

**AASA**  
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

# School Administration

SEPTEMBER 2018

ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND COMMENTARY FOR SCHOOL

## Social Emotional Learning

How it can make  
schools developmentally  
healthy places





**PLUS**

*A Board's Dilemma Over  
Online Evaluation  
of Superintendents, p10  
Legal: Video Recording in  
Big Rocks in Leadership, p11*



Communities  
In Schools

# In schools to help kids stay in school.

Feeling like she didn't fit in, DeeAndra had low motivation to stay in school and her attendance dropped. Najee from Communities In Schools helped DeeAndra see that she was capable of much more. For kids like DeeAndra, challenges faced outside of the classroom can stand in the way of learning inside the classroom. We work full-time inside K-12 schools, in partnership with teachers and school leaders, to connect at-risk kids with resources—like food and clothing—and relationships that help them succeed in school.

**Together we can empower all kids to succeed.**

**Learn how at [CommunitiesInSchools.org](http://CommunitiesInSchools.org)**









## Secure Communication to Parents

Parent Notify is a Lifetouch program that allows schools to automate communication to parents in a secure environment, saving time and money to make them aware of Picture Day.

Lifetouch has a long-standing record of secure transactions, keeping both financial and student data safe. The same care is undertaken for Parent Notify.





# SchoolAdminist

SEPTEMBER 2018 • NUMBER 8 V

## 20 What Makes Social-Emotional Learning So Important?

BY LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

Four components that can contribute to developmentally healthy school places, where students are motivated and feel they belong.

23 SEL initiatives succeeding in Cleveland and beyond

24 Additional resources

## 25 Relationships Are Fundamental

BY DANIEL BROWNE

A Q&A with Harvard education research professor Stephanie Jones on the essential elements of social and emotional learning, plus conflict resolution among youth.

27 Additional resource

## 28 The School Climate Connection

BY TRACI DAVIS

The author's school district is applying a systemwide strategy for targeting early childhood education for those most at risk of failure.

## 32 What We've Learned About Implementing Social-Emotional Learning



BY SHELDON BERMAN

No other initiative in the four districts where the author was superintendent was better received or more enthusiastically implemented.

## 37 Rethinking Discipline

BY ALAN WECHSLER

Four school district leaders find culture change challenging when it comes to reducing suspensions. Their goal is to shut off the school-to-prison pipeline.

39 An urban leader's crusade for reducing suspensions

40 Bryan Joffe: AASA resources on discipline





*"The 'poor me' victim attitude is a recipe for failure. Victim mentality impedes self-discovery, continued learning and mature adaptation to life."* **PAGE 19**

## FRONTLINE

### 6 STARTING POINT

Rich mix of contributors on our theme coverage of social and emotional learning.

### 6 STATE OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY

#### Paths to the Top Job

The most common steppingstones to the superintendency.

### 7 BEST OF THE BLOGS

Four excerpts of superintendent blogs worth following.

### 8 ETHICAL EDUCATOR

#### Football Fireworks

A veteran board member insists on shooting off fireworks at the start of each high school football season, a violation of state law that fellow board members ignore. Should the new superintendent of the small, rural district intervene?



### 9 LEGAL BRIEF

#### Recording Video and Audio at Schools

BY SARAH ORMAN

The challenges presented by the proliferation of recording devices in schools. Who holds the authority over use?

### 10 BOARD-SAVVY SUPERINTENDENT

#### No Reason to Fear an Online Evaluation

BY DARCI D'ERCOLE-McGINN

As online superintendent performance instruments become widely available, school boards may find it an appealing way to wage a job review.

### 12 SOCIAL MEDIA

#### Keeping Up With New Tools in Your Policies

BY KRISTIN MAGETTE

The ubiquitous use of private messaging demands school district employees receive guidance because of the inherent risks.

### 14 MY VIEW

#### Introducing Dewey to Digital Learning

BY RICK CAVE

Reimagining education to rid us of today's version of the Red Flag Law.

### 16 MY VIEW

#### Have We Outgrown Hand-Me-Down Hiring Practices?

BY THOMAS R. HUGHES

The most-wanted preparation school leaders receive guides their decisions affecting students for years to come as well as two-thirds of a school district's budget.

### 18 MY VIEW

#### Students and Victim Mentality

BY GEORGE A. GOENS

The "it's not my fault" attitude today and the deflection of personal responsibility are self-defeating qualities holding kids back.

## RESOURCES

### 42 BOOK REVIEWS

- *Building Equity: Policies and Practices to Empower All Learners*
- *Challenges Facing Suburban Schools*
- *Measuring What We Do in Schools: How to Know If What We Are Doing Is Making a Difference*
- *The Perfect Assessment System*

Also, AASA member **Lesli C. Myers** on why she authored *Life's Leadership Lessons*

### 43 ABSTRACT

A doctoral study on how social media has changed the superintendent's gatekeeper of school district information.

## AASA INSIGHT

### 46 PRESIDENT'S CORNER

#### Big Rocks and Leadership

BY CHRISTOPHER O. GAINES

How Boy Scouting's advanced leadership still applies many years later to the occupational world inhabited by AASA's elected leader.

### 48 EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

#### The Message of an Unforgettable Day

BY DANIEL A. DOMENECH

Recounting acts of leadership on the job from 17 years ago.

### 50 PEOPLE WATCH

Our monthly compilation of job changes in the ranks of AASA members.

### 51 PROFILE

#### Blondean Y. Davis

BY JULI DOSHAN

The superintendent in Richton Park views herself as "head of the family."

## PLUS

### 4 READER REPLY

### 52 LEADERSHIP LITE



**School Administrator** (ISSN 0036-6439) is a benefit of membership in AASA, The School Superintendents Association, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Telephone: 703-875-0772. Fax: 703-841-1543. Annual membership dues in the association are \$460 (active members), of which \$110 covers a subscription to *School Administrator*. *School Administrator* is published monthly except July. Send address changes to AASA, Membership Division, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Copyright 2018 by AASA. All rights reserved. Printed in USA.

SEPTEMBER 2018 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

## READER REPLY

Reading Kimberly Moritz's "A Personal Challenge: My Semester in 4th-Grade Band" (My View, May 2018) made me recognize how fortunate New York is to have a leader like Moritz, who is willing to ask of herself exactly what she is asking of her staff. I also realized how fortunate the children and faculty of Springville-Griffith Institute Central School District are to have a superintendent who **STRETCHES THE BOUNDARIES OF LEARNING** to include herself.

Moritz is a model leader in this state and her region because she never hesitates to take on a new challenge, whether it's her involvement with the New York State Council of School Superintendent's Women's Initiative program, mentoring future leaders, presenting to colleagues on a range of issues and now diving deeply into 4th-grade band through actual participation.

Thank you, Kimberly, for making us all proud to call you a friend, colleague and, by example, a lifelong learner.

**CHARLES S. DEDRICK**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS,  
ALBANY, N.Y.

### Principles for Principals

I was in total agreement with "Three Common-Sense Approaches to Share With Principals" by Robert Rammer, assistant superintendent in Wheaton, Ill., in the June 2018 issue.

One of Rammer's major points of emphasis was to train your principals to step away from their desk and have a

you feel that way or not. When you appear in a restaurant, a grocery store, a concert hall or any other public venue, community members, staff and students will recognize you. How those stakeholders perceive you will influence your ability to effectively lead others.

**JAMES BRISCOE**  
SUPERINTENDENT,  
CANYONS SCHOOL DISTRICT,  
SANDY, UTAH

**School Administrator**

Jay

MANA

SENIOR EDITOR

J

DESIGN

David F

Lifetouch Nati

HOW TO

EDITORIAL SUBM

articles relating to  
welcome. Author  
calendar are av

SCHOOL

16

Alexa

TEL: 703-875-

E-MAIL: I

WEBSITE

LETTERS TO THE

submitted to the e  
may be edit

CHANGE OF A

can report char  
(703-875-074  
e-mail

BACK ISSUES: T

ARTICLE ARCH

accessed at www  
available through  
EBSCO (v  
ProQuest (v  
Cengage (www  
microfiche are  
(80



face-to-face conversation with a teacher who may have just e-mailed you a concern. In most cases, I agree with this approach. Every time you put something in writing, through e-mail, text messaging or any type of social media, there is a strong possibility that the message can be instantly shared with others. The problem with sharing electronic messaging with others is that those written messages can be taken out of context.

When dealing with potential problems that arise during a busy day, addressing concerns face to face often will help you weigh the importance of the issue by witnessing the demeanor of the student, teacher, parent, administrator or community member.

A second emphasis in Rammer's article was to always remember that you are the principal in the school and in the community 24/7. This is true whether

## Board Relationships

Terre Davis's Board-Savvy Superintendent column, "Effectiveness Begins With Ongoing Communication" (May 2018), was especially timely reading for me – just a few months before moving into my first superintendent position.

I followed up with Davis and found her helpful in suggesting some effective strategies for working on relationships with a governing board beyond the useful ideas in her magazine column.

**SARA E. JOHNSON**  
SUPERINTENDENT,  
CROOK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT,  
PRINEVILLE, ORE.

**LETTERS SHOULD** be addressed to: Editor, *School Administrator*, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Fax: 703-841-1543. E-mail: [magazine@aasa.org](mailto:magazine@aasa.org)

### REPRINTS

Quality reprints of quantities of 25 or 0772. Requests for distribute copies professional purp the editor a

### ADVERT

For a media kit a contact Kathy S

*The views expres do not necess does acceptance e*



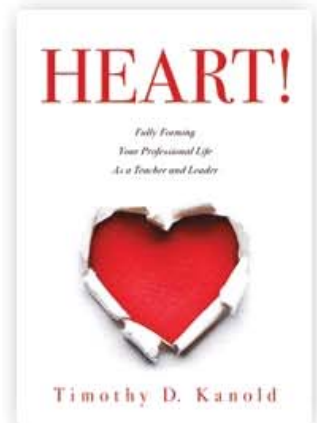
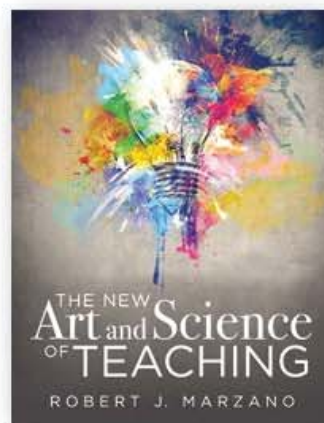
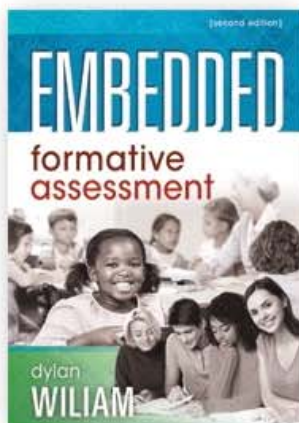
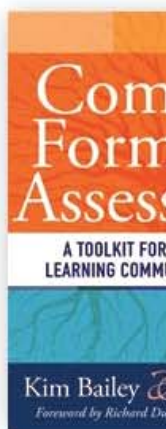
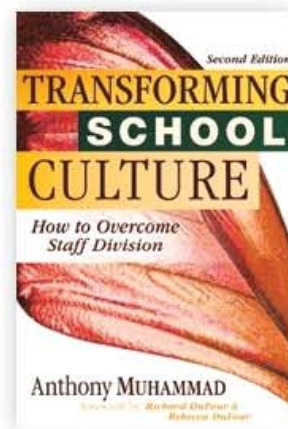
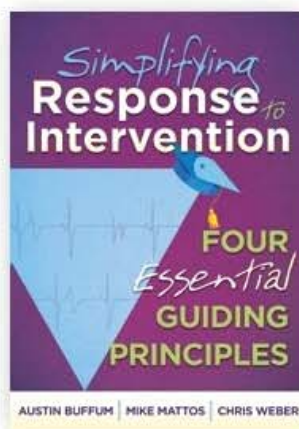
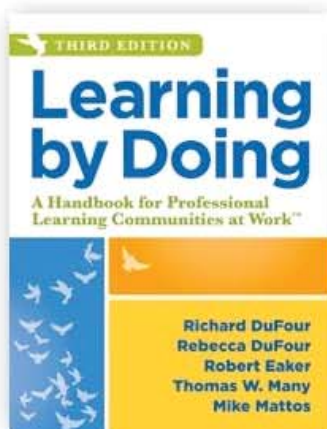
### MISSION

AASA, The School advocates for equ to the highest q develops and sup

# GLOBAL PD

## The Power to Improve Is in Your Hands

The **Global PD Library** gives you focused, goal-oriented training from your favorite experts, helping you to sustain learning throughout the year. Plus, personalize your learning with **curated video playlists** that pair with some of our best-selling titles, including:





The instructional videos and ebooks featured in the **Global PD Library** will help **create a continuum of learning.**



**SUBSCRIBE TODAY**

[SolutionTree.com/Sustain](https://SolutionTree.com/Sustain)



Solut

## STARTING POINT

### A Mix of Practical and Research

**AN EDUCATOR WOULD** have had to spend the past few years in a cave to not recognize the major attention being given to the social and emotional needs of school-age students as factors affecting learning. In this issue, we try to make sense of the burgeoning movement.

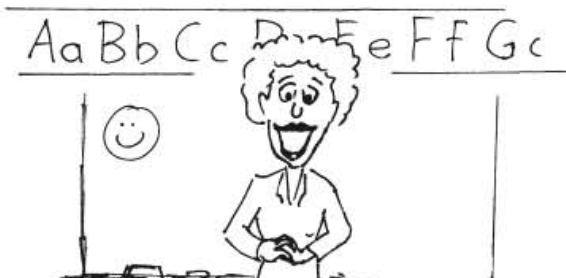
In the pages that follow, we offer a rich mix that combines research-related content from the likes of two prominent national figures, Linda Darling-Hammond (page 20) and Stephanie Jones (page 25), along with the practical considerations of two school districts. The contributors from the latter vantage point are Traci Davis (page 28) and Shelley Berman (page 32), superintendents in Washoe County, Nev., and Andover, Mass., respectively.

Finally, this month's issue also looks at a few school districts that are tackling reform of student discipline in hopes of significantly cutting into the suspensions of students of color (page 37). An accompanying article by Bryan Joffe (page 40) discusses the role of AASA in promoting different thinking about discipline.

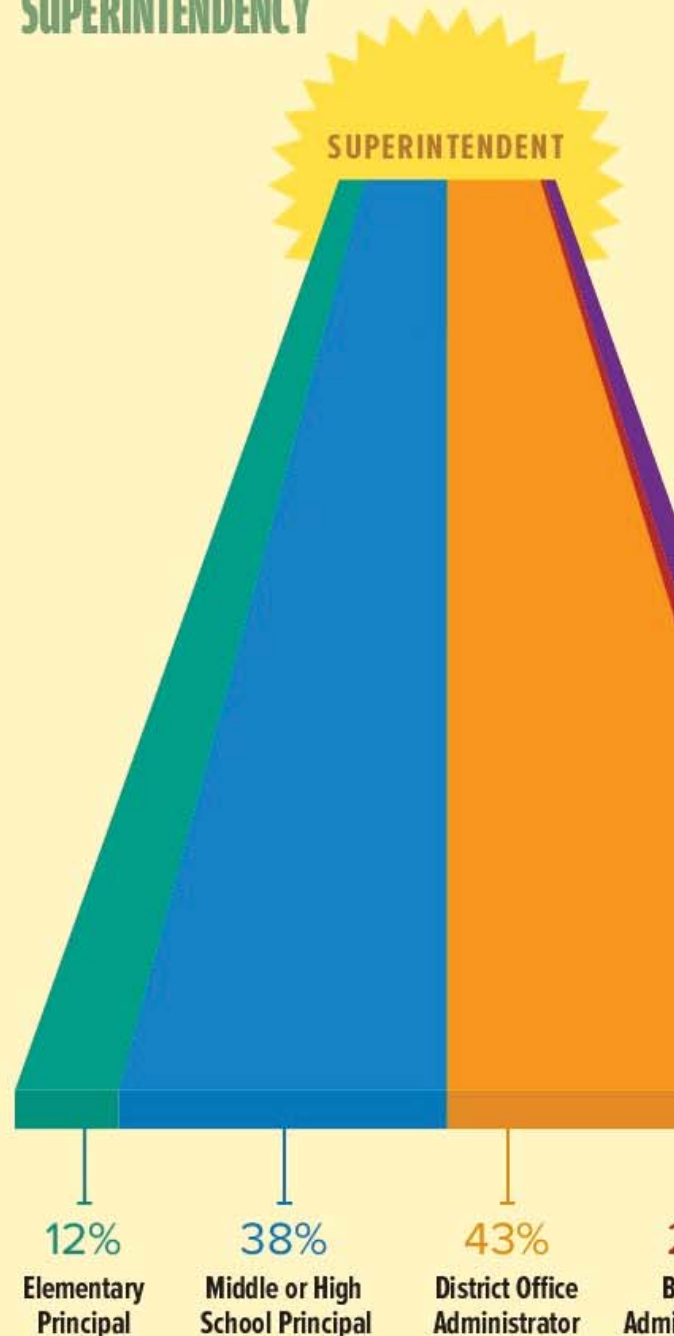
As always, we welcome hearing from our readers about these articles. Because it won't be the last time we deal with social and emotional learning, we're especially eager to receive suggestions for our next round of coverage.

*Jay P. Goldman*  
**JAY P. GOLDMAN**

EDITOR, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR  
 VOICE: 703-875-0745  
 E-MAIL: JGOLDMAN@AASA.ORG  
 TWITTER: @JPGOLDMAN



## STATE OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY



## Paths to the Top Job

The most common steppingstone to the superintendent's office administrative post, slightly exceeding a middle school principalship.





*"Welcome to your first day in kindergarten!  
Please turn off your cell phones!"*

The career paths do not differ based on the experience of current superintendents, according to a recent survey of superintendents in New York state. Size of the school district had a significant impact. Superintendents in rural districts much more likely to bypass the office post.

**SOURCE:** New York State Council of School Superintendents. Available at [www.nyscoss.org](http://www.nyscoss.org).

## BEST OF THE BLOGS

*"Over the course of the last year we faced many challenges — some internally, some externally,*

*but as a team we weathered them well. ... We began work on a much needed stadium project and initiated serious conversation around our other facilities — we began to ask the questions we've needed to ask for many, many years."*

From "Always Live in Beta" by **Michelle Saylor** (superintendent, Bellefonte Area School District, Bellefonte, Pa.) on her blog *For the Love of Learning*

*"Admittedly, the [education] system is no means perfect. We are not nearly as inclusive as we ought to be, not as innovative as we aspire to be, not nearly as efficient as the public expects us to be. But we continue to work*

From "Keeping the Public Confidence" by **Kevin Godden** (superintendent, Abbotsford School District, Abbotsford, B.C., Canada) on his blog *The Triumph of Teamwork*

Read the full postings of these and other members' blogs at [www.aasa.org/SABlogs.aspx](http://www.aasa.org/SABlogs.aspx).

*"The achievement gap is almost always presented as a test-score based construct — where these kinds of kids score persistently higher than those kinds of kids. If we are honest, we don't really need a test score to*

*"[W]e, as educators, are complacent. We are followers and by nature we are compliant. If our superintendents ask us to attend a meeting, we will attend. If a presenter(s) talks at us the entire meeting, we sit quietly, sometimes taking notes. The outcome is compliance. Things such as this is a continued complian*

From "Sit & Get... Compliance" by **William Illingworth** (director of professional development)

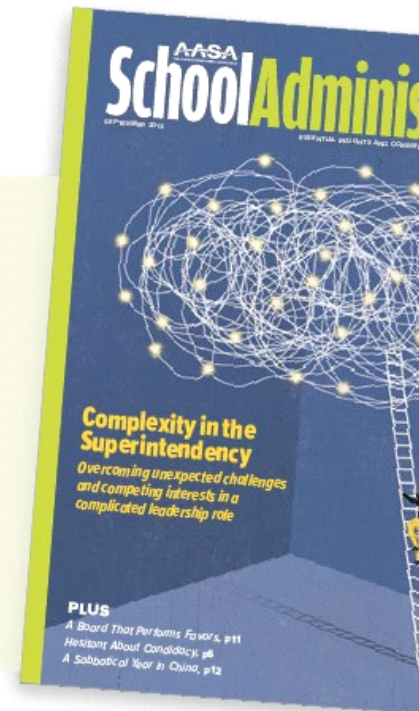
validate that those differences are real — that some of our students have massive advantages over others.”

From “A Provocation on Equity” by **Jason Glass** (superintendent, Jefferson County Public Schools, Golden, Colo.) on his blog *Advance Jeffco*

Sweetwater Union High School  
Chula Vista, Calif.) on her blog *R*  
Leadership and Learning

## FLASHBACK SEPTEMBER 2013

Theme issue on complexities of the superintendency examined the competing interests, coping with the unexpected and relationships with the news media. ... State of the Superintendency infographic captured hesitancy of potential candidates for the top job. ... A Wisconsin superintendent, in a guest column, detailed his sabbatical year spent in China. ... Legal Brief shared advice on bringing tuition-paying foreign students to U.S. school districts. ... Board-Savvy Superintendent tackled board members who violate the chain of command. ... AASA President Amy Sichel titled her monthly column “Navigating the Superintendency.” ... Three letters to the editor commented on previous coverage of blended learning. ... Advertisers included Cenergistic, Horace Mann, Marzano Research Laboratory and Stanley Security.



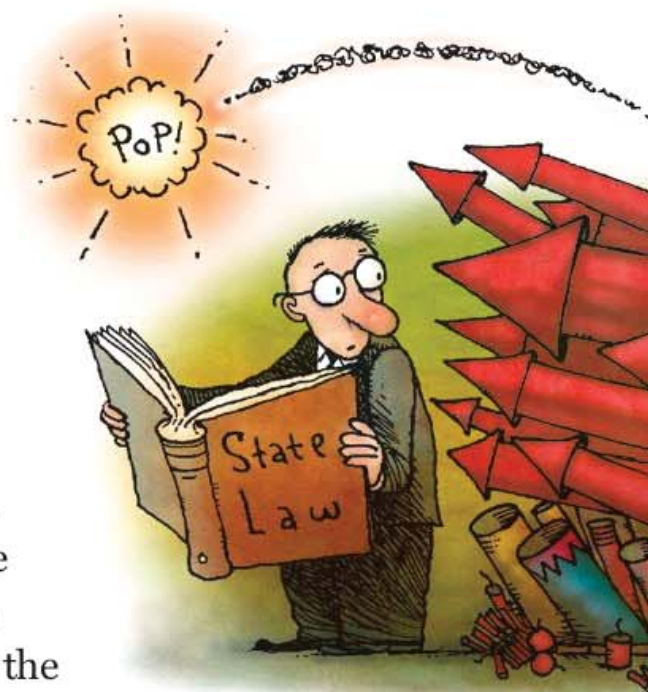
SEPTEMBER 2018 SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION



## Football Fireworks

**SCENARIO:** It's been a longtime tradition for a member of the school board to shoot off fireworks as the varsity football team in a small, rural community rushes down a hill toward the playing field before its home opener each fall. The practice violates state law, and the superintendent, who is new to the area, has brought the matter to the board's attention.

The board member's response: "If there's a fine, I'll pay it." The rest of the board took no action. The superintendent allows the practice to continue. Should he?



**SHELLEY BERMAN:** This practice raises two issues — knowingly violating state law and opening the district to liability should someone be injured. If the new superintendent ends the practice, he risks alienating the board, undermining traditions and jeopardizing his position. However, continuing the practice despite legal constraints could endanger his administrative license. He was correct to inform the board of his concern and should have done so in a way that was documented.

In this small community, local police and fire officials have likely attended home openers and turned a blind eye. The superintendent should consult with these officials to seek ways to retain the fireworks while ensuring a safe and authorized display. In this way, he can support the tradition and board, while protecting people and property. If the practice needs to be discontinued, he must help the community find alternative ways to show their support for the team.

**MAGGIE LOPEZ:** Over the next year as the new superintendent gets to know his board, he should find an alternative that is legal and perhaps even more exciting than

Sometimes as superintendents we try the legal route, the political approach or even influence through other board members to no avail. Ultimately, this board is breaking the law and the superintendent must persuade them to replace this activity with something more appropriate, less dangerous and legal. He has a year to get the job done before the next football season begins.

**MEIRA LEVINSON:** As an outsider, the superintendent has good reason to step back and initially follow others' leads about how the community celebrates. Local high schools serve as anchors in rural communities, and traditions run strong. If the fireworks are being detonated away from the hill and bleachers in a way that runs little risk of endangering anyone, the superintendent may be right to judge that this is a fight not worth fighting.

Before reaching this conclusion, he should determine whether the board member is acting in his official or private capacity when shooting fireworks and hence whether the district would be held liable if an accident occurred. Assuming the district is not insured against damages resulting

and he knows that local police cannot override it. He must make a decision and clearly and consistently communicate the legal rationale. This communication requires more than e-mail. It means engaging the community via media and social media, talking to boosters and players, responding to critics and complaints, and earning points for his leadership through engaging others to carry on the tradition.

Also, it is not up to either the superintendent or board as to whether the board member chooses to act. In fact, the board was right to act because, unless there is a compelling reason about the tradition, it is not their call to make. The individual board member acts on behalf of the board and cannot act without their approval.

Each month, *School Administrator* presents circumstances to raise an ethical dilemma in K-12 education. This column is based on a case previously appeared in the *Times'* Ethicist column. Suggestions for future cases be submitted to [magazine@aaas.org](mailto:magazine@aaas.org).

The Ethical Educator panel consists of Shelley Berman, superintendent of schools, and Maggie Lopez, principal, both of whom are members of the National Association of School Administrators.



**fireworks.** Perhaps he can recruit some influential community members, staff and students to reinvent this event.

See the panelists' full analyses of this case and read the AASA Code of Ethics at [www.aasa.org/SAethics.aspx](http://www.aasa.org/SAethics.aspx).

from an illegal act, the fireworks pose an insupportable financial risk, even if the likelihood of injury or property damage is small.

**MAX MCGEE:** The superintendent cannot stand by ethically or legally and let the fireworks continue. He has the responsibility to demonstrate respect for state law,

**BERMAN**, superintendent, Alameda County Office of Education, Alameda, Calif.; **MEIRA LEVINSON**, professor of education at Harvard University, and author of *Educational Ethics: Cases and Commentary*; **LOPEZ**, retired superintendent of schools in Colorado; and **GLENN "MAX" MCGEE**, superintendent and regional president of the National Association of School Administrators in Schaumburg, Ill. Expanded analysis is available in the magazine's online edition.

## Recording Video and Audio at Schools

**A MOTHER SENDS** her daughter to school with a hidden smartphone, hoping to record evidence of bullying. A student uses a "spy pen" to secretly record her class reciting the Mexican pledge of allegiance and posts the recording on YouTube. Parents of a nonverbal student sue over a school district policy that prohibits recording on campus, claiming it violates their son's right to "tell" about his day at school.

Each of these real-life situations demonstrates the challenges presented by the proliferation of recording devices in schools.

The wide availability of new recording technology has many potential benefits. Advocates argue that security cameras in special education classrooms could protect the most vulnerable students from abuse or neglect. In 2015, Texas became the first state to mandate that schools place cameras in certain special education classrooms upon request.

Recording devices also have clear educational uses, particularly with students who experience learning challenges. For example, a student who struggles with note taking can use a smart pen to record lectures. In addition, video technology could provide valuable feedback in evaluating teacher performance.

The authority to use a recording device at school is not a simple matter, however.

recording or photography in the classroom.

Of course, no principal in her right mind would try to prevent proud parents from snapping photos at graduation. Taking pictures and videos at school activities such as musical performances and athletic events does not raise the same concerns under FERPA as recordings in the classroom. According to the U.S. Department of Education, a photo or video that depicts a student participating in school activities that are open to the public, without a specific focus on any one person, should not be considered an education record.

### Four Suggestions

Before taking a position on recording devices in your school system, consider these tips:

► **Know the law.** In addition to FERPA, recording in schools relates to federal and state wiretap laws. Some states have adopted statutes that restrict the use of recording devices in school. Collective bargaining agreements may address whether teachers can be recorded. Research the laws in your area to ensure your practices are consistent.

► **Avoid overly broad restrictions.** A policy that prohibits making secret recordings or taking pictures or videos in sensitive locations such as

"Taking photos and videos at school activities such as musical performances and athletic events does not raise the same concerns under FERPA as recordings in the classroom."



## Privacy Concerns

Public schools are obligated to protect student privacy. The federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, prevents school districts from disclosing personally identifiable information in a student's "education record," which the law broadly defines as a record maintained by the school that is "directly related" to a student.

FERPA does not allow or prohibit recording devices in schools, but districts must take steps to ensure student privacy when devices are around. Audio or video footage of students recorded by a parent's or student's personal device cannot be an education record if the school does not maintain it. Nonetheless, a device may record information that is contained in a student's education record. To avoid releasing student information to unauthorized individuals, districts often choose not to allow

restrooms or locker rooms is defensible. However, a policy that restricts anyone on campus from making a recording of any kind is unrealistic and may be impossible to enforce.

► **Make exceptions when necessary.** If a student requires a recording device in order to receive educational benefit, federal disability laws may require the district to accommodate the student by making an exception to a general recording ban. Whether a student needs to use a recording device should be determined through the legal procedures that protect students with disabilities.

► **Focus on what's best for students.** When a student needs a recording device to learn, work with the parents to find an arrangement that addresses student privacy and minimizes disruption to the school environment. When a parent acts unreasonably, document your efforts to resolve the issue.



**SARAH ORMAN** is senior attorney at legal services for the Texas Association of School Boards in Austin, Texas. E-mail: [Orman@tasb.org](mailto:Orman@tasb.org); Twitter: @tasbattorney

## No Reason to Fear an Online Evaluation

**AS A SUPERINTENDENT**, you probably are doing more work online every year. Are you ready to have your annual evaluation done online, too?

There are several reasons your school board might find it appealing to conduct your performance review online. You might, too.

**“In an online evaluation system, the superintendent has the ability to UPLOAD RELEVANT EVIDENCE directly to the area of his or her responsibilities.”**



**DARCI D'ERCOLE-MCGINN** is director of leadership development at the New York State School Boards Association.

### ► It's focused.

Online evaluations (such as the one being developed by my organization, the New York State School Boards Association) have a standards-and-goals format. The evaluation instrument presumes that agreed-upon annual goals are SMART — specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

That should be good news for most action-oriented superintendents. SMART goals maintain a clear measure of how much progress has been made on district priorities.

### ► It can be easier for board members, especially the board president.

Who wants to track down paper evaluations or calculate numeric rating scores? With online evaluations, numeric rating scores are all calculated automatically, with auto-reminders sent to each board member. Each board member is held accountable to participate and get the job done. That makes it much easier to expedite the process, according to Sonia Mesika, vice president of the school board in Brewster, N.Y., which used an online program for the first time in 2017.

### ► It arms board members with good information.

A big plus of an online system is that it is organized and provides an emotion-free process for collating and aggregating rating scores and comments. Before meeting, board members can review each other's evaluation comments online. That encourages board members to focus on common perceptions. An outlier com-

ments, much of that material is in written form. In an online evaluation system, the superintendent has the ability to upload relevant evidence directly to the areas of his or her responsibilities. It also sets up a conversation between superintendent and board members and superintendent and superintendent an informal conversation that supports real-time progress and, in some cases, more important course corrections.

### ► It's available as a tool year-round.

The ability to work in a live online environment is available 24/7 all year long making the evaluation more robust and effective. McGrath, superintendent of the Ballston Lake Central School District, used online evaluations for the first time in 2017.

You can review goals and document achievements as they occur.

### ► It's a good investment.

The expense of purchasing an online evaluation system may be tough to justify in a year when budgets are tight and cost-cutting is going on. But it's a pennywise and pound-foolish decision. Evaluations are common for other positions, so why wouldn't we do the same for the superintendent? It's as important as superintendent.

### Honest Dealings

Despite these virtues, an online evaluation is not a panacea for frustrations that superintendents experience when they are evaluated. It's unlikely you'll have an opportunity to discuss the instrument.

It's important for superintendents to communicate with their boards about the evaluation process and have a common understanding of the evaluation criteria. While a good superintendent relationship can be enhanced by an online evaluation system, a bad superintendent-board relationship will not be fixed by an online evaluation system. The ultimate goal is a rich



► **It can be easier for you.**

Most superintendents are asked, reasonably,  
to document their performance by building  
a portfolio of evidence. For most superinten-

The ultimate goal is a rich,  
conversation between you and your  
opportunities for improvement  
fied and discussed. The honest  
sation is more important than  
focus always should be on how  
and your board can improve yo  
strict and serve the interests of

# TODAY'S LESSON

As a member of the **American Association of School Administrators**, you could get a special di-  
on car insurance. GEICO can help with homeowners and renters insurance, too.

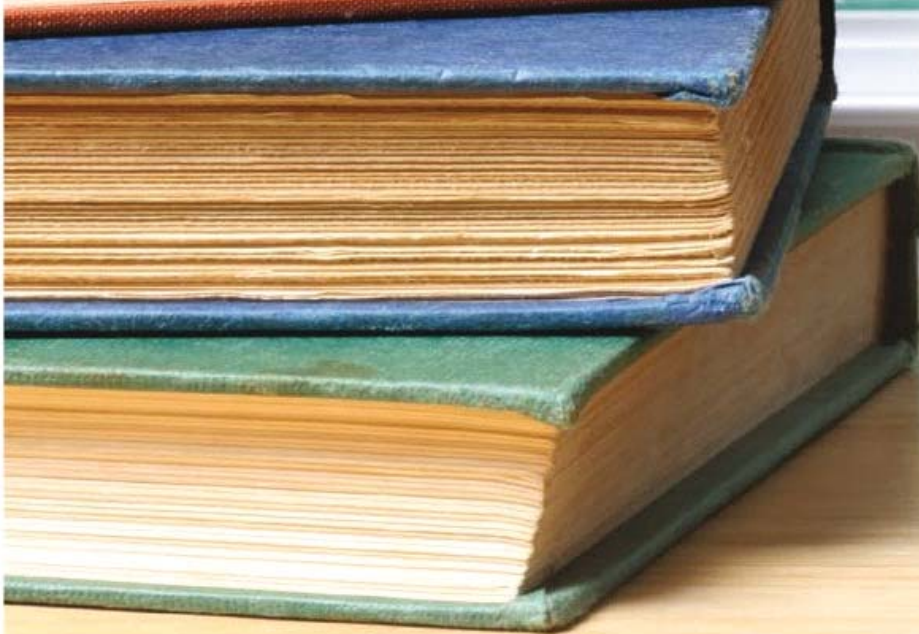


**AASA**  
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

Get a free quote.

**GEICO**

geico.com | 1-800-368-2773



*AASA insurance benefits offered through:*



**Trust for  
Insuring Educators**

*Administered by  
Forrest T. Jones & Company*

*(800) 821-7303 • [www.ftj.com](http://www.ftj.com)*

Disclaimer: GEICO contracts with various membership entities and other organizations, but these entities do not underwrite the offered insurance products. Some discounts, payment plans and features are not available in all states or all GEICO companies. Homeowners, renters and condo coverages are written through non-affiliated insurance companies and are secured through the GEICO Insurance Agency, Inc. Discount amount varies in some states. One group discount applicable per policy. Coverage is individualized. Premium reduction may be available. GEICO may not be involved in a formal relationship with each organization; however, you still may qualify for a special discount based on membership, employment or affiliation with those organizations. GEICO is a registered service mark of Government Employees Insurance Company, One GEICO Plaza, Suite 20076, a Berkshire Hathaway Inc. subsidiary. GEICO Gecko image © 1999-2017. © 2017 GEICO.



**“When social media tools shift around such areas as **USE, PRIVACY STANDARDS AND CONTENT TYPES**, it is essential that district leadership review and adapt both policy and practice.”**



**KRISTIN MAGETTE**  
is director of  
communications

## Keeping Up With New Tools in Your Po

**SCHOOL BOARD POLICY** changes are just part of life for a school district, given the ever-shifting terrain of state and federal laws, technology, fiscal expectations and varied regulations. Social media policy updates are no exception, especially considering the constantly changing social media landscape.

While many districts have an effective social media policy in place, others still require leadership to establish a formal approach to social media in a school system, whether in a classroom or school office — or even while off duty. Policies, procedures and professional development are how leaders effectively manage the risks of social media for meaningful engagement in and out of the classroom.

But writing and adopting a school district policy for social media is not an end point. When social media tools shift around such areas as use, privacy standards and content types, it is essential that district leadership review and adapt both policy and practice.

### Risks Raised

Over the past year, we in the Eudora School District in Kansas became more concerned about risks posed to teachers and families, with the growing popularity of private messaging and apps with disappearing messages, such as Snapchat.

This popularity is not unique to our school system or community and was years in the making. As consumers wanted more flexibility than texting offered, people began to migrate to free apps that allowed private conversations without the need for phone numbers. This evolution has moved everyday interactions into a more concealed space — made possible by social media.

Imagine the parent who hears his 7th grader say that she “messed Mr. Anderson on Snapchat and found out our tests will be graded tomorrow.”

On one hand, that parent is proud to hear

### Purposeful Limits

As use of private messaging and apps grew, so did our belief that our district deserved guidance on how to handle these types of messages. Updating social media policy for social media boils down to two things: Explain the risks and explain how leadership will help manage them.

► **The risks.** In this case, we described a growing trend among all social media tools that could easily involve our employees. Our district policies are updated in a piecemeal manner, but it should be noted if the policy was proposed in the aftermath of a social media incident. We made it clear to board members that the perceived risks were not directly related to existing employee behavior and that private messaging was not necessarily a new tool. In all, a teacher receiving an innocent message from a student or parent should not be disciplined for a brief, innocent reply.

► **The remedies.** We described the risks and the updated policy will help manage them. We changed risks that were explained in the first step. The best social media policy is to identify grey areas and seek to set meaningful boundaries rather than broad limits.

For example, a policy that “employees shall use private messaging with students” would be impractical for various reasons. The goal instead should be to provide expectations and guidance to help employees make wise decisions — and to provide administrators an effective, enforceable policy.

As with all policy changes, it takes time for reflection and thought. And after changes are enacted, we educate employees on the changing landscape and consider ways to further communicate practice to students’ families.

communication  
in the Eudora  
Schools in Eudora,  
Kan. E-mail: kristin  
magette@eudora  
schools.org. Twitter:  
@kmagette

On one hand, that parent is proud to hear that his 7th grader and her friends are taking their school work seriously — and using convenient tools to get answers to important questions. But it's impossible to deny the fears that pop up for the parent, hearing that a student and teacher are communicating in an app designed for messages to disappear.

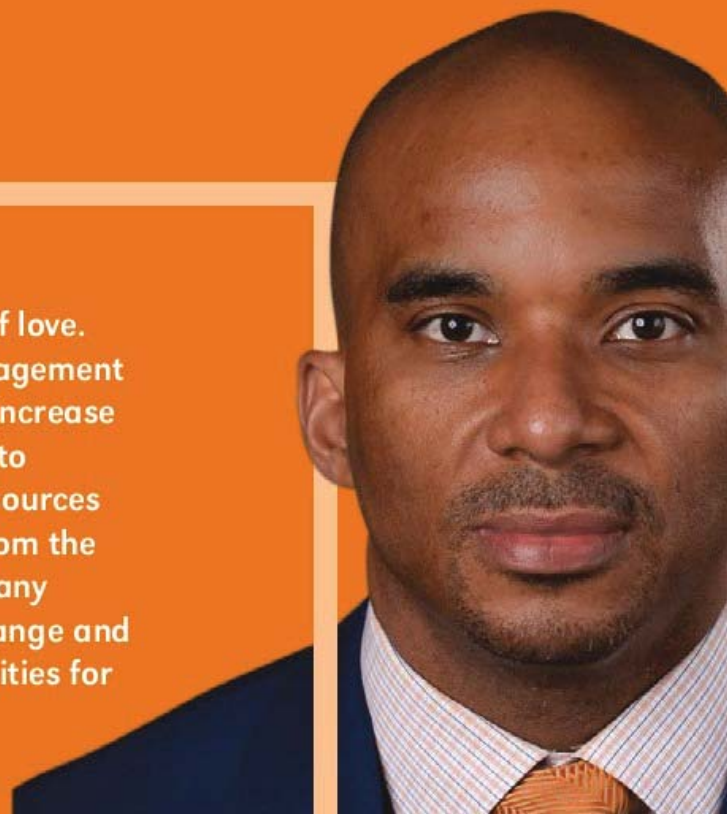
practice to students' families. Social media gives school districts a unique opportunity to build trust between teachers, families and the community. Investing the time and effort in maintaining a dynamic social media presence that supports employees' approach is a critical piece in this equation.

# LEAD TO JOIN JOIN TO LEAD

ASAA is where school superintendents from across the nation learn and share what works in public education.

In my district, we are cultivating a culture of love. We prioritize relationships, community engagement and innovative technology tools needed to increase collaboration. To discover what you can do to transform your own district, dig into the resources offered through your AASA membership. From the I Love Public Education campaign, to the many Children's Programs that drive systemic change and increase educational equity — the opportunities for meaningful change are endless.

**DR. LUELLE BROWN**





Superintendent,  
Ithaca City School District, NY



## REDISCOVER THE BENEFITS OF YOUR AASA MEMBERSHIP

Visit **WWW.AASA.ORG** or call **703.875.0748** to take advantage of everything your membership has to offer.



## Introducing Dewey to Digital Learning

**WHEN THE AUTOMOBILE** was first introduced in the U.S., several state legislatures enacted the Red Flag Law. These laws required that self-propelled vehicles be led by pedestrians waving a red flag to warn bystanders of an automated vehicle's approach. The laws were designed to protect citizens and livestock from a new technology that moved faster and more powerfully than anything people had ever experienced.

Today, it is hard to fathom such a law or to imagine what the world of transportation would resemble if such laws had not been repealed.

### Unfettered Access

I wonder if educators are enacting their own version of the Red Flag

**“Unfettered access to the internet means teachers can rely less on **DIRECT INSTRUCTION** that emphasizes memorization.”**

Law by forcing students to use the internet to support the same learning methodologies that have been used for decades. Instead of trying to fit the internet into traditional classroom instruction, why not create a learning environment that gives students unfettered access to the information available online? This will require teachers, students and parents to let go of traditional learning, but just as the automobile opened a whole new world of transportation, access to the internet will create opportunities for students to achieve a higher level of learning while obtaining a deeper level of understanding.

The internet has redefined the way students store, find, use and create information. It provides access to information from across the globe and enables everyone to share and update information instantaneously. Isn't it unrealistic to believe students who rely on memorization will be able to manage the explosion of new information?

Fortunately, wireless technology provides ubiquitous access to the internet for most students. If taught the skills to find authenticated information online, students would be able to use the internet to find whatever they needed whenever. As students

ering, critics will wonder if students are actually learning.

My answer can be found in the words of John Dewey: “I want to give pupils something to do, not to think; something to learn, not to be taught; something to be devoted to, not to passively receive; and the result should be such a nature as to develop the individual or the intentional notion of the individual; learning natural, not artificial; learning for the sake of learning, not for the sake of passing examinations; learning that is a part of life, not a preparation for life. Unfettered access to the internet means teachers can rely less on direct instruction that emphasizes memorization. Rather, it promotes learner-centered instruction that encourages students to apply information to problem-based or project-based activities. These types of learning promote learning at a higher level than memorization.”

### A Persuasive Case

Higher-level learning is no longer to complete assignments; students are no longer required to learn a basic level of knowledge. Therefore, rote learning is not typically used in the 21st century. Granting students unlimited access to the internet as an information source means teachers will have the opportunity to teach students in high-level learning environments that focus on critical thinking and problem-solving. For work with others, all types of learning are required, including core academic content.

Unfortunately, the success of most educators has relied heavily on memorization. The idea of allowing students to find answers is difficult for many educators. For educators, the major challenge will be to mount a persuasive case for applying information in a meaningful way. Organizing information, a learning

**Reading on the Go?**

Read *School Administrator* magazine now on your tablet or smartphone!

Full content. Page-turning display.



Full content • Page-turning display •  
Live links • Easy sharing with colleagues

Download now in the App  
Store or on Google Play.

**SchoolAdministrator**  
ESSENTIAL INSIGHTS AND COMMENTARY FOR SCHOOL SYSTEM LEADERS

gain proficiency, educators should no longer define learning as a student's ability to recall factual details, but should define learning as a student's ability to apply the information readily available via the internet. Of course, if teachers allow students to use the internet for information gath-

that will lead to longer retention, a deeper understanding of ideas and the development of new ideas will open the door to new

**RICK CAVE** is the director of the West Windsor-Plainsboro District in West Windsor, NJ. E-mail: Rick.Cave@ww-p.o



**AASA**  
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

# LEADERS MATTER





**AASA, The School Superintendents Association** is launching a campaign to showcase school districts where the exemplary leadership of the superintendent has resulted in meaningful, measurable outcomes for the schools, students and community they serve.

AASA will collect and report on successes from these champions for children, allowing you to share practices and access resources not previously available to your district.

Join the conversation on Twitter using **#LeadersMatter.**

**SHARE YOUR STORY!** For more details, visit [AASACentral.org/LeadersMatter](https://AASACentral.org/LeadersMatter)



## Have We Outgrown Hand-Me-Down Hiring Practices?

**I HAVE YET** to meet an administrator who would challenge the expression “Hiring good people is the most important thing we do.” I also have yet to meet a principal who completed graduate-level coursework addressing innovative hiring practices.

For those of us who did not, I’ve discovered that important personnel hiring decisions are routinely based on scattered learning opportunities, often lacking coordination or in-depth focus. Seldom is comprehensive professional development in personnel practices made available to practicing school leaders. Mostly, administrators receive just-in-time coaching when they are faced with terminating someone who perhaps should not have been hired in the first place.

View these circumstances another way: Some of the most-wanting preparation school administrators receive guides decisions that will impact students and two-thirds of a district’s budget for years to come. While

many contend “experience is the best teacher,” how is it acceptable that some of most significant decisions school leaders make should come via “hand-me-down” experiences from others who received the same minimalist training?

### Diminishing Candidates

In my new home state of Arizona, where I teach graduate courses to fledgling administrators, a broad study still underway has found only a scant 4 percent of principals report receiving meaningful graduate training on hiring practices. In all, 60 percent say they received no preparation or at best an occasional mention of staff hiring. Some 77 percent strongly agreed or very strongly agreed that a working knowledge of effective hiring practices is an important skill for administrators. Only 5 percent believed the just-in-time coaching approach offered appropriate training.

The diminishing candidate pool

adds to the challenge. In Arizona, school districts at times to secure a substitute for a teaching position

**“Reducing teacher requirements may expand short-term numbers. However, it also threatens to DILUTE CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS. It is a time when we need stronger educators with adaptable teaching and innovative practices.”**

Reducing teacher requirements may artificially expand short-term numbers. However, it threatens to dilute candidate qualifications at a time when we need stronger educators with adaptable skills and innovative practices. Graduate search for capable, change agents. Professionals will dictate the demand where teacher preparation uncertainties necessitate far more the part of discerning administrators who are selecting the best workforce.

### Needed Action

Graduate programs in administration are gridlocked by standards and accreditation requirements. This need will not be met until practitioners

hanleywood | metrostudy

## TEMPLETON DEMOGRAPHICS

*Demographics and Planning for School Districts*

- Enrollment Projections
- District Demographics
- GIS Mapping and Boundary Planning

Introducing the new

## Demographic Desktop

featuring

## Web GIS





Facility Planning

Reports and Presentations

[www.tdemographics.com](http://www.tdemographics.com) (817) 251-1607

TDemographic Desktop is a software tool that allows instant access to TDemographics data, including enrollment projections, enrollment trends, and maps and our Web GIS tool.

radars until practitioners demands for training better address hiring hiring ought to be own level leaders and view the essential first step things here." Investing ity is a must.

In the meantime, district-level administrators can act to address this need.

Become an advocate for improved training and innovative hiring practices at home and across the profession. Fifteen years ago, I attempted to team up with fellow area superintendents for a one-day summer training session led by a recognized authority on personnel hiring. There was zero interest. Survey results today suggest principals overwhelmingly recognize hiring is an area that demands greater attention.

Invite your governing board to share in your vision by supporting comprehensive professional development that supports hiring practices. Build policy around an inclusive systemwide dialogue on meeting classroom and organizational needs. Dare to move beyond the legalese of policy concerned primarily with forms and deadlines.

Get to know candidates better as we did at my former school district in the upper Midwest by interviewing fewer people. Quality screening including "cold calls" to administrative candidates greatly increased our efficiency. The element of surprise



**SJ Hart & Associates International**

## ***"Mental Health and Suicide Management Education"***

### **Q: Did you know?**

Suicides among young people continues to be a serious problem. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for children, adolescents and young adults age 5-to-24-year-olds.

(Copyright © 2018 by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)

The suicide rate ages 10 to 14 has been steadily rising, and doubled in the U.S. from 2007 to 2014, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### **Our Mission:**

Provide quality and impactful training to those who work with students.

Teach the first responders faculty, guidance, psychologists, bus drivers, paraprofessionals and administration.

### **Read:**

## **"Lies In Silence"**

written by SJ Hart

with asst. editing by Martin Sheen

A critically acclaimed international book used by universities, law enforcement, educators, and researchers. It is a recommended resource by the National Institute of Health, lead psychiatrists, and researchers.

### **Why we are different?**

As research has proven, as well as recent clinical trials and





enabled an effective seven-question dialogue to help us acquire a strong sense of who could handle the job. The remaining process truly was an exercise in picking our best fit.

We also included an unstructured conversation with a second team immediately following the formal interview before a building tour facilitated by counseling and secretarial staff. Each step established a better feel for candidates interested in joining our 5,000-student district and contributed toward making hiring the most important thing we did.

**THOMAS HUGHES**, a former superintendent, is an associate professor of educational leadership at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Ariz. E-mail: Thomas.Hughes@nau.edu. Twitter: @TomHugh34300405

our listening session with the FDA, suicidal ideation often presents as a neurological symptom, which may not respond to behavioral intervention such as prevention.

However, addressing suicide as a chronic illness such as epilepsy or migraines we have the opportunity to teach professionals language to students with seeking help based on management; NOT prevention.

We have worked at universities, conferences, faculty trainings, and student groups. LEARN what suicidal ideation really is, language to assist suicidal students, how to successfully coordinate an impact team to teach symptom management and potentially reduce suicide.

**SJ Hart & Associates International**

**Award-winning Speakers/Authors**

**One Smithbridge Rd. 19017-0712**

**Cell - (610) 844-1560**

**info.associates@comcast.net**

**\$500 Half-day training plus travel expenses**

## Students and Victim Mentality

**CONNOR WALKED INTO** the kitchen where his mother was making supper. She turned from the stove and looked at him with frustration.

"I got an e-mail from your English teacher today. She said you are getting a D because you haven't turned in five assignments. She asked me to call her."

Connor looked at her for a second. "I thought I turned everything in," he muttered. "She must've lost those assignments. Besides, some of them were stupid."

"Lost them?"

"Yeah, she isn't organized. She doesn't tell us what's expected" He paused, then added, "She just con-

tacted you today? The quarter is almost over!"

"Well, I'm not happy!" Connor's mom said. "You sure you turned them in? Why didn't she notify me sooner?"

"Yeah. Besides, she doesn't like me."

### Common Behavior

Teachers shake their heads at the excuses students make for their performance in school and why some parents are willing to accept them. Unfortunately, these narratives occur frequently. The "it's not my fault" attitude may imply something more serious if it occurs regularly.

This behavior shows up at home and school. We hear it in the way

children talk: "the mil- toy broke" and, if there home, "he/she made r

Older students' lan- to deflecting responsi- is boring!" "she's not p- plays favorites."

Generally, these re- one of three themes. story: I am innocent at fault for what happ- ond is my behavior is- fault: I am innocent a- a villain or perpetrator- am helpless and there- could do.

Refusal to accept p- sibility is the common



**Your Organization's  
One Stop Shop for  
Crisis Risk Management**

**For more information contact:  
Marianne Alvarez, President**

## Active Shooter Readiness Begins with a Physical Security Risk Assessment

### SERVICES:

- **Onsite Risk Assessments and Plans:** We use a unique inside-out approach that identifies risks from the exterior AND interior which your organization may face, including an in-depth analysis of Violent Intruder Threat and readiness.
- **Workplace Violence/Threat Management Training:** recognition, reporting, de-escalation, and management.
- **Emergency Drills for Fire, Earthquake and Active Shooter:** Practice your plans to meet readiness and compliance
- **Emergency Operation Plan Development:** We will enhance your existing plans or develop new plans to ensure readiness and compliance.
- **Architectural Plan Analysis for New Construction and Remodels:** Address Security at the earliest phases of your site design process. Take into consideration your safety programs as they relate to building infrastructure and minimize the loss of life during



Individuals with a victim mentality and the nonproductive drama they create frustrates others. They play the “poor me” card and never feel answerable for their behavior or experiences. Blame and the alleged actions of others are the focus, implying they were not in any way culpable for the situation or they were powerless to address it.

Victim mentality is a self-defeating quality. They are passive-aggressive exacerbating events that spiral out of control. This mentality moves the locus of control of their life from internal to external — outside of their sphere of responsibility and not within their influence. They reject any accountability for their responses or situations they face.

Self-defined victims lose credibility over time as they hide under a veil of innocence. For children, this can be severely destructive, just as it is in the adult workplace. This passive-aggressive position makes them irresponsible bystanders in life and events.

### Capacity to Act

Adults and children have the ability to respond — they have choices. Life is not always easy. Difficulties are inevi-

ensure they meet their responsibilities.

The “poor me” victim attitude is a recipe for failure. Victim mentality impedes self-discovery, continued learning and mature adaptation to life. Facing reality and making choices requires courage and charac-

ter. Making excuses for children does them no favors.

**GEORGE GOENS**, a retired superintendent, is an education consultant in Litchfield, Massachusetts, and author of *It's Not My Fault: Victims and Becoming Response-able*. E-mail: gagoens@gmail.com. Twitter: @georgegoens



## Best in class seating.

**FLAVORS®** four-position seating and ergonomic design moves with today's collaborative learners and learning environments. Available in 19 colors.

**Smith System®**



table. All people have the freedom to act and manage their lives. They choose to become a victim and find comfort in victimhood. The stigma of failure and shirking responsibility prevents the opportunity to learn and improve.

A victim mentality is a result of learned helplessness, which is disempowering. Everyone on occasion has uncomfortable feelings about his or her abilities. Pity and sympathy for the victim in these cases creates a sense of validation and results in a continuation of that behavior.

Children must learn from parents and others that they are *response-able* and not engage in self-destructive behavior. They need to perceive the world around them, understand situations and manage circumstances to





# What Makes Social- Emotional Learning So Important?

Four measures that can contribute to  
developmentally healthy schools

BY LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND

**W**hile educators intrinsically know how important social and emotional well-being is to the welfare of our young people, it is sometimes hard to keep this reality in focus as we deal with the press for school accountability and ever higher standards.

Yet students respond powerfully to being cared about, well known, appreciated and seen for their assets rather than their deficits. When students are motivated and feel a sense of belonging, their learning improves. As the old saying goes, “Students often learn as much *for* a teacher as they learn *from* a teacher.”

This was apparent to me from the day I first student taught in the under-resourced summer school at Camden High School in New Jersey, where students who had failed English class the year before dreaded receiving remediation. But these students responded eagerly to opportunities

and why I am co-chairing the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development. The commission has convened governors, business people and community leaders to develop an agenda for the nation that can leverage the policies and programs needed to bring this important work to every school and district in the nation.

Social and emotional supports in schools and at home have frequently been called the “missing link” in education. Decades of research show that students’ social, emotional, and cognitive/academic development are deeply intertwined and vital for student learning. When we help students to engage productively with one another, understand themselves and others, think, and better handle the stresses and challenges in their lives, we prepare them for a bright new end in the future.





these students responded eagerly to opportunities to create poetry and life narratives that revealed their strengths — and were willing to learn grammar, revise their work and sharpen writing skills in the cause of being better understood.

It is why I have championed bringing social and emotional skills into both schools and the teacher education programs where I have worked

## Robust Benefits

Well-implemented programs designed to address social, emotional and academic development are associated with positive outcomes, ranging from better test scores and higher graduation rates to improved social behavior.



who reviewed 213 programs focused on social, emotional and academic learning found these programs positively affected students' social competence and behavior. In addition, students experienced, on average, an 11 percentile-point

alienated and angry. Just adding metal detectors and security guards is much less effective than teaching students tools they can use to manage their emotions and seek help when needed, as well as to raise and resolve problems.



improvement in academic performance. Subsequent studies have found long-term positive effects on academic effort and achievement, as measured in reading, writing and math scores, as well as graduation rates.

School safety, which is a top priority for parents and educators in the wake of school shootings in Parkland, Fla., and Santa Fe, Texas, is also enhanced by teaching students social and emotional skills and by creating a positive learning environment, including counseling and mental health supports.

When schools put in place an educative and restorative approach to discipline and teach students social and emotional skills, such as how to resolve conflicts and relate well to others, evidence shows that incident rates plummet and schools become safer. This is far preferable to a focus on exclusionary and punitive discipline practices that disrupt students' academic progress and cause students to become more disconnected,

I have seen this in my own work with high schools over many years. Among the most profound changes were those in a high school in East Palo Alto, Calif., I worked with for many years. Once dubbed the "murder capital" of the U.S., this high-poverty, largely immigrant community experiences significant gang violence, drive-by shootings and drug trafficking. Many of the students also suffer the traumas associated with evictions, homelessness, family incarceration, food insecurity and lack of health care.

When the school first opened with the intention of reducing high school dropout rates for students from the community, there were frequent fights, graffiti and chronic absenteeism. Many students did not engage in school work and were unmoved by threats of failure. They knew how to fail and expected it.

The turnaround occurred as their advisers — who saw a small group of students every day and stayed with them for all four years of high



**Linda Darling-Hammond (left) promotes the effective application of social-emotional learning through her leadership of the Learning Policy Institute in Palo Alto, Calif.**

school — made home visits and positive phone calls to parents; created a close-knit community in advisory, as teachers did in classrooms; taught social-emotional awareness and skills, including conflict resolution; involved students in decision making about norms and responsibilities; developed restorative discipline practices and mental health supports; introduced mindfulness; and engaged students in project-based learning and internships focused on improving conditions in the community. Soon, the school became a safe haven with a strong family ethos — with students helping each other keep the campus safe while practicing social and emotional skills. Attendance rates soared and both graduation and college-going rates reached 90 percent.

The school, like so many others, demonstrated that the social and emotional aspects of learning are much more than a frill or an add-on. They are part of the core curriculum.

needs of students in diverse social and ethnic contexts, and designing learning to engage these skills; (3) attention to the social and emotional learning needs of teachers and school leaders, as well as (4) making it an explicit mission for students to be personally and socially skilled and responsible.

#### ► **Designing healthy learning environments**

A positive classroom and school environment is important for students to develop. When schools become a welcoming place for students from a diversity of backgrounds, a diversity of ideas, and a supportive environment for those who struggle and have experienced trauma, students and teachers feel a sense of belonging that supports effective learning.

A recent study from the University of California Consortium on School Research found that principals influence school achievement through changes in the school climate. Learning climates are defined as safe environments with high, consistent expectations for students, both behaviorally and academically.

The study, based on data from 100 schools, found that other principal initiatives associated with improving achievement as teachers' professional development, alignment and parent engagement led to student achievement to the extent of a strong school climate. Even among schools that start out with safe climates or high achievement, further improvements in school climate are associated with higher achievement gains.

Schools need to be places where relationships can form. Unfortunately, this is not true in all settings. We still struggle with the factory-model school that we had in the early 1900s, in which students are in the same classroom and have different teachers every year. In secondary schools, every class period offers opportunities for long-term attachment.

Some school districts are engaged in the work of redesigning schools to create environments that are more personally meaningful for adults and students stay together



## Four Dimensions

For this to happen, school leaders need to pay attention to four things: (1) intentionally designing learning environments that are developmentally healthy places with strong long-term relationships; (2) directly teaching social and emotional learning strategies attuned to meet the

time, where teams of teachers and administrators can work with each other around particular students and where administrators enable teachers to know students.

Increasingly, schools also are reaching out to families and other community institutions. Families play an essential role in supporting student growth. Including families and other

tings in efforts to ensure students' healthy development enables learning to occur across contexts.

### ► Creating learning strategies that support social, emotional and academic development.

Social and emotional skills can be taught with high-quality practices, programs and interventions in both school and out-of-school settings.

Indeed, some evidence suggests social and emotional learning skills are open to change over a long period of time, and some skills, such as learning to manage one's emotions, are building blocks for more complex skills that emerge as children age, such as learning to manage conflicts.

In addition to specific social and emotional learning programs, we need to consider cur-

## SEL's Results in Cleveland and Austin

In Cleveland, Ohio, a districtwide social-emotional learning program was created in 2007 in the wake of a school-based tragedy. A student who had been suspended returned to his high school, shot and wounded two teachers and two other students and then killed himself.

Cleveland's schools serve 100 percent low-income students, most of whom are students of color and 23 percent of whom are identified for special education services. The district implemented its SEL program through its district leadership team (known as "Humanware") in each of its 105 schools. The initiative was launched with the support of the Cleveland Teachers Union when Eric Gordon, now district superintendent, was chief academic officer.

The program includes the PATHS curricu-

lum in preK-grade 5; the Second Step program in grades 6-8; student support teams; mental health services in schools; bullying prevention and conflict mediation programs; and school-based planning centers, which are places for students to receive counseling as a constructive alternative to in-school suspensions.

Student and family engagement are a key part of the agenda. Measures include mentors for young men of color, partnerships with local community organizations and a range of academic achievement supports. Nearly 400 high school students meet twice a year to review their individual school's Conditions for Learning data, participate in activities with their peers and provide feedback directly to the CEO about proposed district improvements.

Over the last decade, Cleveland has seen significant improvements in student outcomes as measured by indicators such as attendance and evidence from an annual survey. Suspension and expulsion rates for the 39,000-student district have declined while attendance and graduation rates have climbed. In 2011, only one in 10 students graduated high school; today, the graduation rate had increased to 75 percent.

### Austin's Approach

A second model to watch has emerged in Austin, Texas. Austin launched its plan for social-emotional learning in 2011 under the leadership of then-district superintendent Maria Carstarphen. The work continued under Paul Cruz, her successor.

The Whole Child, Every Child initiative frames SEL as a districtwide effort across the district's 130 schools, not just a program. Elementary and middle school students receive explicit skill






A young student at Wade Park Elementary School in Cleveland, Ohio, leads a discussion with classmates on good listening, a classroom exercise that is part of a districtwide social-emotional learning plan.

through the Second Step program. Schools use School-Connect as an additional resource. Teachers integrate it into instruction with help from coaches deployed throughout the system. After teachers who develop an exemplar lessons in the content area, as part of this integrated effort, the district department is implementing a social-emotional learning education program.

As this work has rolled out across the 83,500-student district, studies show that SEL implementation has been associated with improved attendance, lower levels of chronic absenteeism, fewer suspensions and expulsions, and higher graduation rates. In addition, students have gained SEL competencies, and performance has improved on state math tests.

— LINDA D.





riculum designs and instructional practices that integrate social and emotional learning with academics. Engaging students in well-designed collaborative work around hard problems gives them a sense of ownership over their own learning. Allowing them to reflect on and revise their work in response to feedback helps them develop a growth mindset. Offering real-world, authentic

projects helps them develop executive resourcefulness and the skills of leadership, preparing them for work in the 21st century.

If we think about the ways in which we will be able to function as adults, we will be able to function on problems that need creative solutions. Creative solutions require problem solving. Preparing students to do that work well is part of the major mission of education in the modern era.

## Additional Resources

### AASA'S SEL INITIATIVES

AASA plans to launch a cohort for members interested in sharing their expertise in the use of social and emotional learning or in learning from experienced practitioners.

The association's initiative, expected to begin in the coming months, will provide superintendents with informational resources on SEL and its implementation in school districts. A blog on SEL use will appear regularly in *Education Week* with postings by AASA members as well as Mort Sherman, AASA associate executive director for leadership services, and Dan Domenech, executive director.

For details, contact Bernadine Futrell at [bfutrell@aasa.org](mailto:bfutrell@aasa.org).

AASA also is partnering with Aspen Institute, a nonprofit serving as home to the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development, co-chaired by Linda Darling-Hammond.

### TOOLS AND ARTICLES

► Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (<https://casel.org/resources-support>). Resources for districts curated from CASEL's partner districts to support districtwide SEL implementation.

► "Ready to Lead: A National Principal Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Prepare Children and Transform Schools" ([www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ReadyToLead\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ReadyToLead_FINAL.pdf)) A seven-page executive summary prepared for CASEL based on a survey of 900 principals and interviews with 16 superintendents.

► "School Climate and Social and Emotional Learning: The Integration of Two Approaches" ([www.rwjf.org/social-emotional-learning](http://www.rwjf.org/social-emotional-learning)) by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (January 2018). A 12-page executive summary on how positive school climates support SEL and how improved SEL supports school climate.

► "Skills for Life" by Linda Dusenbury, Roger P. Weissberg and Duncan C. Meyers, *Principal*, National Association of Elementary School Principals, September/October 2016.

### SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

To learn more about the school and district initiatives described in her article, author Linda Darling-Hammond recommends these resources.

► East Palo Alto Academy in California (*Be the Change: Reinventing Schools for*

### ► Supporting the adults who work in schools

For social, emotional and academic success, students need a commitment to thrive in schools, teachers and school administrators themselves need to have access to resources that allow them to be effective. This includes practice self-care, as well as training and support to understand and model social and emotional skills, behaviors, knowledge and attitudes for students. We need not only to prepare teachers to help students get along with each other and develop social and emotional skills, but we also need to support teachers and school administrators as social-emotional learners themselves.

Education is a very intense kind of work. Teachers must be able to relate well to students and other adults; manage their emotions on an ongoing basis; remain calm in the face of emergencies; and be deliberate in their planning. District administrators who support such adult learning are vital.

### ► Making it an explicit mission.

More than anything, district and school leaders can be spokespeople and advocates for social and emotional learning that honors the whole student. Making social, emotional and academic success an explicit mission of schools. Schools need to build this vision into what they do. They need to talk about education and build it into their strategic plans.

The reward is both helping students be successful in school and more prepared for the world they're going into, which requires a kind of learning that's enabled by social and cognitive capacities. As adults, we need to show for young people what a world would be like in which we work together and are able to help each other, understand each other and build a better kind of community in the outside world.



*Student Success* by Linda Darling-Hammond and three co-authors, Teachers College Press, N.Y., 2016).

► Austin, Texas ([www.austinisd.org/sel/implementation](http://www.austinisd.org/sel/implementation) and <https://casel.org/partner-districts/austin-independent-school-district>)

► Cleveland, Ohio (<https://casel.org/partner-districts/cleveland-metropolitan-school-district>)

kind of community in the outside world that we want to build in our schools. ■

**LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND** is president of the Learning Policy Institute in Palo Alto, California, and Charles E. Ducommun professor of education at Stanford University. E-mail: [ldh@learningpolicyinstitute.org](mailto:ldh@learningpolicyinstitute.org); Twitter: @ldh\_ed



# Relationships Are Fundamental

Harvard researcher Stephanie Jones on the essential elements of social and emotional learning

BY DANIEL BROWNE



**Y**ou might not expect an expert on social and emotional learning to turn to “Supernanny,” a reality television program, for parenting advice, but that’s what Harvard University’s Stephanie Jones, a professor of education, found herself doing late one night.

A busy working mother, Jones identified with the show’s stressful situations. She happened to catch the Supernanny advising a mom with a similar challenge at the end of each day.

“She said, ‘When you come home, force yourself to ignore the demands

**Above: Research by Stephanie Jones (center), a Harvard professor, links children’s social and emotional learning to their success in later schooling.**

that prevent you from reconnecting with your children. Let them fall all over you and have their moment of crying, needing you, whatever. Then you’ll have the entire evening to get things done,” Jones said. “I tried it, and it made a big difference.”

Jones tells this story because it highlights one of the fundamental insights of her work on social-emotional learning in youngsters. When adults carefully consider how they interact with children, everyone benefits. “It’s true for parents but also teachers,” she says.

Her research background extends beyond social-emotional learning to cover conflict resolution and character education. She has studied how school-based programs are implemented, how barriers can be addressed and what

effects these programs have on teachers and children.

Jones’ research, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, the Brookings Institution and the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, links children’s social-emotional learning to later success. In an interview for *School Administrator*, she talked about why superintendents and other educators should focus on SEL and what research tells us about using these instructional strategies in schools.

The Q&A has been edited for clarity and length.

**What drew you to social-emotional learning as an area of study?**

**JONES:** A lot of the work I’ve done has focused on poverty and



**Stephanie Jones (rear) teaching her Harvard University class, on social-emotional learning called “Beyond Grit: Non-Cognitive Factors in School Success.”**

forms of risk and the relationship between those factors and children’s developmental trajectories. That work painted a picture that neuroscience is confirming today: Stress, trauma and turmoil set up a dynamic in the brain and in behavior that puts children at a disadvantage. So I came to focus on what kinds of strategies, practices and interventions make a difference in this dynamic.

#### **Why does social-emotional learning matter?**

**JONES:** We start with the idea that social, emotional and behavioral skills have their roots in interactions and relationships. We then move to the idea that interactions and relationships are fundamental to the educational enterprise.

A focus on these skills drives positive academic outcomes, behavioral outcomes, long-term outcomes, relationships with adults, and more engaged, interesting, emotionally supportive learning settings.

#### **When we talk about SEL, what skills are students actually learning?**

**JONES:** We organize the skills into a

them to build empathy.

Then there’s a social category that includes being able to read the social environment and respond to it appropriately, having pro-social inclinations like wanting to help and cooperate.

#### **Can you elaborate?**

**JONES:** Whether you describe self-regulation as self-control or even grit, these concepts are deeply tied to the process of learning. You have to be able to manage your attention. You have to be able to minimize distractions. You need to be able to negotiate and manage in groups with other children or with adults.

#### **You argue that social and emotional skills are “malleable,” meaning they can be taught and developed throughout childhood, adolescence and beyond. What role does age play in SEL? How should SEL education evolve as children age?**

**JONES:** When I talk about how social emotional skills are malleable, I mean two things. One is that they emerge and change over the course of human development.

Those first years of schooling — pre-K, K and 1st grade — are when

set out a plan and follow through to organize their materials, take charge of their backpack, use more sophisticated verbal skills, basic executive functions.

The second thing I mean malleable is that research on design strategies and practices support the acquisition of these skills. The thing that’s important to remember is that not all skills develop every period. You would not expect a 4-year-old to be able to solve a social problem solving

#### **What is the specific role of SEL in supporting social and emotional learning?**

**JONES:** The goal of social-emotional learning is to provide children and young people with knowledge but almost more importantly, skills in learning to manage their capacity to take control of their environment, manipulate it, understand it, share it. That process involves social and emotional skills.

Social-emotional learning is happening all the time, in every setting. The question is, how do we make it explicit and intentional to maximize the impact it has on the outcomes we care about?

#### **What do we know about the return on investment in SEL?**

**JONES:** We now have evidence that implementing a program of social-emotional strategies that builds social-emotional skills results in positive outcomes not only in those skills but in other outcomes, things like improved scores on standardized tests. The effects are even stronger for children who struggle with behavior problems. Even counting longer-term outcomes including health, wealth, criminality and substance use.

**What are the ingredients**



**JONES:** We organize the skills into a few categories. There are cognitive skills like working memory, attention control, response inhibition, goal-setting, planning. There are emotional competencies like “emotion knowledge” — being able to understand emotions in oneself and others, using

pre-K, K and 1st grade — are when the prefrontal cortex is expanding, and it’s a big opportunity to focus on [core executive functions] like self-control, working memory, and attention shifting. Those set the stage for further development. In 3rd grade, for example, children need to be able to

**What are the ingredients of SEL?**

**JONES:** It boils down to two things. One is instruction. The other is creating an environment where the experience as safe, caring, engaging and motivating. In the instruction c

is generally effective if it has four elements:

(1) Adults model the skills they’re trying to build with children and youth. You can’t have adults yelling at children about their emotions.

(2) Skills are made explicit. An example I frequently use is attention. We say to children all the time, “Pay attention,” but do we teach them what attention means? What does paying attention feel like? What might you do to show someone you’re paying attention?

(3) Practice opportunities are available. Effective SEL instruction isn’t confined to one part of the day. Children are using attention during math or science or gym or lunch. You can use that time to talk about attention. “I noticed you zoned out a little there. What was happening in your brain?”

(4) Making the language of SEL part of the discourse. For example, an adult who supervises recess might notice when children are having big emotions and talk to them about it. And that means working with adults on their social and emotional skills, supporting them in effective classroom and behavior management.

**You mentioned that school environment is important. What is the connection between SEL and school culture?**

learn and use those skills. For example, a child is much more likely to pay attention to their teacher and get along with their peers in a classroom and school community where they feel connected, engaged and accepted.

For this reason, efforts to support SEL and improve school culture and climate can often be mutually reinforcing. School culture and climate initiatives that support SEL might include establishing a clear set of prosocial norms, promoting positive school discipline and classroom management, and supporting teachers and students to build healthy relationships with one another.

#### **Any research on this that superintendents would find valuable?**

**JONES:** Research shows that school culture/climate efforts can support children to develop and use SEL skills in two important ways. The first is through the quality of adult-child relationships in the building. A large body of research shows that warm and trusting relationships between teachers and children lead to improved SEL skills and school adjustment while negative relationships lead to poor behavior and academic outcomes.

Second, children are more likely to benefit from SEL programs when the programs are embedded in everyday

ers and students to use SEL strategies more broadly during their interactions.

#### **What common pitfalls should administrators watch for?**

**JONES:** The perception can be to make a new program fit, you have to eliminate something else. Schools often decide to put SEL, say, in a social and wellness class but nowhere else. In fact, SEL is most effective when it’s woven into everyday practice. It’s not easy, but when leaders get it, they do see positive outcomes.

SEL can’t just be checked off as simply adopting a program. You have to make it a priority and think carefully about what will make implementation stick and connect to the work of the school.

Another pitfall is the tendency for adults to not notice when they are breaking a norm they expect of children. I was dropping my son at school one day and he had something he wanted to tell his teacher. She was talking to someone else and he ran over and interrupted. She said, “When an adult is speaking to another adult you have to wait and not interrupt.” And he said, “But do you get to interrupt us?” Children are highly attuned to these inconsistencies. [W]hich means you

**JONES:** SEL is about more than just targeting and building skills. Certain aspects of the school environment can make it more or less challenging to

actions and school culture, meaning that successful SEL efforts should extend beyond the classroom to playgrounds, lunchrooms, hallways and bathrooms and support teach-

provide support to adults as well as children.

**What key points should superintendents take away from this interview?**

**JONES:** First, social-emotional learning is important. Attending to it makes a demonstrable difference for children, youth and the overall culture. Second, there are many ways school districts can address this body of skills, including curriculum, instruction and policies. It takes time, attention and effort. Lastly, you don't just focus on it for its own sake; by weaving it into the system, you can accelerate other areas of positive outcomes. ■

**DANIEL BROWNE** is a freelance writer based in Birmingham, Ala.

## Additional Resource

"Navigating SEL from the Inside Out," a consumer-oriented guide produced with support from The Wallace Foundation, provides references to 25 leading, evidence-based social and emotional learning programs.

The practical guide profiles each program, including the specific skills targeted and instructional methods used. It includes a summary of the evidence base for each program and a series of tables that makes it possible to compare features. Readers can see at a glance that one program is designed to help students regulate their behavior, while another is aimed at developing a particular character trait like empathy or that one offers support for engaging families, while another can be adapted to serve specific populations.

The guide includes a set of worksheets to help readers put this information to practical use. Access the guide at [www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org).









# The School Climate Connection With S

**T**hink of Reno, Nev., and you likely picture casinos, dusty desert terrain and perhaps nearby Lake Tahoe, some 450 miles north of Las Vegas. You probably will not envision the families, children and educators who live and work in this vibrant community we call home.

The Washoe County School District encompasses 6,500 square miles of northern Nevada, including the cities of Reno and Sparks. More than 64,000 students attend our 103 schools, and with 8,000-plus employees, we are the largest employer in the area.

**Nevada's Washoe County adopted a systemwide strategy for taking action early on those most at risk**

**BY TRACI DAVIS**

and led by the Collaborative for Academic, Social



Our students reflect our diverse, majority-minority population, and 45 percent of them live in poverty. Our community is transient and experiencing rapid growth due to an influx of companies drawn by the state's welcoming attitude toward new business.

As a district, we are committed, as our motto proclaims, to helping “Every Child, By Name and Face, to Graduation.” Our district achieved a record-high graduation rate in 2017 of 84 percent, an increase of seven percentage points over the previous year. We are making major strides to our goal of achieving a districtwide 90 percent by 2020 — “90 by 20.”

But it took concentrated effort over time to reach this point.

### **A District Priority**

In 2012, with our graduation rate dipping to 66 percent, Washoe County was among eight urban school districts awarded a grant to implement social and emotional learning across the district. This pioneering work was funded through the NoVo Foundation

and Emotional Learning, or CASEL.

Even as district leadership changed — Heath Morrison left as superintendent in early summer 2012 and was succeeded by Pedro Martinez — our commitment never wavered. In adopting this new way of supporting our students, we created what became known as “The Washoe Way,” a unique approach to implementing and sustaining educational reforms.

Under The Washoe Way, SEL was incorporated not just at the school level, but as a dynamic, districtwide strategy to raise the graduation rate and improve academic outcomes for all students at every level. We included SEL in our strategic plan, professional development, professional growth and evaluation, accountability, and school improvement plans. Our school board was an enthusiastic partner in this effort and regularly received updates about our progress.

SEL quickly became a district priority, working in support of our four fundamentals: core curriculum and instruction; inclusive practice; climate



**Traci Davis, superintendent of Washoe County School District in Reno, Nev., visits a classroom at Middle School.**

engagement; and multi-tiered system of supports, or MTSS.

District staff member Trish Shaffer, who previously served as MTSS coordinator, was assigned to lead the SEL effort, and she now serves as the MTSS/SEL coordinator. Staff members at 12 schools agreed to become the first wave of employees trained in SEL implementation. Teacher ambassadors returned from training to instruct their co-workers and counterparts about the new practices, a train-the-trainer effort that proved both efficient and effective.

In 2012, Washoe County developed a multiyear plan to provide SEL to all students in all schools. By 2016, SEL teams from every one of our 93 schools had training and coaching. Today, SEL has become integrated into the fabric of many schools' daily practice in the Washoe County School District.

### **Launching Pad**

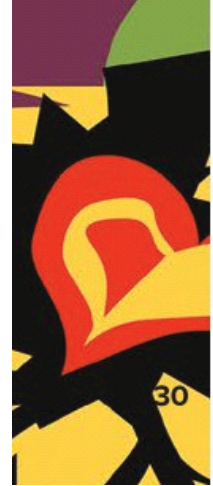
In 2009, we began using an Early Warning Risk Index in 9th grade to identify students at no, low, moderate or high risk to not graduate on time based on their attendance, personal behaviors and course attainment. The index is a strong

ers were, and it led us to wonder what skills that the other 69 percent did have. Those resiliencies among all students—how do those graduation outcomes improve?

Beginning with the first SEL in our classrooms, we continue to determine where our students struggle. We conduct annual surveys among students in grades 5-9 and part to determine how students feel the ease or difficulty of different social competencies. We developed a survey in collaboration with CASEL that more than 100 students into focus groups to collect their feedback on whether the competencies we surveyed resonated with their experiences.

As a result, we adjusted language in our round of surveys to make it more relatable to our students in order to get a more accurate assessment of the impact. Our data team compares the index to academic and behavioral data to create a holistic student profile, which in turn informs future planning for the program.





predictor of graduation. Only 31 percent of students who were high risk in 9th grade graduated on time compared to 89 percent of no-risk 9th-grade students.

This was a concern, indicating we needed to identify and support students far earlier in their educational pathway. But it also indicated how resilient that 31 percent of high-risk 9th grad-

For instance, we ask students to rate the difficulty of several relationship components from “very difficult” to “very easy,” including:

- Sharing what I am feeling with others
- Joining a group I do not usually hang out with at lunch;



**Teacher Cristy Fernandez (right) leads her 5th-grade students in a mindfulness exercise at Lemmon Valley Elementary School in Reno, Nev.**

- Talking to an adult when I have problems at school; and
- Introducing myself to a new student at school.

Survey results are shared with students during a Student Data Summit, where students present the data to other students, ask questions, express concerns and provide information to administrative staff on how their schools measure up in these crucial areas. We post the results of this survey publicly at [www.wcsddata.net](http://www.wcsddata.net) to allow for more transparent conversations

Our district recognizes that academics do not tell the whole story. Students need to be emotionally and socially equipped to deal with an increasingly challenging world, and SEL provides them with these essential skills.

### **Achieving Success**

When I became acting superintendent of the Washoe County School District in 2014 and was named superintendent the following year, I pledged to continue our SEL journey. I have seen firsthand how our academic outcomes have improved. Our graduation rates have risen

with the community about our approach to social and emotional learning and the data we receive from students.

## Monitoring Risks

Knowing and monitoring risk factors can help us direct more SEL services and supports to these students whose chances of graduation are compromised, and we continue to refine our data tools to identify these students earlier.

The NoVo Foundation, in collaboration with CASEL, provides financial resources, ongoing guidance and funding for two consultants, and continues to support the implementation in Washoe County. CASEL, working in partnership with NoVo, also sponsored cross-district learning events that drew representatives from across the country who learned from our programs, processes and implementations.

SEL plays a prominent role in our district goals, including our “90 by 20” graduation goal.

to 84 percent, an 18-percentage point increase in six years.

Students with higher social and emotional competencies in Washoe County have reduced suspension rates, improved GPAs and improved attendance. Anecdotally, teachers note that students have increased abilities to manage stress and depression and better attitudes about themselves, others and school. The program is cost-effective, as research conducted by Teachers College at Columbia University showed that every dollar invested in SEL programming yields an \$11 return in long-term benefits, including better mental and physical health, reduced juvenile crime and higher lifetime earnings.

Our school district will continue to use SEL to achieve success for all of our students. ■

**TRACI DAVIS** is superintendent of Washoe County School District in Reno, Nev. E-mail: [TDavis@washoeschools.net](mailto:TDavis@washoeschools.net). Twitter: @Supt\_Davis



# What We've Learned About Implementing Social-Emotional Learning

Author: 'No other initiative ... in my four districts was better received or more enthusiastically implemented'

BY SHELDON BERMAN

Creating an effective environment for social-emotional learning requires planning, professional development and significant staff time. It demands clarity of vision and focused attention by district and school leadership.

In each of the four school districts in which I have served as superintendent, social-emotional learning was pivotal in improving school climate, students' academic performance and connection to school, and teachers' morale. Over time, I've learned several important lessons that contribute to the effectiveness of SEL.

► **No. 1: The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum.**

Teaching and learning are inherently social and emotional. A classroom culture where collaboration and support are the norm conveys a very different social and emotional message than a classroom based on strict discipline, rewards and punishment. A culture of caring and responsiveness supports academic learning by fostering a

including clear messages, a common language and sequential skill development. When I enter a classroom, taking note of the culture and climate is key to helping me guide that teacher toward greater success with students.



The new 3rd graders in Mary Rose Me... classroom in Andover, Mass., gather on the rug for their morning meeting, eager to share the hopes for the year that their parents wrote at last night's parent meeting. Listening to and comparing their parents' responses with the ones they themselves wrote just days before. These hopes and goals will remain a yearlong reference point for the work they will do and the community they will build in their classroom.

► **No. 2: Weekly 30-minute lessons aren't sufficient.**

Social curricula that directly teach such skills as self-awareness, self-management, social



ness supports academic learning by fostering a safe climate in which students can take risks, make mistakes, collaborate with others and receive support.

Structuring a positive social environment requires the same attention and planning for developmental appropriateness and consistency that we provide for the academic curriculum,

self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building and responsible decision making are an important first step. These lessons must be integrated into academic instruction, modeled by adults and revisited throughout the day.

At its core, SEL is about helping students develop empathy and work cooperatively





achieve goals. Students need to practice empathy and social skills daily in the social environment of the classroom, where they can talk with peers and adults about what works.



To foster social development through caring classroom communities, Oregon's Eugene School District launched Caring for Kids, an elementary SEL program that prepares teachers to facilitate classroom meetings and refocus discipline on restorative practices.

► **No. 3: The experience of community is central.**

Experiencing the interdependence and interrelatedness of belonging to a community not only teaches students social skills but helps them understand the meaning of the common good, appreciate that their actions have consequences for others and feel responsibility for the larger human community. For children who have known

emotional or physical trauma, the first step in developing SEL skills is to foster their trust in the classroom community.

Building a community entails providing students with ongoing experiences of being valued contributors to a classroom that is dedicated to the learning and well-being of all its members. For example, elementary students can take part in morning meetings that unite them for the day ahead and closing meetings that frame the events of the day just ended. Through class meetings they can define classroom norms, deal with classroom issues and make choices that give them voice.

That sense of community extends to models of discipline. In a classroom that focuses on relationships and learning, errors in judgment and behavior are addressed through logical consequences and restorative practices that help students learn to resolve differences, manage their emotions and see others' perspective. The goal is to restore the



Community building is one objective of the morning meeting, a daily practice inside classrooms in Andover.

relationship, provide restitution when appropriate and enable the student to re-enter the classroom community bolstered by the trust and respect of other students and adults.



It's September 11. The 9th graders in Scott Armstrong's advisory period at Andover High School are getting to know each other as they discuss the first responders who risked their lives at the World Trade Center in 2001 and the people they know who have taken risks to help others. This hour-long advisory period, occurring every eight days, will be a mainstay of their high school experience, personalizing a large school and strengthening students' sense of community.

► **No. 4: SEL classrooms are culturally inclusive.**

We tend to be formulaic in teaching social skills, presenting particular strategies for greeting others, offering feedback or resolving differences. However, even something as simple as eye contact can elicit strong and varied reactions among people from diverse backgrounds.

Community requires authentic, particularly

rooms, teachers encourage open conversations about cultures and cultural experiences. Such conversations may stem from literature, historical events, stories about individuals of different cultures who made contributions or approached social situations. Appreciating the value of cultural diversity while understanding the power of prejudice in our world enhances compassion and awakens an aspiration for justice.



Lining the halls outside the 5th-grade classrooms at Andover's High Plain Elementary School is an array of family portraits from the Family Diversity Project's traveling exhibit "Of Many Colors." Inside the classroom, students — including immigrants from many countries — listen to teachers read *Their Great Gift: Courage, Sacrifice and Hope in a New Land* by John C. Stossel. They launch a unit on immigration. In the coming weeks, the students will trace their families' cultural and national origins and then examine the challenges and prejudices that new immigrants have confronted throughout U.S. history.



Community requires authenticity, particularly in terms of the cultural norms and identities that students bring to the classroom. Encouraging students to celebrate their cultural identities and honoring the richness that diverse cultural perspectives bring to learning are essential to creating a safe and affirming classroom.

In culturally inclusive and responsive class-

#### ► **No. 5: Integration into academics unifies instruction.**

When the core curriculum integrates cooperation, collaboration, investigation and problem-solving, students connect their social skills to academic learning. Collaborative investigation in science, problem-solving groups in math

writing workshops in language arts and project-based learning in social studies foster social skills development — provided students have the opportunity to learn and reflect on the skills they are using. Embedding SEL across the curriculum cements it as an integral component of the school climate.

Although teachers who understand SEL strategies consciously adjust their curriculum to integrate social skills development into their academic instruction, it is unrealistic to expect teachers to completely redesign their academic curriculum on their own. At the district level, we can support the selection of core curriculum materials that integrate instruction in social skills and further the application of those skills.



Organized to simulate a publishing company, Colleen McCormick's 7th-grade language arts students at Andover's West Middle School brainstorm ideas, work in teams around particular publication roles, edit each other's work and produce publications. The experience includes time to reflect on how they are working together and how they can provide each other with actionable and thoughtful feedback.

#### ► **No. 6: Service learning solidifies SEL skills.**

One of the most significant lessons I've learned is that students benefit from real opportunities to demonstrate their social skills and their sense of caring. Service to others affirms those skills and gives them purpose, empowering students through both their actions and the positive

and social development, giving students an experience of community and a belief in their own power and effectiveness.



In Hudson, Mass., each grade developed a service-learning experience that was integrated into the regular curriculum. For example, kindergartners created alphabet and number books for schools in Uganda. First graders partnered with the senior center in shared reading. Third graders adopted a local service organization as they studied civics and civic engagement. Fourth graders became involved in reclamation of local woodlands and wetlands as part of their science unit on ecosystems.

#### ► **No. 7: Professional development is foundational.**

Another lesson I've learned is the importance of high-quality professional development for all school staff — including cafeteria workers, bus drivers and custodial staff. Many SEL program developers offer training on implementing their specific programs, yet how teachers demonstrate their own SEL skills and address demanding situations in the classroom has even greater influence on school climate and students' development.

It's challenging for teachers to consciously model social skills, facilitate social development in conflict situations, demonstrate cultural proficiency, and be mindful of the impact of adults' language on students' social perceptions. Teachers and administrators require targeted training and guided practice in how to teach SEL skills and

response from those who benefit.

Service and service learning take many forms. For example, through such programs as Where Everyone Belongs, 8th graders are paired with incoming 6th graders, offering them insights on making friends, managing the unfamiliar environment and understanding the flow of the day. The older students serve as mentors throughout the year, checking on their younger peers' acclimation, celebrating birthdays and supporting their success.

Through service and service learning, students make the connection between what they are learning and its relevance to the world outside the classroom. Because it connects to the curriculum, service learning enhances both academic skills

**Shelley Berman, superintendent of Andover Public Schools in Andover, Mass., which has incrementally introduced social-emotional learning practices.**






how to reflect on their own daily practice and communication.

When teachers refrain from praise and criticism and instead promote understanding through sincere questions, they enable students to non-defensively explore their own thinking and behavior. When teachers engage students in thinking through conflict situations to find their own solutions, students experience the reward of resolving these differences in positive ways.

When teachers apply restorative discipline and focus on re-establishing and restoring relationships rather than punishing, students begin to experience how they, too, can heal relationships and recover from mistakes. These instructional skills are developed over months and years through effective training, daily practice and collegial support.



Although Andover hosts week-long professional development experiences to help teachers implement SEL effectively, Pam Lathrop's team from High Plain Elementary School takes it one step further. Joining a year-long certification program in school climate and social-emotional learning at William James College, the team digs into what it means to transform, create and sustain a positive school culture through a focus on the core concepts of SEL, systems change and coaching.

► **No. 8: Administrative vision and leadership are critical.**

When the superintendent articulates the district's vision and commitment to SEL, the staff understand its importance. When district leaders show organizational support through specific references to SEL in the district's strategic plan, theory of action and mission statement, the staff feel empowered to move forward. When the superintendent provides such structural supports as SEL instructional coaching or an SEL director, the staff know they have the organizational support and leadership that promote success.

Principals, too, must demonstrate a commitment to SEL, guide its implementation, offer candid assessments of progress and model in personal and management behavior what is expected.



Reflecting the board's and administrative purpose of wanting students to be human, caring and engaged individuals who have a moral compass and are willing to stand up to injustice and prejudice, the Jefferson County district in Kentucky wrote into its theory of action that staff will "collaborate to create caring and socially responsive classroom communities ... so that students are prepared to create a more just society."

► **No. 9: Progress is incremental.**

Finally, I have learned that implementing a comprehensive approach requires incremental progress, starting with a simple foundation that works for that district. That foundation may be professional development in SEL or the adoption of an elementary-level SEL program or the integration of SEL into the district's strategic plan. From that first step, a district can deepen and extend the approach over time.



In Jefferson County, 70 elementary schools were implementing a structured SEL program supported by professional development for teachers and principals. An independent program evaluation in 2011 revealed that the program had a positive and significant correlation with improvements in school climate, students' attendance and suspension rates, and reading achievement. These correlations were stronger for schools that had implemented the program for more years and in greater depth.

## Timely Initiative

In spite of the challenges, no other initiative pursued in my four districts was better received or more enthusiastically implemented, largely because of the positive relationships, classroom culture and student responsiveness that SEL fosters.

The schoolwide application of SEL principles helps to ensure that students have a safe haven where they can express their ideas and concerns without fear, develop skills that help them to interact in a positive fashion with people who hold different perspectives, and count on the support among adults and peers as they address issues in their academic and personal lives.

If even there was an era when social



and management behavior what is expected.

To assist administrators and policymakers, the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development is developing a roadmap for making SEL part of the fabric of every school. States also are moving to put policies and standards in place to support districts' SEL efforts.

If ever there was an era when social and emotional learning could make a significant difference in our nation's future, that time is now. ■

**SHELDON BERMAN** is superintendent in Andover and a member of the Council of Distinguished Educators, the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. E-mail: sheldon.berman@andoverm...



# Rethinking Discipline

**Four district leaders find culture shifts challenging yet key to reducing student suspensions**

BY ALAN WECHSLER

**I**t was 2012 and Mary Sieu had just become superintendent of ABC Unified School District in Cerritos, Calif. The district of 21,000 students had some of the highest-performing schools in the state and the country and had won awards for school improvement. Yet drilling down on student suspension rates revealed a dis-

Mounting evidence across the state showed that students of color and other minorities faced suspensions from school at a much higher rate — nearly four times greater than white students in some California districts. Nationally, the U.S. Department of Education in 2014 issued a “Dear Colleague” letter to school districts asking them



turbing picture.

“What dismayed us was that the discipline data did not reflect our diversity but concentrated primarily around two racial groups,” Sieu says of her highly diverse school system.

Like many districts, the ABC schools for years had operated a zero-tolerance policy toward misbehavior. Then, in 2012, a statewide mandate in California required districts examine discipline practices and find alternatives to suspending students. In 15 other states, legislative bills relating to school discipline were under consideration around that time as well. The objective in most cases was to reform the harsh disciplinary practices.

Although ABC’s suspension rate of 4.7 percent was low compared to 500 other California districts, Sieu and her team recognized that disparate discipline rates among racial and ethnic groups signaled the need to create support systems for students in trouble.

address the “school-to-prison” pipeline that disproportionately hurt minority students. The push to find alternatives has been gaining momentum, although scattered acts of violence in schools that included student shootings are raising some concerns about the softening of disciplinary measures.

### Positive Shift

Sieu introduced a program in 2012 known as Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, or PBIS. The federally supported program offers four tiers of response to deal with student discipline.

Under Tier 1, a teacher or staffer deals individually with the problem. In ABC, Sieu said 80 percent of discipline matters that arise are resolved this way. When an ABC high school student was caught stealing a sandwich in the cafeteria, he was asked why he committed this act. It turned out he hadn’t eaten since the previous day because his home had no food. Instead of being

punished, the school helped him apply for the free lunch program, the superintendent said.

A student's recurring problems lead to Tier 2 interventions. The student who repeatedly gets into fights is referred to a school social worker. In some cases, students who are regular combatants take part in a mediated discussion to resolve their differences. "It's not just sending a kid home to watch TV or hang around the neighborhood," Sieu says.

If problems persist, outside experts are brought in to help — Tier 3 intervention. The youths may be referred to a youth counseling center or they may be ordered to join a parent at a family guidance center. If students are caught possessing drugs, they might be remanded to a local drug treatment center. In many cases, the student is sent to a "bridge program" — a class in a different part of the school with access to fitting support.

The idea is to address the trauma underlying the misbehavior in the first place. The traumas include poverty, foster care, abusive situations, homelessness. "It's about all the positive things we have to do to increase a student's possibility to perform at his or her very best," Sieu says.

In Tier 4, a student is transferred to a private school that specializes in dealing with his or her problematic behavior. ABC pays the student's



**Susan Enfield, superintendent of Highline Public Schools in Burien, Wash., on the first day of school in 2017 when she rode a bus with students from Parkside Elementary School.**



tuition. Only two dozen students are referred to this level of response.

ABC's four-tiered approach had been implemented. The district hired at least 10 new mental health professionals, bringing the district's total to 34. But under PBIS, the district had reduced suspensions from 4.7 percent of the student population to 1.7 percent. And, Sieu admitted, she had expelled anybody in six years. "We had about 12 students a year."

### Root Causes

Around the time of the PBIS launch, Highline Unified, Highline Public Schools in Burien, Wash., was considering a similar program. Superintendent Susan Enfield said that in 2012, she admitted she was shocked by the number of students being suspended. "In a single year — about 2,100 students out of a district population of 19,000 back then."

"I felt this was a hemorrhaging of our system," she recalls.

Like ABC Unified, Highline is a district with many low-income students. W





**Superintendent Mary Sieu (second from right) with staff and graduates of the BRIDGES Program at Cabrillo Lane for high school students with severe behavioral issues, part of the ABC Unified Schools' multi-tiered system of support.**

investigated the high incidence of defiance. She found the main cause was defiance. "You right now defiance is not a threat."

During her first year, at a staff meeting, she raised the idea of trying to eliminate school suspension. Her wish was for polite silence — but the topic was not one point, Enfield asked two students

been suspended multiple times to talk about their experiences at a staff meeting. It turns out that the father of one student had recently abandoned the family, leaving it in chaos. The other student had a drug problem. Enfield questioned the students in front of the staff: "At any time when you were suspended, did any adults ask you why?" No one had.

"The message we send when we suspend someone for minor infractions is we are throwing them away," she says. "In my mind, we punish the behavior without diagnosing the root cause."

Her alternative: Teach faculty how to de-escalate a situation. If a student mouths off in class, teachers in Highline are directed to accompany the offender out into the hallway to discuss the situa-

## A Superintendent's Crusade for Reducing a Big City's Suspensions

**W**hen John Deasy learned that 49,000 students were suspended each year in the Los Angeles Unified School District, he was startled and alarmed. It was 2011, and he had just become superintendent of the nation's second-largest school system.

Deasy came ready to pursue education reforms on a large scale. He added discipline reform to the list.

LAUSD enrolls more than 640,000 students in grades K-12. Nearly 75 percent are Hispanic, 12 percent are African American and 10 percent are white. Like many districts, it enforced a zero-tolerance policy toward student misbehavior.

The quest for answers on the scope and shape of the problem required an intensive review of data.

"We literally looked at every single suspension," says Deasy, who spent three years as LA's superintendent and now leads the Stockton, Calif., Unified School District. "We



**John Deasy (left), superintendent in Stockton, Calif., greeted students on the final day of the 2017-18 school year.**

suspension," which increased their chances of dropping out of school.

not suggesting the healthy approach to abandon all approaches to co-



learned less than 3 percent of suspensions were for weapons, assault and drugs.”

What he also found was that 93 percent of suspensions were for incidents not considered significant enough to automatically warrant such severe discipline. Of those most were for “willful defiance” — a vaguely defined description for anything from failing to open a textbook in class to talking back to the teacher.

Data showed young men of color had suspension rates that were dramatically disproportionate, and Deasy acted swiftly to end systemic practices that put these students in the school-to-prison pipeline.

“I do not apologize for my principles, and I am not confused about my mission: We lift youth out of poverty,” Deasy said. “I felt compelled to act on behalf of those voiceless children. Thousands of students were losing between 10-15 days or more in a year for

Initially, the objective of the superintendent’s disciplinary reforms was to clarify for teachers what they could no longer do when it came to punishing misbehavior by students. Training of teachers and administrators reduced suspension rates in many schools, but the speed of change created a backlash from some teachers and parents who felt schools became more unsafe once less-punitive practices, such as restorative justice, were implemented.

Similar criticism surfaced in the aftermath of the 17 deaths in a mass shooting in February at Marjory Stoneman High School in Parkland, Fla. But Deasy sees no connection between discipline alternatives and school shootings.

“Do you want to punish kids, or do you want consequences for young people?” he says. “School is about training and supporting students and having consequences. I’m

misbehavior.”

He adds: “Young people witness violence, catastrophe and witness violence, catastrophe and fear of deportation — these things are at our front door. These children need support.”

During his tenure, which ended in 2013, the suspension rate dropped from 1.5 percent in 2010-11 to 1.5 percent annually. Deasy says Los Angeles experienced increases in attendance and a major reduction in suspensions during his tenure.

“Change is possible, even in the toughest districts such as Los Angeles,”

In 2017, after leaving LAUSD, Deasy became CEO of The Reset Foundation. He launched the Reset Foundation’s Day, New Year, an alternative program for young men.



tion one-on-one. "You always lose when you engage with students in the classroom," Enfield said.

In 2013, the district put an engagement specialist in each of Highline's 32 schools to develop an in-school alternative program for problem students. There, students could continue to do schoolwork, some with access to counseling as well.

The changes were not without issues. Some teachers contended they were not trained to handle unruly students. Some principals, in an effort to reduce numbers, continued to send students home but did not mark them down as suspensions. (Enfield says she put a stop to that.) Some individuals hired to be engagement specialists didn't work out because principals were not well

informed about the requisite skills for the job. A story in the *Seattle Times* about student behavior problems were enough to get teachers to leave the district. (Enfield says the story, saying teacher churn was high in neighboring districts.)

"What I underestimated was the magnitude of the culture shift that this involved," Enfield says. "It's really, really hard. We are educating students to high standards."

But suspension rates did go down. In 2012, suspension rates were 1.7 percent over the past

### Multitpronged Measures

Meanwhile, in Colorado, Denver Public Schools was pushing for change. About 10

## AASA Resources on Discipline Reform

BY BRYAN JOFFE

Every day in high school classes nationwide, a student who is struggling academically decides, in a moment of immaturity and frustration, to act out and disrupt the entire classroom. A teacher, upset by the misbehavior and challenged by the intense pressure to move the more than 25 students toward state-tested proficiency, sends the student to the assistant principal's office.

We know what happens next often has severe consequences for this student's future academic success and, potentially, for the student's life outcomes. We also know that what happens next is too often colored by the student's race, gender and nationality.

The devastating impact on student performance is cataloged in the groundbreaking report "Breaking Schools' Rules" published by the Council of State Governments' Justice Center. In that 2011 study, researchers show mounting evidence that disciplinary decisions that involve exclusionary measures lead to increases in grade repetition, dropout rates and interaction with law enforcement and juvenile justice.

Furthermore, the negative outcomes caused by harsh and exclusionary school discipline are not evenly distributed but concentrated among children of color, poor children

biased, AASA published a series of informational tools and resources on school discipline reform and racial disproportionality beginning with the analysis of our 2014 survey of 500 superintendents.

The survey examined how and why districts use out-of-school suspension, the parameters of districts' discipline policies, practices that create positive school climates and reduce discipline disparities, and the availability of outside partners for improving school discipline.

Developed in partnership with the Children's Defense Fund, the informational resources for school leaders now include suggestions for revising the district code of conduct, communicating changes in discipline policy and practice and explaining positive behavioral intervention and supports, restorative justice and best practices for in-school suspension.

These tools help leaders to answer the question: What happens next?

### Difficult Balance

School and district leaders have told us, when confronting these situations, they must balance the needs of the student with the needs of the community and the

fallen behind. The other students deserve a safe and incident-free environment in which to learn and thrive.

Leaders must ask themselves: What happens next when removing a student from academic settings? How can we improve the chances of the student's academic success and matriculation? What happens next if an out-of-school suspension for a student? How can we effectively address the root causes of student misbehavior? Does locally collected and district-level data on discipline disparities show racial disparities? And, in the wake of school shootings and the emphasis on school security practices, how can school leaders build systems that support student safety and orderly while accounting for the academic and emotional needs of children maturing?

### Innovative Approaches

Superintendents and students are looking for insights from practices that find helpful reflections in three profiles: Wisconsin's Madison Public Schools, the Broward County Schools in Florida and Oklahoma's Public Schools.

These profiles were developed by the AASA Center for



trated among children of color, poor children, special education students and the intersections of these marginalized populations.

## AASA Findings

In light of studies revealing current school discipline practices are ineffective and

those of the teacher and the needs of other students in the classroom.

The student who disrupts the class needs academic tutoring and support to learn social and emotional learning skills. The teacher needs tools and supports to reach each student, including those who have

depth interviews by AASA and during the past year. All resources at [www.aasa.org/schooldiscip](http://www.aasa.org/schooldiscip)

**BRYAN JOFFE** is project director of children's programs at AASA. E-mail: [bryan.joffe@aasa.org](mailto:bryan.joffe@aasa.org) Twitter: @AASATotalChild

**Allison Horton (front), restorative practices coordinator at Skinner Middle School in Denver, with educators from across Colorado who are looking to build restorative cultures in their own schools.**

leaders challenged the district to examine a racial disparity in the district — African-American students represented about 14 percent of the student body but about 30 percent of suspensions.

Eldridge Greer, associate chief of student equity and opportunity, says Denver began eliminating most suspensions and expulsions last year. In its place, the district promotes restorative justice practices, where student instigators are made to understand how their misbehavior causes trauma to others. "Discipline should be a learning experience, not a punishment," he says.

He offered an example of how the process works. Two girls at a Denver high school regularly took to fighting each other. After each fight, the girls were brought into a room with a counselor so they could discuss what the fight was about, how their anger hurt each other and what they could do to prevent it from recurring. One day, after a few such meetings, the counselor saw the two girls walking toward him. They had just had a fight, she said, and they wanted to discuss it in private. "We don't need you, we just need your office," one said. "We know what we have to do."

"It was at that point that he realized he had changed the culture," Greer recalls.

Ten years ago, Denver had 200 expulsions in a body of 73,000 students. Last year, with 93,000 students, the district expelled just 31 students.



peer-mediation program where two students a year in each Cleveland school are trained to work with fellow students.

## Safety Concerns

A backlash to suspension alternatives has arisen lately. Some teachers and parents say violence in schools is increasing as students face penalties that are too mild for their aberrant actions. U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos is considering rescinding the "Dear Colleague" letter distributed during the Obama administration.

Some critics of suspension alternatives make the connections between the relaxing of punishment and the fatal shooting of 17 people inside Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., in mid-February. Stoneman is part of the Broward County Public Schools, which



In Ohio's Cleveland Metropolitan School District, the impetus for change came from tragedy. In 2007, a 14-year-old suspended student came to an alternative high school with a gun, wounding four before killing himself.

The school responded by spending about \$3 million on metal detectors and security. Then the school began devoting attention to "humanware."

"Our kids cannot be successful if they do not have the supports and the socio-emotional learning component they need," says Michelle Pierre-Farid, chief academic officer in Cleveland. "We want to fix the problem. Suspension doesn't fix the problem."

The district of 38,000 students now employs various programs to help students who act out. Students with behavior problems are dispatched to a planning center — a place in the school where they can get extra attention apart from peers.

The district also introduced Not on Our Watch, an anti-bullying program, and Wave, a

runs a program called PROMISE (Preventing Recidivism through Opportunities, Mentoring, Interventions, Support and Education) to reduce student suspensions.

Leaders at districts that have worked to reduced student suspensions say they take safety in school no less seriously. Acts that threaten students can still result in suspension.

"Things happen. I've had kindergarteners clear a room with their violent behavior," says Highline's Enfield. "We have to be honest and strategic and compassionate, but also pragmatic."

It's the more banal misbehaviors that they seek to address through alternative means.

"We wanted our children to understand it's OK to have emotions, it's OK to not feel happy all the time," says Pierre-Farid of Cleveland. "But you have to learn how to manage it." ■

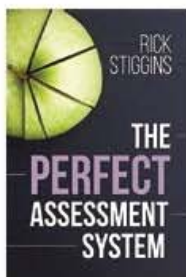
**ALAN WECHSLER** is a freelance education writer in Albany, N.Y. E-mail: [alwechs@gmail.com](mailto:alwechs@gmail.com)

# Reading & Resources

## BOOK REVIEWS

### The Perfect Assessment System

by Rick Stiggins, ASCD, Alexandria, Va., 2017, 132 pp., \$24.95 softcover



Rick Stiggins is a rock star of educational assessment with scholarly credentials and a following for his work on assessments for learning. He consistently says the main purpose of assessment is to help

both teacher and student learn better.

In *The Perfect Assessment System*, Stiggins calls for a comprehensive redevelopment of assessments for American education. Not everything has to be tossed, but it all must fit into a pattern that provides appropriate information. The professional criteria of composing and piloting individual items is satisfactory, he says, but we have lost a broad view of why assessments are given and what to do with the results.

A shortcoming of this book is the lack of attention to curriculum. The author acknowledges this flaw but sidesteps the issue by admitting he is not a curriculum expert.

A significant element of Stiggins's proposals is the impact upon the future learning of students. He provides ways to keep students in control of their own learning and motivated for the long term.

**Reviewed by Art Stellar**, vice president, National Education Foundation, Hingham, Mass.

## MORE BOOK REVIEWS

[www.aasa.org/SAreviews.aspx](http://www.aasa.org/SAreviews.aspx)

### The Critical Advantage: Developing Critical Thinking Skills in School

by William T. Gormley Jr.

REVIEWED BY DARROLL HARGRAVES

### How to Use Grading to Improve Learning

by Susan M. Brookhart

REVIEWED BY LISA M. ANTUNES

### School Days 101

by Angela Farmer

REVIEWED BY MARC SPACE

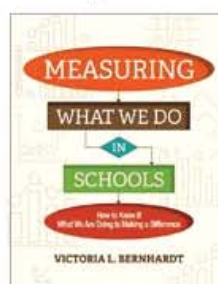
The book carries value in on a journey of continuing improvement and evaluating practice. The critical element in such programs is time, so difficult to make available and teachers' schedules at schools have the luxury of with substitutes, which would implement a program similar hardt seeks.

The book is an appropriate for those in any stage of a school program.

**Reviewed by Kurt W. Eisele**, assistant professor, Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

### Measuring What We Do in Schools: How to Know If What We Are Doing Is Making a Difference

by Victoria L. Bernhardt, ASCD, Alexandria, Va., 2017, 160 pp., with index, \$28.95 softcover

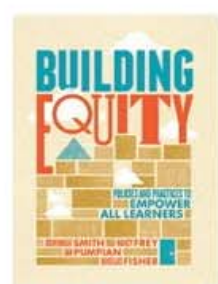


Victoria Bernhardt, author of *Measuring What We Do in Schools*, discusses several critical components — continuous improvement; evaluating programs and

organizations; and a case study to pull everything together. She basically presents a template that any organization can follow if it wants to begin the trek toward continuous improvement through systems thinking.

### Building Equity: Policies and Practices to Empower All Learners

by Dominique Smith, Nancy Frey, and Robert Fisher, ASCD, Alexandria, Va., 2017, 160 pp., \$28.95 softcover



"We are committed to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to learn and succeed. This book provides a roadmap for educators to create a more equitable learning environment for all learners."

San Diego State University, San Diego, Calif.

The authors share a variety of strategies with "physical integration" and "opportunity to learn" in the classroom. Chapter by chapter, they provide examples that illustrate the challenges and potential improvements for all students and educators.

The successful application of these strategies in this book will require a commitment to assessment that moves beyond standardized testing to a more holistic view of student learning. It is a call to action for all educators to open up opportunities for underserved students who

## WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK ...



*"No one could tell a story like my grandmother, the late Addie Terrie Mills. In harnessing her art of storytelling, I wrote this book to inspire others with the leadership lessons I've collected along my journey to becoming the first woman of color to be appointed as a permanent superintendent"*



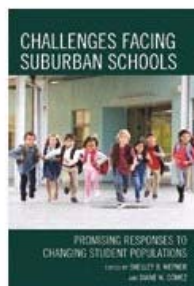
*in Monroe County, N.Y. ... The 31 lessons are based on my personal and professional leadership experiences and can be used as a daily dose of leadership."*

**Lesli C. Myers**, superintendent, Brockport Central Schools, Brockport, N.Y., and AASA member since 2012, on writing *Life's Leadership Lessons* (WGW Publishing, 2018)

able to access those programs.  
Asking the tough questions about the kinds of changes cited in the report will not be easy, but this book provides concrete support for creating a unified schools one policy and program.  
**Reviewed by Bob Schultz**, education consultant, Calif.

## Challenges Facing Suburban Schools

edited by **Shelley B. Wepner** and **Diane W. Gómez**, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Md., 2017, 148 pp., \$25 softcover



*Challenges Facing Suburban Schools* is authored by 14 individuals with a wide range of experience in the K-12 and university settings. They share their thoughts, insights and

experiences related to the many challenges facing suburban school districts.

The book's early sections focus on the changing demographics of suburban districts and increasing diversity. Deeper into the book, multiple chapters focus specifically on language barriers and instructional strategies designed to better support English language learners.

This book feels rooted in academic research, making it challenging to follow. It is a good resource for school leaders in districts with rapidly changing student demographics who might be looking for specific strategies and instructional support. However, for the educator looking for a general overview related to suburban schools, this book might be too detailed and research-based for such a purpose.

**Reviewed by Justin B. Henry**, superintendent, Goddard Public Schools, Goddard, Mo.

## AASA Journal

The fall issue of *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice* focuses on accountability and leadership for student learning. The journal will be posted at [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org) on September 15.

Contact Editor Kenneth Mitchell of Manhattanville College at [kenneth.mitchell@manhattanville.edu](mailto:kenneth.mitchell@manhattanville.edu) about submitting articles for future issues of this peer-reviewed publication.

## Humanitarian Nominees

AASA seeks nominations by Oct. 26 for the 2019 Dr. Effie H. Jones Humanitarian Award, which honors leadership in equity and excellence. To qualify, AASA members must demonstrate a commitment to the advancement and mentorship of women and minority members of educational leadership.

Visit the Awards and Scholarships section at [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org) or contact Stephen St. John at [ssstjohn@aasa.org](mailto:ssstjohn@aasa.org).

## Crisis Toolkit

AASA's new School Safety and Crisis Planning Toolkit identifies effective practices for ensuring student safety and security before, during and after a crisis. Resources were contributed by the National School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, the National School Boards Association and the National School Public Relations Association.

To access the toolkit, visit [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org).

## 24-Hour Crisis Hotline

To assist school district leaders in time of school and community crisis, AASA has established a 24-hour hotline managed by Joseph Erardi, former superintendent of Newton Public Schools. The hotline telephone number is 571-480-0313.

A select group of safety leaders will provide peer-to-peer guidance about school safety during hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, fires, suicides and other major incidents. Visit [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org) for details.

## ABSTRACT

### Social Media Use

Has social media use changed the superintendent's role as gatekeeper of school district information and communication?

Joan W. Henry addressed that question in her dissertation for an Ed.D. at Northern Arizona University in 2017. She studied 23 district superintendents in Arizona.

Most superintendents agreed that social media should be used to deliver positive messages that highlight their districts and actions. They acknowledged they were non-traditional gatekeepers of school communication and indicated they had assistance

## School Trauma Kit Solution

In these troubled times, RANDOM ACTS OF VIOLENCE in schools are causing deaths from bleeding wounds at an alarming rate.



➤ The **ALTON FIRST AID KIT FOR BLEEDING** is compact, lightweight, and has all the equipment necessary to help stop bleeding, and save lives.

This kit is designed by a Doctor and Nurse-Practitioner team who have been educators for over 35 years.

Amy Alton, ARNP

Joe Alton, MD

[AltonFirstAid.com](http://AltonFirstAid.com)

**Want to order for your district? Email us at:**  
**[AltonFirstAid@yahoo.com](mailto:AltonFirstAid@yahoo.com)**





in disseminating, monitoring and receiving information through social media.

The superintendents learned that the public researched and spread information about them through public and private social media domains.

Copies of "Social Media Use by Arizona K-12 Public Unified School District Superintendents" are accessible from ProQuest at 800-521-0600 or [disspub@proquest.com](mailto:disspub@proquest.com).

## AASA School Solutions Center

These firms make up the AASA School Solutions Center.

**PREMIER PARTNER**

**Sourcewell**  
Formerly N.J.P.A.  
[www.sourcewell-mn.gov](http://www.sourcewell-mn.gov)

When you leverage our national purchasing power, we reinvest in student and community success.

**CrisisGo** | [www.crisisgo.com](http://www.crisisgo.com)

Emergency communications tools for schools.

**Ecra Group** | [www.ecragroup.com](http://www.ecragroup.com)

Leadership, planning and analytical solutions.

**Gibson Group** | [www.gibsonconsult.com](http://www.gibsonconsult.com)

An education consulting and research group.

**HMS** | <http://hms.com/dependent-eligibility-verification>

Dependent healthcare eligibility audits.

**Infinity Systems** | [www.isimetrics.com](http://www.isimetrics.com)

Helping school districts measure alignment.

**iTutor.com** | [www.itutor.com](http://www.itutor.com)

Live, online, instruction from state-certified teachers.

**Jason Learning** | [www.jason.org](http://www.jason.org)

STEM education through exploration.

**Public Works, LLC** | [www.public-works.org](http://www.public-works.org)

Producing cost savings and non-tax revenues.

**Quantum Learning** | [www.quantumlearning.org](http://www.quantumlearning.org)

Transformative schoolwide professional development.

**Triway International Group** | [www.triwayinc.com](http://www.triwayinc.com)

International Education, exchange and recruitment.

**UPS** | [www.ups.com](http://www.ups.com)

Shipping, freight, logistics, supplies for schools.

**Wonder Media Story Maker** |

[www.wondermediastorymaker.com](http://www.wondermediastorymaker.com)

Transforming education by cultivation writers

## BITS & PIECES

### Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery has a medium to large effect on students' reading over the course of four years.

An evaluation of the one-to-one reading intervention for struggling 1st graders measured 6,900 students' scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills total reading assessment.

Access "The Impacts of Reading Recovery at Scale: Results From the 4-Year i3 External Evaluation" at <http://bit.ly/reading-recovery>.

### Summer Intervention

Early readers who have not mastered basic decoding and fluency may require more help than a typical summer reading program can provide, according to a University of North Carolina at Charlotte study.

The study provided students in the experimental group with 15 intensive hour-long sessions using the Sound Partners program five times a week for three weeks and reported no statistical significance.

Read "Effects of a Summer Reading Intervention on Reading Skills for Low-Income Black and Hispanic Students in Elementary School" at <http://bit.ly/summer-intervention>.

### Condition of Education

The National Center for Education Policy has released "The Condition of Education 2018," which reports on the condition of public school teachers and the route to certification programs.

Find out more at <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/condition-of-education/programs/coe>.

### Free Eyeglasses

In a study by Robert Slavin, the National Research and Reform in Education, scores for children who wore free glasses improved more than students who did not need glasses.

Download "In Plain Sight: Outcomes of Providing Free Eyeglasses to Disadvantaged Children" at <https://www.nationalresearchandreform.org/files/In-Plain-Sight-Outcomes-of-Providing-Free-Eyeglasses-to-Disadvantaged-Children.pdf>.

### Student Views

Students with more positive views of mathematics, reading or science were more likely to enroll in the corresponding NAEP assessment, according to a new report from the National Assessment of Education Progress.

The report, "Students' Views of Mathematics, Reading, and Science," is accessible at [www.nationsassessment.gov/sq\\_students\\_views\\_2015](http://www.nationsassessment.gov/sq_students_views_2015).

## School Administrator | OCTOBER

**RURAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP.** How professional networking can be especially elevating in the ranks of rural school leadership. A pair of rural superintendents share how networking benefits their work. Findings from a research study, "The Power of Place," on the rural superintendency. Also, the phenomenon of the shared superintendency and the distinct experiences of superintendents serving in the communities where they grew up.





transforming education by cultivating writers through animation.

*School districts should do their own due diligence before signing contracts with companies that belong to the AASA School Solutions Center. More on the School Solutions Center can be found at [www.aasa.org/ssc](http://www.aasa.org/ssc).*

## PLUS

- ▶ A guest commentary, "Rigor vs. Rigor Mortis"
- ▶ Ethical Educator: May a teacher pay for a student's good performance?
- ▶ Who's responsible for preparing the board meeting agenda?
- ▶ Professional networking through hashtag chats
- ▶ Best of the Blogs

## Back Tracking on Your Reading?

# Get Recent Back Issues of School Administrator

Catch up on any issues you may have missed of AASA's flagship publication, *School Administrator*.

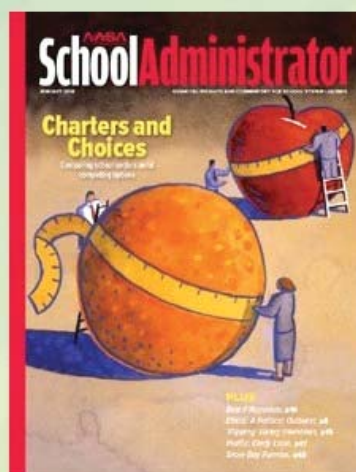
To order a single issue or purchase a bulk quantity with a discount, contact **703-875-0772** or [magazine@aasa.org](mailto:magazine@aasa.org).



DECEMBER 2017

### Evaluating Evaluators

PRICE: \$9 member/\$10 nonmember



JANUARY 2018

### Charters and Choices

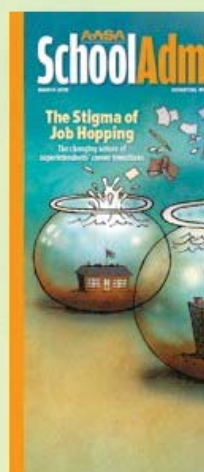
PRICE: \$9 member/\$10 nonmember



FEBRUARY 2018

### Performance-Based Grading Takes Off

PRICE: \$9 member/\$10 nonmember



MARCH 2018

### The Stigma of Job Hopping

PRICE: \$9 member/\$10 nonmember

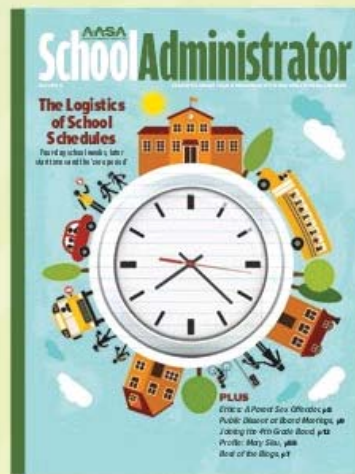




APRIL 2018

### Civility in Classroom and Community

PRICE: \$9 member/\$10 nonmember



MAY 2018

### The Logistics of School Schedules

PRICE: \$9 member/\$10 nonmember



JUNE 2018

### Capacity Building

PRICE: \$9 member/\$10 nonmember



AUGUST 2018

### The Appraisal Process

PRICE: \$9 member/\$10 nonmember

**AASA**  
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

1615 Duke Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
[www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org)

TO ORDER, CALL:  
**703-875-0772**

### Big Rocks and Leadership



**THE CONCEPT OF** leading yourself before leading others always has resonated with me. Leading yourself means seeing yourself clearly, having a clear set of goals and standards — a clear direction for yourself that allows you to focus on

what's important in your life.

My fascination with the notion stems from my time in the Boy Scouts and the emphasis the scouts place on leadership and personal growth.

In Boy Scout advanced leader training, participants are taught that to lead yourself, you must set priorities and take care of what's most important first. This idea is illustrated through an exercise that involves a bucket, a container of water, some sand and rocks of various sizes, including some really big rocks.

The goal is to fit everything — sand, water and rocks — in the bucket. If you begin by pouring the water into the bucket and adding the remaining items from smallest (sand) to largest (big rocks), you quickly realize not all the materials will fit. The key is to place the big rocks into the bucket first, followed by the other rocks, the sand, and finally, the water.

How does this illustrate the concept of leading yourself before others? The large rocks represent the things that matter most to us, like friends, family and relationships. In our roles as leaders, spouses, parents and grandparents, we must consider these priorities (big rocks) and place them in our buckets first.

After we fill our buckets with the big rocks, we can add the smaller rocks, sand and water to fill the empty spaces. The sand and water represent the extraneous noise and minutia in our daily lives — the things that consume time

districts we serve. Programs, services, people and things vie for our attention all day every day. To lead effectively, we must first identify and attend to the big rocks — the three or four things that drive the work of the district. Only then can we turn our attention to those less-important things that fill in the spaces.

Effective leaders know what's important — the difference between the big rocks, the pebbles, the sand and the water. Those who have mastered the skill of leading themselves have clear goals, standards and a path forward, and they translate that skillful leadership into providing the same attention to the priorities in their district.

**“After we FILL OUR BUCKETS with the big rocks, we can add the smaller rocks, sand and water to fill the empty spaces.”**

They also know that the priorities in one district are not necessarily the priorities in another. One district may be focused on closing the achievement gap, another implementing technology districtwide and still another providing alternative pathways to college and career. Skillful superintendents attend to their own district bucket before reaching out to help others.

Regardless of your district's priorities, they must be sustained year after year. Like family, friends and relationships, these “big rocks” are the bedrock of the district, creating solid ground from which to build. Just as we work to keep our personal big rocks stable, so must we attend to the district's — whether it's a digital conversion, personalized learning, work around the 4 C's, learning communities, student engagement or continuous improvement,

E  
C

(te  
of

Ch

Mehlv

IMI

Ret

PRE

Ma

Nich

Da

Tra

B

Lupit

Sha

p

Ral

Ja

Kris

Car

To

Be

Ronal

Da



and resources but are of lesser importance.

Concentrating on the small items first might make us look busy, but we are probably not fulfilled and we certainly are not maximizing our leadership capacity — we don't have time. Consequently, the important things might get cast aside.

We must make similar choices in the school

we must keep our district focused.

By remaining focused on our big rocks and not the sand and pebbles, our chances of reaching our vision are more likely. Take care of those big rocks and your buckets can be filled.

**CHRIS GAINES** is AASA president for 2018–19. E-mail: [gainesc@msdr9.org](mailto:gainesc@msdr9.org). Twitter: @paddlingsupt

## Developing Better Suicide Prevention Programs in Schools

It was just another ordinary Tuesday night board meeting for Dr. Jamie Wilson, superintendent of Denton Independent School District in Texas. He had a full house. The board had just begun to discuss district concerns, when administrators received a GoGuardian® alert indicating a student was struggling with suicidal thoughts.

Within minutes, school staff were able to intervene. Area Superintendent Gwen Perkins recalls the incident vividly, “We were able to step out of the board meeting and immediately reach out to a parent, the principal and have the police check on the child at home.”

“If it had not been for GoGuardian, we would not have known who the student was and if they were safe,” Perkins added.

The sharp increase in youth suicides throughout the country has motivated superintendents, educators and community leaders to better prepare for such crises, and make every effort to prevent them. However, suicide prevention is a complex problem — one that requires a coordinated, multifaceted effort, including a districtwide policy, prevention and postvention training for school staff, students and families.

Technology can play an important role in helping districts manage all aspects of the solution.

### The Role of Technology in Suicide Prevention

GoGuardian technology uses advanced, context-aware



suicide prevention tool, Beacon, designed to support school suicide prevention programs. Beacon uses advanced machine learning to help mental health professionals identify warning signs and trends in the student body, while facilitating escalations so students can quickly get the help they need.

*“GoGuardian helps our counselors have access to the knowledge that allows them to do their jobs.”*

— Dr. Jamie Wilson, Denton Independent School District

analytics to understand the content students are creating and interacting with online. Early identification of potential problems means early intervention — and identification starts with analytical insights.

Here, data can make a measurable difference. In just one week, a school district implementing GoGuardian's suicide prevention alerts receives an average of 1.7 alerts indicating students who may be at risk of suicidal ideation, suicidal behavior or self-harm. Larger districts receive as many as 52 alerts per week.

These insights can be game-changing for school mental health professionals. Or, as Dr. Wilson put it, "GoGuardian helps our counselors get access to the knowledge that allows them to do their jobs."

### **A Suicide Prevention Tool Designed With Industry Experts**

For this reason, GoGuardian has gone a step further and collaborated with industry leaders and school mental health professionals to build a new youth

Technology, when paired with awareness, ongoing dialog and concerted action can truly make an impact. We encourage you to take part in these conversations, share your experiences, and lean on GoGuardian and our partners as resources for your school district. Through a collective effort, we hope to help solve this nationwide crisis together.



To join the conversation and learn about  
for your district, visit

[www.goguardian.com/aasa](http://www.goguardian.com/aasa)

or contact **Jeff Stark** at  
[jeff@goguardian.com](mailto:jeff@goguardian.com)  
or 888.310.0410, ext. 262

**ADVERTISEMENT**



## The Message of an Unforgettable Day



**THE FAIRFAX COUNTY** Public Schools' leadership team always met on Tuesday mornings. On Sept. 11, 2001, my administrative assistant walked into the

meeting room to place a note in front of me. It read: "The North Tower of the World Trade Center has been hit by an airplane." She did so because she knew that, as a New Yorker, I would be interested.

Initially, I assumed the pilot of a small plane, blinded by sunlight, had crashed into the building. Half an hour later she came back to inform me another airplane had crashed into the South Tower. Recognizing this as an improbable coincidence, I dismissed the meeting and requested everyone return to their posts. I had barely reached my office when the report came in that a plane had crashed into the Pentagon.

Fairfax County, where I was the superintendent, not only is located in proximity to the Pentagon, but it also is home to CIA headquarters, the National Reconnaissance Center and Fort Belvoir, all major military and intelligence operations. When my phone rang, an agent from one of the federal agencies informed me of the likelihood we were under attack and that additional planes were in the air with targets unknown, but certainly in our area.

### Rapid Mobilization

We had to mobilize quickly. Every September, our district sends all of

ized our students were on buses that were near a potential target. I immediately called my transportation director and instructed him to contact all the buses and have them return the children to their respective schools — 140 elementary schools spread across the county.

**"After the smoke cleared and search and rescue operations were completed at the Pentagon, we learned MORE THAN 200 HAD LOST THEIR LIVES THERE, many of them the spouses, relatives and friends of our staff."**

Television news then flashed the bulletin that another plane had crashed in western Pennsylvania. The possibility that we were under attack was credible. Panic and chaos quickly spread throughout the Washington, D.C., region. I sent a message to all 190 schools and centers that they were now on lockdown. Not knowing how long the situation would last, the directive was that no child would be allowed to leave school unless picked up by an authorized adult. Similarly, all staff were directed to remain at their posts until further notice. At that point, the overwhelmed communication systems crashed, and we were all in the dark, waiting for the next explosion, the next attack.

ing them into a poten... I was incredibly proud... who, to an individual... their posts until the la... retrieved. Many had f... tives at the Pentagon... of the assault on that... stayed to protect the c... their care.

After the smoke cleared and rescue operations at the Pentagon, we learned that more than 200 had lost their lives there, many of them the spouses, relatives and friends of our staff.

### Conscious Avoidance

As a former New York City resident, I have many memories of the World Trade Center. The New York State Department of Education had offices in the building, where I attended high school. I had been part of many events at the hotel in the building, as well as dinners at the World Trade Center.

The New York City Department of Education also had offices in the World Trade Center, a fact I learned in 1995 that the city's Board of Education voted unanimously to move its chancellor of schools' office to a new building that lasted only a few years — that's another story.

I had consciously avoided the 9/11 Memorial & Museum, not sure I could handle it would evoke. I recently took a trip, 17 years later. I am not sure I could handle it because it will forever remind me of the 2,996 lives lost and the more than 6,000 people injured in the attack on our country.



September, our district sends all of its 5th graders — about 13,000 — to the Wolf Trap International Children's Festival. It's a special, youth-oriented cultural affair dedicated to the performing, visual and interactive arts. Because Wolf Trap is located eight miles from CIA headquarters, I real-

Hours passed without any additional incidents, but the escape out of the D.C. area created massive traffic jams. Many parents were unable to retrieve their children until late that evening. They were appreciative that the schools had kept them in a safe environment rather than dismiss-

attack on our country. I found it's also a good reminder of how important it is to have the United States of America.

**DANIEL DOMENECH** is the director. E-mail: ddomenech@cia.gov Twitter: @AASADan



## 3 Easy Signs of Misaligned Districts

**W**e at Orgametrics® can easily spot district superintendents and cabinets who are aligned to their mission, vision and strategic plan and which have work to do. Can you? We see it in the daily routine of leadership. We see it in the action and communication style to the staff. Here are some simple examples of aligned and misaligned offices.

### Misaligned District Office

- ▶ A meeting of leadership, including principals, had the cabinet and superintendents in the upper level of the room while the principals were on the lower level.
- ▶ The superintendent is regularly late to meetings, apologizing, but with excuses. Staff are distracted and not engaged. They work long hours so they can check off boxes.

### Aligned District Office

- ▶ During a large group meeting, the superintendent and cabinet are at the same tables as the principals, getting feedback and engaged in the discussion.
- ▶ The superintendent is on time to meetings, responds to requests in a timely manner and pays undivided attention to the conversation and people in front of him or her.



- ▶ When cabinet members are asked how they communicate mission and strategic plan to district leaders, they are asked to add the mission statement to all the meeting agendas.

- ▶ Cabinet leaders have several stories of how they are living up to the mission and strategic plan and regularly share these stories to anyone who will listen and help others connect to it.

Our Orgametrics alignment staff works with superintendents, cabinet members and other leadership to help them connect with our 9 alignment concepts. Practicing these concepts within daily activities and ingraining them into the culture will ultimately result in the betterment of teachers, staff and, most importantly, students.

The Orgametrics process starts with finding your Orgametrics Score to identify a benchmark to where improvement could be made. Our continued services range from workshops to individual and cohort coaching. We work together to connect alignment with metrics that matter to you. We help leaders become better servants to their staff and faculty, by empowering them to be the best they can for students.

Contact us to talk about your district and where you might be in your alignment journey.



Empowering Leaders. Aligning Organizations. Driving Results.

855-57-ALIGN  
[info@orgametrics.net](mailto:info@orgametrics.net)  
[www.orgametrics.net](http://www.orgametrics.net)

**ADVERTISEMENT**



### William "Tony" Lake

Tony Lake is returning to the state where he started as a teacher almost 30 years ago. Lake enters his first superintendency at Lindbergh Schools in St. Louis, Mo., after 17 years in the Blue Valley School District in Overland Park, Kan., as chief operations officer and executive director of school administration. He earlier worked as a principal in Blue Valley and Shawnee Mission, Kan. He started his career as a teacher and basketball coach in Creighton, Mo. Lake, who joined AASA in 2018, earned his Ed.D. in school leadership from Baker University in Overland Park.



### Martin Pollio

Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Ky., has elevated Marty Pollio from acting superintendent to the permanent post. Pollio began his career in Jefferson County as a social studies teacher at Shawnee High School. He later became assistant principal in St. Matthews, Ky., before leading the high school in Jefferson-town, Ky., and then served as principal at Doss High School in Louisville. Pollio, who became an AASA member in 2017, earned his doctoral degree from the University of Louisville in 2012.



### Roxann Ramsey-Caserio

Roxann Ramsey-Caserio has accepted her first superintendency in the North Ridgeville, Ohio, City Schools. She spent the past four years serving as the assistant superintendent in the Lakewood, Ohio, City Schools. In earlier postings in Lakewood, Ramsey-Caserio worked as director of teaching and



### Lamont Repollet

The 2,100-student Asbury Park, N.J., School District is saying goodbye to its superintendent of four years as Lamont Repollet becomes the New Jersey state commissioner of education. Repollet previously served as a principal and vice principal in Carteret, N.J., and assistant principal in Irvington, N.J. He started teaching in East Orange, N.J., in 1996. Repollet is a governor-appointed trustee of Kean University. He earned his Ed.D. in education leadership from Nova Southeastern University and has been a member of AASA since 2017.



### Thomas S. Tucker

After spending most of his administrative career in Ohio, Thomas Tucker now is superintendent of the Douglas County School District in Castle Rock, Colo. Tucker was superintendent of Princeton City Schools in Cincinnati when he was named the 2016 AASA Superintendent of the Year. He also held superintendencies in Worthington and Pataskala, both in Ohio. Earlier, he worked in Hilliard, Ohio, as director of secondary curriculum. Tucker, an AASA member since 2013, earned his Ph.D. in education from Ohio State University.



### Jule J. Walker

The Montana Office of Public Instruction has a new deputy state superintendent for operations in Jule Walker. An administrator at the local level for 20 years, Walker worked as superintendent/principal in both the 80-student Plevna, Mont., School District and the Ekalaka, Mont., Public Schools, where she had attended

## APPOINTMENTS

**Chris Bauman**, from executive operations to superintendent

**Steven Cook**, from deputy superintendent, Weld County, Colo., to superintendent, Idaho

**Patricia Cosentino**, from superintendent, Washington 12 School District, Washington to superintendent, New Fairfield

**Darrienne Driver**, from superintendent, Wisconsin, to CEO, United Way for Southeastern Michigan, Detroit, Mich.

**Charles "Chip" Dumais**, from superintendent, Regional School District 5, Wisconsin, to executive director, Cooperative Services, Trumbull, Conn.

**Sara Johnson**, from director of school improvement, Klamath Falls, Ore., to superintendent, Crook County Schools, Prineville, Ore.

**Cory Myer**, from superintendent, Community School District, Benton, Iowa, to superintendent, Sheldon, Iowa

**Tonya Olson**, from superintendent, principal, Belleville Elementary

**Kevin Patterson**, from superintendent, to director of graduate education, Baptist University, Bolivar, Mo.

**Traci Pierce**, from superintendent, college and career readiness, School District, Redmond, Wash.

**Patrick Rau**, from superintendent, Peshtigo, Wis.

## RETIREMENTS

**Jed Bowman**, superintendent,

**Glenn Gelbrich**, superintendent,

**Joan M. Lucid**, superintendent, School District, Santa Clarita,

**John E. Miller**, superintendent, Perrysville Exempted Village School District, Loudonville, Ohio

**Evan Pitkoff**, executive director, Educational Services, Trumbull,

## DEATHS

**Ronald M. Jandura**, 77, retired, Burlington, Wis., April 13

**Raymond J. LaPorte**, 74, retired, Beecher, Ill., March 9

**John G. Moulis**, 71, retired, N.H., April 13

**Leo H. Snelling Jr.**, 69, retired, Ozark, Mo., May 24



Casero worked as director of teaching and learning K-12, elementary school principal and coordinator of teaching and learning K-12. Previously, she worked since 2000 in Beachwood, Ohio, as an assistant principal, advisory and activities administrator and director of student activities. Ramsey-Casero joined AASA in 2014.

Public Schools, where she had attended high school. She was named Montana Superintendent of the Year in 2010 and formerly served on the board of directors of the Montana Rural Education Association. A 14-year member of AASA, Walker has served on the AASA Governing Board twice as well as the AASA Executive Committee.

Brian Whiston, 56, Michigan  
of schools, May 7

News about AASA member  
retirements, honors and d  
addressed to: Editor, *School*  
1615 Duke St., Alexandria,  
703-841-1543. E-mail: mag



## PROFILE | BLONDEAN

# Staying Visible as ‘Head of the Family’

BY JULI DOSHAN

**WHEN BLONDEAN DAVIS** first came to Matteson School District 162 in Richton Park, Ill., after more than 30 years in Chicago Public Schools, the school board asked her if it was possible to create a system strong enough to stabilize the surrounding neighborhood. She said no.

Fast forward 16 years to today, when the number of Matteson students meeting or exceeding state learning standards has jumped from 55 percent to 82 percent. Despite the improvement, Davis hasn't stopped pushing.

"This may be strange to say, but it's like there is no end, so the accomplishment is the constant strive for improvement," says Yvonne Williams, who has worked with Davis in both Matteson and Chicago as a special education officer. "Our potential is always greater than what we are, so her push for excellence is, in my mind, what kind of defines her and separates her from other leaders that I've worked with."

Davis identified a need for a high school in the district so she succeeded in opening a public charter school,

### BIO STATS: BLONDEAN DAVIS

**CURRENTLY:** superintendent and CEO, Matteson School District/Southland College Preparatory Charter High School, Richton Park, Ill.

**PREVIOUSLY:** chief of schools and regions, Chicago Public Schools

**AGE:** 69

**GREATEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER:** One person has been my guiding light — my mother, who worked six days a week to put me through college. I am the man of my mother's dreams.

**BEST PROFESSIONAL DAY:** Aug. 16, 2010, the day that I looked into 122 children who came into my middle school because we did not have — and it signaled the first day of Southland College Prep.

**BOOKS AT BEDSIDE:** *11th Hour* by James Patterson; *Buckingham Palace* by Anne Perry; and the Bible

**WHY I'M AN AASA MEMBER:** I can't envision not being an integral organization that represents some of the strongest, most dedicated administrators in the U.S.



selector to come to Southland Prep, not only to prepare children for competitive colleges but also to help attract enough merit-based financial aid to fund 80 percent of each student's college expenses. So far, the cumula-

Davis says she can walk through the halls of the district's schools, located about 30 miles southwest of Chicago, at any given time ("The head of the family has to be visible," she says) and hear that students and sta-

Southland College Prep High School, in 2010. It boasts a 100 percent college acceptance rate during the past five years. She has since changed her tune about whether the district can influence its community.

“What has happened is the success of children who live right here in the same community has brought a sense of well-being and stability that I totally did not anticipate,” says Davis, an AASA member since 2007 who was honored last February with the association’s Women in School Leadership Award. “Goals and objectives are one thing. Actually doing this and finding the staff that’s strong enough to do this, that’s a whole other thing.”

Assembling the right team of staffers has been instrumental to Davis’s success. She recruited a college coun-

tive total is close to \$102 million in scholarships.

“We try to make sure the community understands that taking out college loans, in the end, is going to result in something negative, not only for the child, but for the family,” Davis says.

And family matters a lot to Davis. She always refers to the school community at Matteson as “the family” and has centered her career around family values.

“We emphasized the concept of family because everyone understands it. It’s not something that sounds so obtuse,” she says. “In a family, people are kind to each other; in a family, no one is physical; in a family, there’s no bullying; in a family, people look after each other. It’s the nucleus of how everyone interacts.”

bought into the concept of family. Family also bears on Davis’s choice. She began “teaching” dolls on the couch as a small child in Chicago because she was surrounded by educators and thought teaching was what everyone did.

Even more influential than her various aunts and uncles who were educators was Davis’s mother, who was a teacher and what she called a “pusher” in terms of education.

“She shared that teaching was the perfect profession for me because it was the world I was most comfortable in,” Davis says. “I’m a manifestation of what she thought I should be and the dreams that she had.”

**JULI DOSHAN** is senior editorial advisor for *School Administrator*. E-mail: [jdoshan@scholadmin.com](mailto:jdoshan@scholadmin.com)



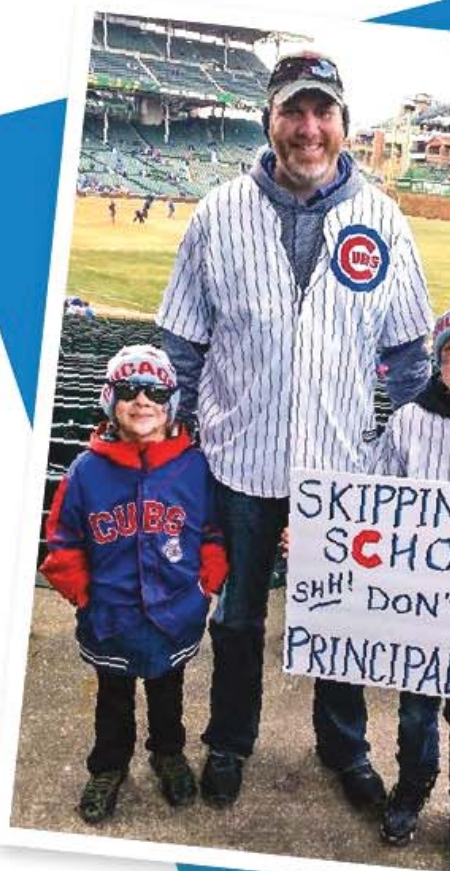
### How Not to Play Hooky

A lesson in how not to play hooky at Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs.

On baseball's opening day last spring, a 4th grader at Wells Elementary School in East Moline, Ill., proudly held high a homemade sign outside Wrigley's main gate that stated "Skipping School ... Shh. Don't tell Principal Versluis." Major League Baseball found the situation so quaint it tweeted a photo of it to 8.3 million Twitter users.

Once inside Wrigley, the student spotted the last person he wanted to see — principal Pat Versluis, who was taking a leave day to accompany his young son to the game. The gig was up for the two hooky players.

For Versluis, it was a rare personal leave day in six years as principal (and 19 years in the district) — and, yes, his day off had been sanctioned by the superintendent.



### Ending on a High Note

Commencement ceremony speeches by superintendents usually aren't the most memorable occasions. That's not the case in the Hempfield School District in Landisville, Pa., where for the past six years, the superintendent has belted out a song loosely tied to the message of the day.

Brenda Becker, who retired as Hempfield superintendent in 2015, started the custom by reciting the chorus of a song popularized by Pink. Her successor, Chris Adams, has lent his voice to song at the last three ceremonies. His choice of song is influenced by students' social media requests.

One year Adams closed out his speech with a verse from Charlie Puth's "One Call Away." This past June, he sent the graduates off into the world with a few bars from reggae artist Ben Harper's song "With My Own Two Hands."

**SOURCE:** Shannon Zimmerman, Hempfield School District

### Maybe It's the Clean Living

Milton High School may sit in the rural confines of Pennsylvania, but the school has a knack for producing superintendents. With an enrollment of 650 students in grades 9-12, for the past three years, it has been the school now head school districts in the region.

"Just because you live in a small, rural town in Pennsylvania doesn't mean you can't go on to do great things," says Superintendent in Selingsgrove.

The other Milton products are Patricia Cross, superintendent in Sullivan County; Jason Bendle, superintendent in Darke County; and Misavage, on leave as superintendent in Shikellamy.

**SOURCE:** Milton Standard

### Wheeling the Tunes

When a car with open windows drove down the road in West Bridgewater, N.J., with three teens belting out Journey's "Don't Stop Believing," the only thing extraordinary was who was behind the wheel — Pat Versluis, the school superintendent.

It represented the most unusual episode of a series called "Superintendent Spotlight Carpool Karaoke," a monthly event inspired by a recurring segment on a late-night talk show.



**SHORT, HUMOROUS** anecdotes, quips, quotations and malapropisms for this column relating to school district administration should be addressed to: Editor, *School Administrator*, 1615 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314. Fax: 703-841-1543. E-mail: [magazine@aasa.org](mailto:magazine@aasa.org). Upon request, names may be withheld in print.

edy show. Oakley's purpose behind her own series was to discuss school affairs with her car occupants during their commute. The three students were seniors on the superintendent's advisory council.

"We used to just sit down and talk, but this year it's more in," Oakley says.

**SOURCE:** *West Bridgewater Wicked Local*



NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
EDUCATION

# EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP CREATES SUCCESS

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

REGISTER EARLY AND SAVE

FEBRUARY 14-16, 2019



LOS ANGELES CONVENTION CENTER

NETWORKING

CURRENT ISSUES

INNOVATION

TECHNOLOGY

EDUCATION

Presented by

**AASA**  
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

[WWW.AASA.ORG/NCE](http://WWW.AASA.ORG/NCE)

