing Officer Training
9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - G.I. Public Schools Admin. Office - Grand Island
3:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. - ESU #3 - Omaha

October 17-18

NELI
Lincoln/Omaha

October 24-25

Balanced Leadership
Sandhills Convention Center
North Platte

October 30

Paraeducators Workshop
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Holiday Inn - Kearney

November 1-2

Balanced Leadership
Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln

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

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



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Calendar of Events

OCTOBER

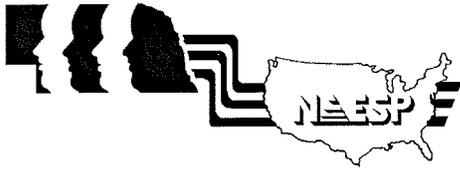
5	New Superintendents Workshop		NCSA	Lincoln
6	Behavior Management Workshop	9:00 a.m.	ESU #3	Omaha
11	Hiring Good Employees	8:00 a.m.	ESU #13	Scottsbluff
11	Hiring Good Employees	3:00 p.m.	Sandhills Convention Center	North Platte
11	NASA Region III	9:00 a.m.	Life Long Learning Center	Norfolk
12	NAESP Executive Board	9:30 a.m.	NCSA	Lincoln
12	Hiring Good Employees	9:00 a.m.	Cornhusker	Lincoln
12	Hiring Good Employees	3:00 p.m.	Holiday Inn Express	Columbus
12	NASES Region V	9:00 a.m.	Prairie Winds CC	Bridgeport
13	NASES Region II	8:30 a.m.	Plattsmouth Public Schools	Plattsmouth
16	NAESP Region II	8:30 a.m.	UNO	Omaha
17-18	NELI			Lincoln/Omaha
17	NAESP Region I	TBD	Doane College	Crete
17	Hearing Officer Training	8:30 a.m.	ESU #13	Scottsbluff
17	Hearing Officer Training	3:00 p.m.	Sandhills Convention Center	North Platte
18	Hearing Officer Training	9:00 a.m.	GI Admin Office	Grand Island
18	Hearing Officer Training	3:00 p.m.	ESU #3	Omaha
18	NASA Region I	4:00 p.m.	An Evening With Friends	Milligan
18	NASA Region IV	10:00 a.m.	ESU #10	Kearney
18	NASA Region V	10:00 a.m.	Eagles Club	Bridgeport
20	NASES Region III	12:00 p.m.	Sports Denn	Norfolk
24-25	Balanced Leadership		Sandhills Convention Center	North Platte
26	NASES Region IV	12:00 p.m.	ESU #10	Kearney
30	Paraeducators Conference	8:00 a.m.	Holiday Inn	Kearney
31	NASA Region II	5:00 p.m.	Quarry Oaks Golf Course	Omaha

NOVEMBER

1-2	Balanced Leadership		Cornhusker	Lincoln
2	NAESP Region I	TBD	Evening With Friends	Milligan
8	NASA Region V	12:00 p.m.	Alliance Country Club	Alliance
15	NASA Executive Board	12:00 p.m.	Holiday Inn Central	Omaha
15-17	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

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

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



Welcome to the LINK

A Note from your State President
Beth L. Welke

I am hoping this finds you settled into a new school year routine and enjoying learning all around! Aren't schools much more fun when filled with excited children?

As elementary principals, we find our days full. Our e-mail boxes are at the limit, our phones are constantly ringing and we are walking hallways and visiting classrooms on a daily basis. There are students to visit with, newsletters that need to be completed, school picture information that needs to be sent home, and meetings to attend. All of these things are important and need to be accomplished in a timely manner. And so, we prioritize.

As your state president, I would like to add one more important "to-do" to your list. I would like to encourage you to take every available opportunity to network with your fellow principals at both the Regional and State levels. I know we are BUSY people and that time out of the building is sometimes hard to justify. But, I also know that professional development is an important priority. There is no better way to learn than to dialogue with fellow principals in similar situations! For those of you who are new to the profession or have not participated regularly in these activities, I cannot tell you how helpful they are in your career. You cannot get involved with a better group of people!

So, take a few moments from your busy schedule to visit the NCSA web site www.ncsa.org and add the dates of Regional and State events to your calendar! Then, plan to attend as many activities as possible. Please highlight March 12th and 13th as we are planning an exciting NAESP Legislative event. I hope to see you there!

Have a GREAT school year!

Welcome Back To School!!

Mary Yilk, Region IV President
Elementary Principal, Doniphan-Trumbull Public School

Do you have a school environment that people feel welcome and important when they first walk into your building? Many people say they can "sense" the environment once they walk into a school. It is important to me to have an upbeat and friendly place. I want everyone that enters my school to feel important and needed.

It takes everyone in the building to work at having a positive environment. At the beginning of the school year, I remind staff and students how important it is to acknowledge people in the hallway and give a smile. If a visitor is in the hallway, staff will ask if they can assist in finding their way.

There are many factors that contribute to the “welcome feeling”. Last year I received a checklist from Teaching for Excellence to evaluate school environments, look at this checklist and see how you do.

- School name is displayed attractively outside the building.
- Convenient parking places are marked for visitors.
- Nation’s flag is displayed.
- Grounds are kept litter free.
- A doorbell is available when doors are locked after hours.
- Building entrances welcome visitors and ask to report to office.
- Office area attractive.
- People are greeted pleasantly when they enter building.
- There are comfortable lobby chairs.
- Persons who answer the phone give a greeting, identify the school and self, and offer to assist.
- A person is not put on hold on the telephone for long periods of time.
- A map of the school showing halls and rooms is available for visitors and new students.
- The school’s mission is posted prominently for all to see.
- A bulletin board exhibits student honors, good citizenship, exemplary effort, etc.
- Positive mottos and sayings are displayed throughout the building.
- Hallways display examples of student work
- Rooms are clearly marked.
- Classrooms are attractive, including charts, graphs, decorations, student work.
- The building is clean and in good condition.
- School staff members are courteous to visitors.
- Written communication projects a positive image.
- Teachers communicate with parents in writing on a periodic basis.

News From Region 1 NAESP

Jeremy Christiansen, Region I President
Elementary Principal, Central Elementary School, Fairbury

Our **REGION I BOARD** for 2006-2007 welcomes several individuals to new regional leadership roles. With the election of Mr. Mark Wragge (Fillmore Central Elementary ~ Geneva) to the position of NAESP President-Elect, our Region I presidency was assumed by Jeremy Christiansen (Central Elementary ~ Fairbury). Other Region I Board members include:

- Beth Ericson, President-Elect (Sutton Elementary ~ Sutton)
- Wendy Bonaiuto, Secretary (Randolph Elementary ~ Lincoln)
- Annette Weise, Treasurer (Jefferson Intermediate ~ Fairbury)

The 2006-2007 school year will be highlighted by several exciting **REGION I ACTIVITIES**:

Foremost, our Region I Elementary Principals are hosting their first annual **STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**. Our NAESP Region I Principals' STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE will be held on Tuesday, October 17, 2006 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. at Doane College. Our keynote speaker will be Mr. Dan Woods from Central City. Student leaders will participate in breakout sessions and will learn about opportunities to apply for Leadership Project Mini-Grants to support efforts in their schools and communities. Region I Principals are encouraged to register and bring students in Grades 5 and 6 who participate in building leadership activities or who demonstrate leadership potential. We anticipate excellent participation from Region I schools! A special thanks to Mr. Kurk Wiedel (Thayer-Central) for his major efforts to plan and organize our Region I Student Leadership Conference.

Region I Membership continues to provide elementary and middle-level principals with a variety of benefits. Our planned regional events offer a social format which supports networking and a meeting format which has an organized, thematic approach. Planned events for 2006-2007 include a **REGION I FALL SOCIAL EVENT** to be held November 29, 2006 in Milligan, NE at "Evening with Friends." The much-anticipated program, "100 Yard Classroom" will be presented by Coach Kevin Kush from Boys Town. Our **REGION I SPRING SOCIAL EVENT** is now approaching "tradition" status! This year we will once again honor our school secretaries on April 25, 2007 with a specially-themed program held at the Nebraska Club in downtown Lincoln.

All Region I principals are encouraged to attend this year's NAESP Legislative Conference to be held in Lincoln (March 12-13, 2007) as well as the NAESP National Convention to be held in Seattle, WA (March 30-April 2, 2007). Region I anticipates excellent representation at both of these extraordinary events.

Best wishes to all Region I Principals for a successful school year!