

TENNESSEE PRINCIPAL

JOURNAL OF THE
TENNESSEE PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATION

Inside Spring 2012 Issue:

- TPA input into evaluation revisions
- Jennings reflects on school reform
- Voting for NAESP officers



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Tennessee Principal is the semiannual publication of the
Tennessee Principals Association
205 Sterling Springs Drive, Johnson City, TN 37604
www.tnprinassoc.org

Articles printed may be quite divergent in point of view and controversial as TPA feels that our members can best be served through discussions which challenge and stimulate their thinking. Therefore, the articles published in the journal represent the ideas and/or beliefs of the authors and do not necessarily express the view of TPA unless so stated.

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Volume XXII – Spring 2012
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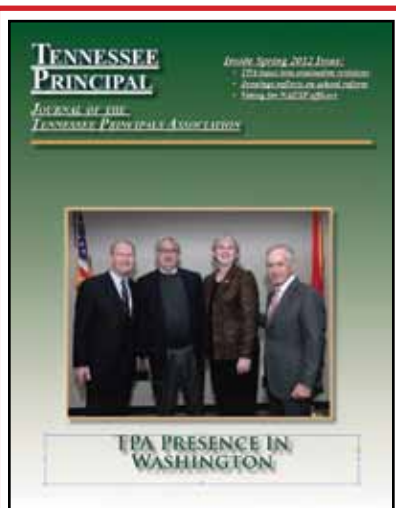


Contents

Spring 2012

**Volume XXII
Spring 2012**

On the Cover



Tennesseans, Ernie Bentley, TPA Executive Director, and Nancy Meador, NAESP Zone 4 Director, met with Tennessee's Senators to discuss education on the national level and how it effects us locally.

(photo provided by Sen. Corker's staff)

Features...

- | | |
|----|--|
| 7 | Perspectives on Tennessee's Teacher Evaluation System |
| - | Principals |
| - | Superintendents |
| - | Teachers |
| 12 | Trust is Not Enough |
| 18 | Candidates for NAESP President-Elect |

Research ...

- | | |
|----|---|
| 20 | Educators' Reflections on Learning to Read |
| 24 | Quantum Learning Research Study |
| 30 | Reflections on a half-century of School Reform |

Columns...

- | | |
|----|---------------------------|
| 5 | Editor's Letter |
| 6 | President's Letter |
| 16 | In the Zone |

Editor's Page



Catherine Prentis

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Dear Friends:

I suppose if I opened with, "Wow, there are some really important things happening now!" I would be assuming you are living under a rock! We are all aware of the big political changes sweeping across our state and nation. I hope that this edition of your principals journal contains beneficial information to help you navigate the changes. We have also included a number of solid research pieces and a sad note on the loss of William Glaser at age 91.

If you have just returned from NAESP convention in Seattle, I hope you found inspiration and renewed energy to complete the rest of the requirements of the year. Please share your experiences with colleagues who weren't able to attend and encourage them to plan ahead for next year. Right now the plans for next fall's state conference project that it will be located in the mid-state. Keep in touch with the TPA website for details on when and where, as well as 2013 NAESP national conference. Please be sure to VOTE in the NAESP election. See directions at right to ensure that your vote for President-elect will count.

My warmest thanks go out to all the members of the TPA board for honoring me with the 2011 Meritorious Service Award for editing this Journal. It has been my honor to do this important work for a number of years. I have always viewed it as an enormous professional development opportunity where I get to sift through the best things out there to find what I hope is helpful to you in your important jobs. Congratulations also to Brian Hoer, Operations Administrator for Inter-State Studios, for being recognized as the 2011 Friend of Education. He is TPA's contact for many of our website photos and for printing this publication. Inter-State is an important sponsor and partner in the work we do for the membership.

Be Ready to Vote

This spring, eligible NAESP members will elect a new president-elect as well as members of the Board of Directors from Zones 5, 7, and 9. NAESP has simplified the election process. It takes less than five minutes, and its confidential, protecting the integrity of the voting system. All you have to do is log in to access the ballot.

Members will be notified when voting opens, and electronic ballots for which you will need to log in to access will be available on the NAESP website. If you have never logged in to <http://www.naesp.org/> (or if it has been a while), take a moment to do it now and ensure that you are able to vote for your candidates as soon as you are notified in late March.

Here's how:

Go to www.naesp.org/user/login. Type your Username (the email address NAESP has on file with your membership).

Type your Password (your last name is your password the first time you log in). If you have changed your password and can't remember it, click on the Request new password tab and follow the instructions.

—Dateline NAESP

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Message from the President



Sharon K. McNary

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Hello Tennessee Principals,

As we enter into spring, most of you should be wrapping up your first year with the new observation system and will be beginning the summative conference phase with all of your teachers. I want you to know that TPA has listened to your concerns regarding the new evaluation system and has taken some action. On December 21, Governor Bill Haslam charged SCORE (State Collaborative on Reforming Education) with collecting feedback on the new evaluation system.

When TPA heard that SCORE was partnering with other associations and agencies to gather feedback from educators and community leaders across Tennessee, your executive board contacted Dr. Sharon Roberts, Chief Operating Officer for SCORE, and asked to be one of the partners. Dr. Roberts whole-heartedly agreed that the principals' perspective would be a critical and a valuable asset. Besides TPA, the other partners are: TN Chamber of Commerce & Industry, TEA, PTA, TSBA, TOSS, PET, and the TN Business Roundtable. Members of these associations/organizations/businesses consist of teachers, principals, local and state officials, parents, community, business leaders and citizens at large, and superintendents. SCORE will gather input from these stakeholders in four ways:

1. Regional roundtable discussions open to the public- (educators, parents, community and business leaders, local board members, and state board representatives)
2. Online questionnaire to gather feedback on current teacher evaluation practices and policies (Open to all teachers principals, and evaluators across the state beginning in March)
3. Gathering of feedback from existing groups and experts (e.g., superintendent, principal, and supervisor study councils and leaders and educators from each of the four models)

4. Convening a representative group of teachers and principals from across the state in work teams to provide ongoing feedback

The TPA Executive Board met with Dr. Roberts in February to outline TPAs role in this review process. We gave recommendations of members for the regional roundtable discussions. When we met with Dr. Roberts, the roundtable discussion for Metro Nashville had already been planned, but Dr. Roberts did accept our recommendations for Chattanooga, Jackson, Knoxville, and Memphis. Dr. Roberts and your TPA Board of Directors held a conference call last week to review the process described above. I have been selected to serve on the work team that will be responsible for completing all of the data analyses compiled from roundtable discussions, surveys, and other sources to help SCORE make their recommendations to the Governor. You too can get involved in this process by completing the Teacher Evaluation Questionnaire that will be sent to you soon via email. Your TPA board has heard your concerns regarding the new evaluation system and we are committed to doing what we can to see that changes are made to make the process more manageable.

I am excited to announce that Dr. Nancy Meador, a principal from Nashville, Tennessee and our NAESP Zone 4 Director for the seven Southeastern states, is on the NAESP ballot as President-Elect. If you know Nancy, then you know how passionate she is about the role of the principal, TPA, and NAESP. She has the drive that is needed to make changes that will have a positive effect on the role for the principal and ultimately impact our students. Voting begins immediately following the NAESP convention (March 26). You may have already received information on the electronic voting process. Your login is your email address and your default password is your last name. Once you receive the notice, please log in to see if it accepts your email address and your last name. If it does not accept your password, please call 800-386-2377 and ask for assistance. Please encourage all of your colleagues to vote. Dr. Meador has the support of Zone 4, and she will win her election if we all work together to support her candidacy.

I wish you the best of luck as you complete all of your observations, begin the summative conference component, and move into testing season. If you need anything from me at all, please do not hesitate to ask.

Principals' Perspective on Tennessee's new Teacher Evaluation System

Compiled by Catherine Prentis, editor

During this first year of implementations for Tennessee's new teacher evaluation system, I have heard many comments from other principals across the state. Some of these came during the middle Tennessee SCORE Roundtable that I attended recently and others have been gleaned from news releases or random conversations on the topic. I have attempted to gather and share these principal perspectives without my own bias unless I have credited myself.

The format of the SCORE Roundtable session enabled the panelists to list features of the system that were seen as positives, negatives (or opportunities for improvement) and recommendations. One of the first positives listed was "common vocabulary." In a release from Education Weekly, a Tennessee principal was quoted saying that he had recently completed an observation where a well planned and executed lesson had to be marked down to a "1" in Grouping for having only whole group instruction.

Other principals whom I polled disagreed and believed that the rubric allowed for whole group if it was an effective means of instructional delivery in the lesson.

I heard a teacher comment positively on the depth of understanding that she now had about the structure of her lessons since her principal had directed the teachers in her building to script their entire lesson when they were planning.

In the TEAM training I went through, only the observers were instructed to script what they heard during the lesson as a means to give feedback.

Another principal stated that she and her two assistant principals went into each classroom with a video camera.

Again in my training session we were specifically told NOT to video. I wonder what those extra eyes did to the teachers' stress levels. My opinion is that common vocabulary without common definitions still leaves enormous room for interpretation.

When we looked at problems, "time" seemed to leap to the forefront. TPA's president and principal of Richland Elementary in Memphis, Sharon McNary, said to a national publication that these days, she finds herself rushing to cram in what amounts to 20 times the number of observations previously required for veteran teachers – including those she knows are excellent – sometimes to the detriment of her other duties. Each observation involves a complicated rubric and scoring system, discussions with the teacher before and afterward, and a written report – a total of perhaps two to four hours for each one, Ms. McNary estimates. "I don't think there's a principal that would say they don't agree that we need a more rigorous evaluation system," says Ms. McNary, "But now it seems that we've gone to [the opposite] extreme."

In my own situation, I am evaluating 19 apprentice teachers and 16 professionally licensed staff with no assistant principal or any other administrative evaluator assigned to help—do the math on that. I practically wept when I learned that we could roll together some of the shorter classroom visits with the lesson-length instructional observations to cut down on the number of visits. Then at the SCORE round table I met a couple of teachers from another mid-state county who had release time to travel to other schools and do some of the evaluations. I don't have a comment on that.

And there are still problems with how the data will be used. For now, many will be judged on school-wide data for reading or math, even if they teach history, art, or physical education – a much-publicized phenomenon that has made the system look ridiculous in some news stories.

No doubt there are as many principals' perspectives on teacher evaluation as there are principals. Remember, my goal was to furnish a sampling of opinions and not an exhaustive one. My district uses the TEAM system as does all middle Tennessee. I have no doubt that opinions could vary across the state where other models are used. Please read on to find opinions and recommendations from two superintendents and a teachers' group.

Superintendent's Perspective



In January 2010 the Tennessee Legislature, the Office of the Governor, and the Tennessee Department of Education enacted the Tennessee First to the Top Bill, one of the most ambitious education initiatives in our state's history. The centerpiece of that legislation was a sweeping reform of our teacher evaluation system. The new system was described as providing frequent and constructive feedback for our teachers, pinpointing teachers' individual strengths and development needs in order to tailor support, and recognizing and learning from our most effective educators as we seek ways to enhance educational opportunities for all students. The system envisioned a high level of accountability for all educators—district leaders, school administrators, and classroom teachers alike.

As Superintendent of Williamson County Schools, I firmly support these important goals. In our district we continually ask the question, "How can we better meet the needs of the students and families we serve?" Accountability is a strong part of our culture. We have worked to implement Tennessee's new teacher evaluation system with fidelity, and we've supplemented that work by providing our teachers with expanded formative data, focused professional development, and increased access to technological resources.

Unfortunately, lofty goals and good intentions are insufficient in an initiative as important as Tennessee's new evaluation system. In order to reach those goals, the system must be able to establish a clear link between teacher performance and student achievement, it must include valid and reliable metrics, and it must be fair and equitable. While the new teacher evaluation system includes a number of strengths, it simply does not meet these requirements.

Linking teacher performance and student achievement

Under the new system, 35% of every educator's evaluation is based upon student growth as measured by TCAP and End of Course testing over the course of a year. This may very well be a fair measure for teachers whose students take these assessments. However, the TDOE estimates that over 60% of Tennessee's educators have no direct student test results. The outcome of this is that most educators have 35% of their evaluation based upon scores from students they may have never even met. Kindergarten teachers are evaluated on 4th grade results. High school art or physical education teachers are evaluated on student growth in English class. Even counselors and librarians are assigned arbitrary school-wide averages. Clearly these measures do not pass the critical test of linking teacher performance and student results. In fact, they may create disincentives for talented teachers to choose positions in schools where they are most needed.

Valid and reliable metrics

The metrics that make up the new system are problematic in several ways. First, of course, is there is no clear link between performance and student growth for most teachers. Second, the system includes very limited data choices for determining the 15% of the teacher's evaluation based on achievement. The TDOE has recommended the use of a number of formative assessment measures for this 15%, but this is a misuse of formative assessment, one of the most powerful tools available to the teacher. When employed as an evaluative tool, a formative assessment becomes a summative instrument and loses its usefulness as an honest tool guiding instructional decisions. Third, the rating instrument for teacher observations includes the key elements of good instruction, but it does so in a somewhat generic way, and many observers struggle to apply it in the context of specific subjects and classes. It is very difficult, for instance, for a principal to judge the quality of questioning in a high school German class when he or she doesn't speak the language.

Dr. Mike Looney, Superintendent of Schools Williamson County Schools

Fair and equitable evaluation

Williamson County Schools is fortunate to have outstanding teachers who focus every day on giving their students the best instruction possible. Our teachers' morale is an important factor in their ability to perform at such a high level. When they are faced with an evaluation system that is built around a deeply flawed measure of their effect on student growth, poor choices of metrics for student achievement, and a one-size-fits-all observation protocol, it is tough for them to feel that they are being treated fairly and equitably. They deserve better.

What changes could be made to the current system?

Williamson County Schools convened a cross section of teachers to give honest feedback on the evaluation system and to recommend changes that might improve it. Additionally, district and school leaders have considered ways to improve the system. Ideas have included the following:

1. The Tennessee Department of Education should consider the first year of growth data (the 35%) informational only, not a part of the teacher's formal evaluation. As more appropriate measures are developed, this component of the evaluation could become a part of the overall rating.
2. The TDOE should commit to the development of standardized assessments for all subjects and grade levels. Teachers should be able to draw a very clear connection between what they have done throughout a school year and how much students have grown.
3. Observations should be differentiated among those teachers who have a history of high ratings and those who are new or are struggling.
4. At least some components of the observation instrument should be specific to the grade or subject being observed. Specific context should be a part of the overall observation.
5. The TDOE should establish additional choices for teachers and administrators to use in gauging student achievement (the 15%).
6. The TDOE should change the observation protocol so that teachers have an opportunity to provide additional evidence or artifacts before the final ratings are set by the administrator.
7. The observation instrument should be simplified, and clear, concise language should describe each indicator.
8. The TDOE should commit to getting all necessary data for teacher evaluation back to the school districts in time for the end of the school year. Teachers should know their evaluation results when they leave for the summer, and districts should have all data necessary to help inform their personnel decisions.
9. The TDOE should consider 2011-2012 a pilot year for the evaluation system and not publish teacher results that make use of a flawed process.

Williamson County Schools remains focused on its strategic plan to "become a district recognized nationally for students who excel in academics, the arts, and athletics." In order to achieve our goals, we know that teachers, school leaders, and district staff must perform at a high level. We want to be held accountable. The evaluation system is just too important to not get it right. We urge our lawmakers and the Tennessee Department of Education to engage districts across the state in a meaningful way to help make much-needed changes to the new evaluation system.

New Evaluations Open the Door to Collaboration, Improved Communications



Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, Director,
Jesse B. Register, Ed.D.

From increased academic standards to a recently announced waiver from No Child Left Behind guidelines, Tennessee is in the midst of major educational reform. One of the most talked about reforms in education has been the new teacher evaluation system, the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM). Some across the state like it; some are adamantly opposed. Regardless of your position, the intent is clear: To help districts and schools across our state focus on best practices in the classroom, and to share those best practices so that our students are better prepared for college, career and life.

Having served on the statewide Teacher Evaluation Advisory Committee created by the General Assembly as part of the Tennessee First to the Top Act of 2010, I served alongside some of our state's top educators in developing the new evaluation system. From the very beginning of the committee's work, I said that it would be a waste to use this evaluation system only to deal with inadequate performance. Our focus should be on identifying what teachers are doing well, sharing those teaching strategies, and building on individual strengths. Our public school systems need to be learning organizations, continuously looking for ways to improve. That's the power of this evaluation system. It allows for ongoing evaluations, opportunities for very targeted professional development and sharing of best practices.

Recently a principal in Metro Nashville Public Schools, whose school served as a pilot school for the new evaluations during the 2010-11 school year, shared an interesting story. After the first evaluations were completed, his teachers began sharing their feedback with colleagues, what worked and what didn't. The principal said they almost immediately began communicating more as teams and as a building. They were working together to ensure each other's success, the students' success, and the school's success. The impact of improved communication has been instrumental in helping his school achieve a higher level of performance, and it can do the same for other schools across the state.

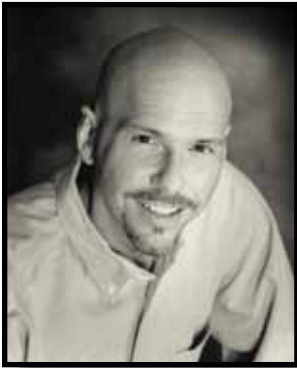
Part of the difficulty with the new evaluation system is that it is a big culture change, and human beings tend to be creatures of habit. The move to this new evaluation system will empower teachers to help one another, opening lines of communication and encouraging the sharing of best practices. It will force educators to constantly work to improve instructional practices and be thoughtful in lesson preparation. It will help us get out of our comfort zones and find ways to truly engage our students. It will help us give our students the excellent education they need and deserve to be successful members of a global society.

While the first year of any new program will undoubtedly expose some chinks in the iron, we need to stay the course through this transition period. Principals, who already have full plates, are now being asked to evaluate teachers with four to six observations per year. What has been especially helpful for principals in Metro Nashville Public Schools is the training they have received for the past two years. Since 2010, MNPS principals have been through numerous trainings through the Rutherford Learning Group's Skillful Observation and Coaching Laboratory. The purpose of this training is to help principals become strong instructional leaders. They are being trained to coach their teachers, focus on strengths, identify best practices, and work to build a learning system that is continuously getting better— all of which are key components of the new state evaluation system.

We all need to remember as we continue the new evaluation system that this is a big change for teachers and principals. We need to realize that we will make mistakes, but more importantly, that we will learn from those mistakes. What I continue to encourage Metro Schools' principals and teachers, and our community, to realize is that this is a pivotal time not only for our district but also for the future of public education in our state. If we take advantage of the new evaluation system and really work together, we can make Tennessee's education reform successful.

Recommendations for Tennessee's Evaluation System

Stephen C. Henry - President, Metropolitan Nashville Education Association



As part of the 2010 "First to the Top" legislation, the General Assembly mandated a new evaluation system to be in place by July 1, 2011. While there was initial input by teachers in the early stages of its development, that input was mostly ignored by the Tennessee Department of Education in the final stages of its development. Since its implementation, the new evaluation system has been a source of frustration for educators across the state. To be clear, teachers want an evaluation system. They want an instrument that will help them grow as professionals. Further, they want an instrument that is both user friendly and one that improves instruction and increases student achievement. Unfortunately, the new Tennessee teacher evaluation system (and supporting data system) has not accomplished this goal. It has distracted teachers and administrators from focusing on student learning in order to meet the demands of the evaluation system. Additionally, it has forced principals to focus fulltime on teacher evaluation at the expense of running an effective school. The new evaluation system must be fine-tuned for the sake of our students, our schools, our teachers and our administrators.

The following are recommendations by educators to address the flaws in the new evaluation system:

1. Designate the 2011-2012 initial implementation year as a pilot/practice year for the new evaluation system so that no educator will be negatively affected by this year's evaluation rating.
2. Prohibit the use of school-wide data as a substitute for individual growth data for non-TVAAS teachers. Rather, where TVAAS data does not exist, student growth shall be determined by appropriate criterion-referenced pre- and post-tests or comparable assessments.
3. Provide that teachers who achieve an evaluation rating of "Meets Expectations" (a three on the five-point rating scale) shall be eligible for tenure.
4. Streamline and strengthen the observation process:
 - a. Reduce the number of required observations for accomplished teachers. For example, professionally licensed teachers with a rating of three or better (on a five-point scale) would receive one observation each year and a full evaluation cycle comprising multiple observations completed every five years.
 - b. Utilize observation instruments which appropriately reflect how students learn and teachers teach across the range of teaching assignments.
 - c. Simplify and streamline the observation instrument so criteria to be observed in a single lesson are realistic in both number and scope.
 - d. Provide constructive feedback to teachers from one observation before the next one occurs.
 - e. Base evaluation ratings on actual observations of teaching practice; prohibit manipulation of such ratings to fit a bell curve or expected student growth data.
 - f. Provide administrators and teachers with access to a scripting system so teachers can review and respond to observation data immediately. Require that rating forms be provided to teachers after each observation.
5. Expand the 15 percent options and allow teacher choice as contemplated in the law.
6. Ensure accuracy of all data used in evaluations by providing a process for correcting erroneous data.
7. Deliver teachers' final evaluation ratings no later than the last work day of the school year. Ensure that evaluation ratings are accompanied by recommendations for improvement and indications of the support to be provided to help teachers improve.

Only one of these recommendations, the third proposal related to tenure, requires legislative action. All others could be addressed through action by the Tennessee State Board of Education or, in some cases, the Tennessee Department of Education.

Trust Is Not Enough



Jeffery Cozzens

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Over the past 10 years the principalship has become more complicated; however, traditional aspects of school operations cannot be overlooked. The author asserts that practical school-based accounting and fraud protection training for Principals is woefully inadequate. This article equips principals with internal and external indicators that could be signs of financial school-based improprieties. The article identifies 10 common sense indicators that can point administrators in the right direction if financial improprieties are suspected. The author cautions school leaders to resist jumping to conclusions if one of these indicators is present; however, when two or more indicators are discovered, school leaders are advised to investigate and take corrective action as needed. Corrective action always includes notifying district level administration. The 10 indicators that principals need to be aware of and investigate are as follows:

1. Vendors terminating accounts
2. Vendors insisting to talk to the principal about late payments
3. Responsible parties failing to take ownership for audit findings or financial impropriety
4. School bookkeepers failing to supply the principal with an immediate snapshot of the school's financial status
5. School personnel failing to meticulously follow the separation of duties when accounting for school funds
6. School personnel failing to receive (or receiving altered) financial receipts
7. Teachers, coaches and sponsors turning in cash and ticket reconciliation documentation that is always perfect
8. Bookkeepers requesting that the principal move an inordinate amount of school funds from one account to another to "cover" bills
9. School personnel accepting (or encouraging) school checks without the completed memo portion identifying which school account is to be credited (these checks can be easily "Swapped" for cash
10. Monthly bank statement reflecting any signs of electronic banking.

Providing school leaders with the basics of school business management must involve collaboration between educational leadership preparation programs and ongoing district level staff development. Superintendents and principals are well served to have an open and frank conversation about this critical aspect of school operations.

Look for this article in the September 2012 edition of *Principal Leadership* published by the NASSP.

Robert Glaser, Who Shaped the Science of Student Testing, Dies at 91



Robert Glaser, a cognitive psychologist who helped define the terms of the national debate over student testing, and who pioneered ways of measuring not only how students learn but how teachers teach, died on Feb. 4 in Pittsburgh. He was 91.

The cause was complications of Alzheimer's disease, said a spokesman for the University of Pittsburgh Learning Research

and Development Center, which Dr. Glaser helped found in 1963.

Dr. Glaser was probably best known for promoting a kind of standardized test that became the norm for the federal government's National Assessment of Educational Progress, the state-by-state evaluation commonly known as The Nation's Report Card.

The method, which he did not invent but championed, and coined as "criterion-referenced testing," measured not just what students knew but how well they were learning. Rather than measuring students in comparison with one another, as I.Q. and other traditional standardized tests do, "criterion" tests were mainly designed to compare students' results with their own previous test results. While not obviously different from traditional tests like the SATs — which the Report Card used at first — Dr. Glaser argued successfully that criterion tests were the more nimble tool for helping teachers adjust lessons to their students' needs.

It became the standard testing system for the periodic "Report Cards" exams in math, reading, history and science given to 4th, 8th and 12th graders throughout the country.

Dr. Glaser was equally resolute, though less successful, in warning about the limits of testing.

In 1987, when the Department of Education asked the National Academy of Education to critique the Report Card system, Dr. Glaser was named chairman of the academy's review panel. In a report that called test results "fallible and partial indicators of academic achievement," the panel warned educators to avoid letting them become "the major goals of schooling."

Diane Ravitch, a policy analyst and historian of education who quoted Dr. Glaser's report in her 2010 book, "The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education," described Dr. Glaser as one of his generation's most respected, and far-sighted, experts on testing.

"No one understood testing as well as Bob Glaser did, and what he said in 1987 was prescient," she said in an

interview. Referring to an increase in standardized testing under the federal No Child Left Behind law, she added, "I don't think he would like what's happening today." Colleagues and family said Dr. Glaser had had Alzheimer's disease for many years and was unable to give his opinion on current trends in standardized testing. But his views about the science of education, they said, changed the field and influenced the work of three generations of researchers.

"He was one of the first to use testing to measure how we should be teaching, not just to sort" high and low achievers, said Lauren B. Resnick, a psychology professor and former head of the learning research center that Dr. Glaser helped found.

Dr. Glaser focused on the process by which people learn: How do people evolve from novices to experts in their fields, whether as physicists or cabdrivers? What are low achievers missing when they read or hear someone talk? What could help them to get it?

In the universe of cognitive science, Dr. Glaser was known for encouraging his students and other researchers to develop what he called "a unified theory of learning" — one that would measure student, teacher and curriculum, then use the findings to make each of them better.

It was important to strive for that ambitious goal, "even if we accept that it will be difficult to achieve," he wrote in one of the last of his 220 published articles. Drawing on an educational theory at least as old as the sayings of Confucius, he added, "Learning is driven by failure."

Dr. Glaser was initially a disciple of Professor Skinner's, embracing the view that learning is a process of behavior modification that is not fundamentally different from teaching rats to press a lever to score food pellets.

But Dr. Glaser developed his own learning theories and a broader view of the mission of education. Dr. Ravitch said he articulated them in the 1987 report for the National Academy of Education, which she called "vintage Glaser."

The report said the goal of education should be not only informational but also "aesthetic and moral." It should aim to equip people with "resilience and courage in the face of stress, a sense of craft in our work, a commitment to justice and caring in our social relationships, a dedication to advancing the public good."

The most sophisticated standardized test, it concluded, would find those cognitive skills "extremely difficult to assess."

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R _____ \$110.00 Retired
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NAESP staff trained state delegates on membership strategies



Zone 4 met in Nashville in January



Patty Evans, TPA Board member, joins the luncheon discussion



Ernie Bentley and Nancy Meador discussed issues impacting the entire Zone



Quantum Learning's Carol Fetzer, with Tonja Trice, who presented her research



Luncheon Roundtable discussions with Sharon McNary and delegates from the other states



TPA Past President, Brian Partin, and Vice President, Kim Headrick

In The Zone



Dr. Nancy F. Meador

Principal
Madison Middle School
Nashville, TN

Welcome to Zone 4 in affiliation with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). My name is Nancy Meador and I serve as Director of Zone 4 on the NAESP Board of Directors. If you are a member of NAESP and reside in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands . . . you are a part of NAESP's Zone 4.

NAESP recently held the Federal Relations Conference in Washington D.C. The focus of the conference was centered on "The Power of the Principal: Advocacy in Action." Four states in Zone 4 participated in the Federal Relations Conference. Conference participants spent a day on Capitol Hill meeting with congressional leaders. NAESP crafted eight research-based recommendations to help guide federal policies. These recommendations include:

1. Acknowledge the core competencies of effective school principals
2. Dedicate on-going professional development that strengthens principals' core competencies
3. Support standards-based induction and mentoring programs for early career principals
4. Strengthen elementary principals knowledge of early childhood education
5. Encourage comprehensive, fair, and objective principal evaluation systems at the local level
6. Reinforce support for principals as key ingredients in School Improvement Plans
7. Develop accountability systems that include growth models and multiple measures
8. Support innovative models and empower principals to drive their implementation

Thanks to the following Zone 4 members who "went to the Hill" to represent principals in the southeastern region of the U.S.:

AL	Earl Franks	Executive Director
AL	Jim Chesnutt	Assistant Executive Director
AL	Cynthia Toles-Woods	NAESP Board of Directors
FL	Janet Knott	State President
FL	Bonnie Cangelosi	State President-elect
GA	Bob Heaberlin	State Representative
GA	Eddie Pollard	State Federal Relations Coordinator
TN	Ernest Bentley	Executive Director
TN	Nancy Meador	NAESP Board of Directors

Come to Seattle, Wash., March 22-24, 2012 for the NAESP 2012 Annual Conference BEST PRACTICES FOR BETTER SCHOOLS™. Plan to be in Seattle to learn from a stellar collection of education experts joining Rafe Esquith on the speaker roster: Diane Ravitch, Richard DuFour, Rebecca DuFour, Douglas Reeves, Andrew Hargreaves, Eric Jensen, Rick Stiggins, Yong Zhao, Michael Chirichello, Michael Conyers and Donna Wilson, Justin Baeder, Malachi Pancoast, and Charlotte Danielson, plus many more.

Learn more at www.naesp.org/2012.

Congratulations and thanks are extended to the following Zone 4 principals and education leaders who have accepted positions and responsibilities on national level committees affiliated with NAESP and Zone 4:

AL	Cynthia Toles-Woods	NAESP Board of Directors (Director, Minority)
AL	Jan Palmer	NAESP Resolutions Committee
	TBA	NAESP Resolutions Committee (alt.)
SC	Marian Crum-Mack	NAESP Nominating Committee
GA	Cecil Patterson	NAESP Nominating Committee (alt.)
FL	Janet Knott	NAESP Credentials Committee
FL	Cheryl McKeever	NAESP Membership Committee
TN	Teresa Dennis	NAESP Membership Committee (alt.)
TN	Linda Irwin	NAESP Principal Evaluation Committee
	TBA	NAESP By-Laws Revision Committee
TN	Sharon McNary	Zone 4, Southeastern Council President
NC	Sara Moore	Zone 4, Southeastern Council Secretary
AL	Lydia D. Davenport	Zone 4, Southeastern Council President-elect

Zone 4's State Presidents are listed below. Our State Presidents are in "key" leadership roles at both the state and national levels. We appreciate their service and support!

<u>STATE</u>	<u>REPRESENTATIVE</u>	<u>EMAIL ADDRESS</u>
<u>Alabama</u>	Steve Lamon	slamon@tcss.net
<u>Florida</u>	Janet Knott	knottj@duvalschools.org
<u>Georgia</u>	Julia Mashburn	jmashburn@dawson.k12.ga.us
<u>Mississippi</u>	Tina Joslin	tjoslin@tishomingo.k12.ms.us
<u>North Carolina</u>	Travis Collins	tcollins@haywood.k12.nc.us
<u>South Carolina</u>	Roger Richburg	richburgr@gwd50.org
<u>Tennessee</u>	Sharon McNary	mcnarys@mcsk12.net

Upcoming Calendar of Events

March	22-24	NAESP Annual Conference, Seattle, WA
July	19-20	NAESP National Leaders Conference

NAESP Mission Statement

The mission of the National Association of Elementary School Principals is to lead in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle level principals and other education leaders in their commitment to all children.

Contact Information:

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 Director, Zone 4 - NAESP Board of Directors
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Dwight Liddiard | Candidate for President- Elect

Building Better Principals With the Help of NAESP



Every day I realize how fortunate I am to serve as principal of East Meadows Elementary School, located at the base of

of the beautiful Wasatch Mountains in Spanish Fork, Utah. Despite these stressful, high-stakes times, I love my job and consider myself lucky to work with, and be surrounded by, excellent staff, great kids, and supportive parents.

NAESP and its affiliates have played such an important role in my career. They've helped me become the principal that I am today. I know that the schools I have been asked to lead are better places because of the many membership benefits I have received from—and my relationships with—NAESP and its affiliates.

Each principal and each school is unique. Regardless of where we live, special circumstances impact our work. NAESP needs to ensure that the work of our Association reflects the needs of all principals—urban, suburban, rural, and frontier. We must continue to reach out, bring our colleagues into membership, and help them to realize the benefits of our organization.

NAESP helps us to stay on top of all the issues affecting our profession and offers each of us excellent professional development opportunities, such as our national conference and webinars. Principals will find tremendous resources on the NAESP website, and we can stay engaged in real time via the Association's Facebook page and Twitter channel. NAESP also has some amazing publications that we should all be using and sharing, such as the ever-popular *Principal* magazine and email blasts. When we make use of these rich resources, we stay on the cutting edge of our profession and best serve the students in our schools.

NAESP is also a strong advocate for its members with the U.S. Department of Education and Congress. Now more than ever we need a strong, unified voice to represent the needs of elementary and middle-level principals and the students we serve.

Our Association's strength is attributed to the development of amazing state and local affiliate leaders. We must continue to strengthen and build our organization by inviting new members to become involved in the leadership of NAESP.

I am passionate about NAESP and my role as a principal. As a candidate for President-Elect, I pledge to work hard to continue the great work of our Association and to find additional ways to help principals enhance their skills to perform their duties effectively.

I would be honored to represent my colleagues throughout the United States and worldwide to ensure that the viewpoint of the elementary and middle-level principal is well represented. To serve this wonderful profession and to give back to an organization that has helped me have such a wonderful career and life would be an opportunity that I would love.

Dwight Liddiard

Principal, East Meadows Elementary School, Spanish Fork, Utah

Professional Experience: Principal, East Meadows Elementary, 2006-present — Principal, Larsen Elementary, 1996-2006 — Principal, Park View Elementary, 1995-1996 — Curriculum Specialist, Nebo School District, 1991-1995 — Teacher, Brockbank Elementary, 1984-1995

Professional Affiliations: NAESP, 2004-present (Zone 9 Director, 2009-present; Nominating Committee, 2008; Resolutions Committee Alternate, 2007-2009; Board Subcommittee on Presidential Succession, 2009; Zone 9 Chair, 2007-2008; Chair-Elect, 2006-2007; Utah State Representative, 2004-2009) — Utah Association of Elementary School Principals (UAESP), 1995-2011 (Student Council Conference; Student Council Chair, 2002-2004; Secretary Conference; Awards Committee; Mid Winter Conference; Summer Conference; Nomination Committee; State Representative, 2004-2009; Secretary, 2003-2004)

Professional Honors: Mentor Principal of the Year, Nebo District, 2011 — Nebo School District Service Award (25 years), 2009 — National Distinguished Principal State Finalist, Nebo District Representative, 2003 — UAESP Instructional Leader of the Year, Nebo District Representative, 2002 — Utah Reading Principal of the Year, Utah Council of the International Reading Association, 2001 — Utah Principal Academy Fellow, 1999-2000 — Center for the Improvement of Teacher Education and Schooling (CITES) Cohort, 1998-1999 — UAESP Rookie of the Year, Nebo District Representative, 1997 — Utah Outstanding Title I Program, 1996 — Nebo District Teacher of the Year Finalist, 1990

Civic/Community Honors: Spanish Fork Kiwanis Club Outstanding Community Service Award, 2012 — Utah State University Extension Service Award, 2011 — Spanish Fork High School FFA Outstanding Alumni Award, 2010 — 4-H Family of the Year, State of Utah 4-H Council, 2009 — 4-H Family of the Year, Utah County 4-H Council, 2008

Education: M.Ed., Educational Leadership, Brigham Young University, 1991 — B.A., Elementary Education, Brigham Young University, 1984

Nancy Flatt Meador | Candidate for President-Elect

Every Principal Matters!



Pincipals have one of the most diverse and challenging jobs in the United States. We have great responsibility and opportunity to influence the future through our decisions and leadership. I am proud to be a principal and strive daily to lead with passion, purpose, and enthusiasm.

Communities across our nation depend on principals to lead schools to unprecedented levels of success. Accountability for test scores, student safety, and positive learning environments is at an all-time high. The bar has been raised nationwide, and principals are determined to meet the challenges and expectations.

As a current member of the Board of Directors, I believe that every NAESP member is working to make a difference. This Association is focused on the value that it can bring to every member. I believe that service and support to members through benefits and resources is a primary value of this Association.

Membership is the heart and soul of any successful association, and I will continue to work to strengthen our membership. Together we can identify those resources required to ensure that principals survive and prosper.

With these actions, I believe we will be able to retain and grow our membership.

We will also become a more effective Association by increasing our visibility and our influence as we work with our elected officials who write and implement education law. Advocacy will continue to be important to establish our collective priorities and to have our positions understood before laws are enacted.

NAESP and its state affiliates are instrumental to the success of elementary and middle-level principals. Working together, we can raise both the level of awareness and the important role our state and national associations have in the development and support of America's principals.

I am passionate about my commitment to serve and support principals across our nation, use our collective efforts to influence decisions that shape state and national legislation, and work together to continue to build NAESP as a premier educational association serving and supporting all elementary and middle-level principals.

Through my leadership experiences with NAESP and the Tennessee Principals Association, I have had the opportunity to lead at the district, state, and national levels.

As a candidate for the position of NAESP President-Elect, I am offering my leadership skills and experience to promote the mission and values of NAESP and its membership. I am an advocate for learning, and I will use my authority and influence to improve principals' chances of success both personally and professionally. I will speak boldly for schools. **I desire to help make a difference for principals because every principal matters.**

Nancy Flatt Meador

Principal, Madison Middle School, Nashville, Tennessee

Professional Experience: Principal, Madison Middle School, 2009-present — Exec. Director, Learning Support Services, 2003-2008 — Principal, DuPont Elementary, 1998-2003 — Principal, Brookmeade Elementary, 1995-1998 — Asst. Principal, Tusculum Elementary, 1992-1995 — Classroom Teacher, 1982-1992

Professional Affiliations: NAESP, 1998-present (Board of Directors, Zone 4 Director, 2010-2013; Convention, 1999-present; Local Arrangements Committee Contact, National Convention, Nashville, 2008; State Representative, 2003-2005; National (State) Leaders Conference, 2001-2005, 2010-2011; Resolutions Committee, 2002-2004; Zone 4 Southeastern Leaders Conference, 2003-2005, 2011-2012; Co-Chair, Zone 4 Southeastern Principals Conference, 2001) — Tennessee Principals Association (TPA), 1998-present (Board of Directors-NAESP Representative, 2010-2013; Middle Schools, 2009-2010; Past President, 2003; President, 2002; President-Elect, 2001; Vice President, 2000; Member Services, 1999; Research & Development, 1998; TPA Conference & Leadership Forum, 2003 Steering Committee; Exhibit Hall Coordinator, 2008-2009) — Metro Nashville Principals Association (MNPA), 1998-present — ASCD, 2003-present — TASC, 2004-present

Professional Honors: Meritorious Service Award, TPA, 2001 — Metro Nashville Public Education Foundation Principals Grant, 1999 — Frist Foundation Principal Award, 1998 — HCA Principal Award Recipient, 1996 — Runner-Up, MNPS Teacher of the Year, 1992 — Dodson Elementary School Teacher of the Year, 1992 — *Tennessean* Teacher of the Week, 1991 — Who's Who in American Universities and Colleges, 1982

Civic/Community Honors: Old Hickory Area Chamber of Commerce (Co-President, 2003; Member, 1998-present) — PENCIL Foundation Board of Directors, 2002-present — Madison-Rivergate Chamber of Commerce, 2009-present

Education: Ed.D., Administration & Supervision, Tennessee State University (TSU), 1991 — M.Ed., Elem. Ed., TSU, 1984 — B.S., Elem. Ed., Lipscomb University, 1982 — Postdoctoral Training/Certification, Tennessee Prospective Superintendents Academy, 2010

Educators' Reflections on Learning to Read Can Encourage Stronger School Reading Programs

Reading proficiency is considered fundamental to success in school and the workplace. American workers have seen an economy that has evolved from a society with abundant jobs in agriculture and manufacturing to an age of information requiring high literacy competencies. The dynamics of the 21st Century global economy emphasize the need for both affective and pedagogically sound strategies for fostering reading achievement (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007). For example, approximately 18% of individuals with no more than basic reading skills are employed in professional and business sectors of the economy as compared to 60% of individuals with proficient literacy skills (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). Not surprisingly, adults with lower levels of literacy competencies earn significantly lower salaries than those with higher capability levels (Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007). Economic well being is highly important; however, high levels of literacy are critically important for individual development, academic opportunities, career choices, and participation in society over a lifetime. In this light, a comprehensive review of empirical research and theory led Adams (1990) to conclude that reading "is the key to education, and education is the key to success for both individuals and a democratic society" (p. 13).

Despite the importance of literacy, there appears to be a decline in literacy among young Americans today. In this light, Bauerlein (2008; 2011) determined that excessive orientation toward video formats experienced by many children dampens the spirit and lulls creative instincts while eroding the context in which book reading is respected. Bauerlein further suggested that highly predictable and routine video oriented activities diminish thoughtful social and creative interaction. In addition, Bauerlein concluded that the video-oriented leisure habits of today's youth pull them ever further from their studies. In this light, Weil (2011) encouraged the practice of fostering participation of children and adults in spontaneous, engaging, and not so predictable activities. In comparing the messages of Bauerlein and Weil to what we have experienced, we have seen, all too often, children inundated with unimaginatively developed worksheets and excessive use of video slides. Narratives of school personnel relative to learning to read echo what Bauerlein and Weil suggested.

We believe that the development of reading skills relies largely on home environment, recruiting and retaining exceptional teachers, and providing appropriate educational support. In addition, the leadership of school principals, assistant principals, and district office administrators is essential. Educators realize that reading proficiency enhances learning in all subjects. Although reading is taught in elementary schools, fostering reading competencies is generally not a focus in middle school and high school. Reading and writing are generally not taught as separate subjects past the eighth grade and content area teachers often do not feel they have either the time or the need to include reading instruction in their specific course content (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007). Moreover, school leaders might have little training in the teaching of reading and the other language arts before they are licensed by state agencies.

State departments of education work to establish reading standards while school district personnel strive to meet those standards. In this light, we want to determine what school leaders can do to enhance those efforts. We believe that when school leaders rekindle memories of how they learned to read, they will be more able and inclined to lead school literacy improvement efforts with greater enthusiasm. We have determined that encouraging school leaders to write a short memoir concerning how they, themselves, became readers can foster greater appreciation and understanding of literacy instruction.

School leaders play a vital role in providing the atmosphere and encouraging the pedagogical expertise that fosters reading proficiency at all levels of schooling. Effective school leaders are the ones who make literacy a school priority by impacting the development of leadership skills among faculty. Principals and district leaders are responsible for providing professional development opportunities that support school-wide literacy goals. They also have a direct impact on promoting school, community, and home partnerships. All of these efforts can positively support the development of reading proficiency in students at all levels.

We invited school leaders to write their story of reading and suggested the title "My Life as a Reader". Modern social theory emphasizes the importance of story, often referred to as narrative in the research literature. Interpretation of story as an approach to understanding human development and changes in human behavior is widely encouraged. Experiences of humans all over the world are given expression through storytelling (White & Epston, 1990). Concerning literacy, Carlsen and Sherrill (1988) provided much evidence concerning the vital role of reading experiences in enhancing the lives of individuals, both from an academic and personal perspective. They established the link between early reading experiences and the development of confidence, competence, and a love of life-long reading. This is supported by the concept of self-efficacy developed by Bandura (1997, 2001) who determined that success is enhanced when learners see themselves as competent, capable, joyful participants in the world around them.

The 40 school leaders in the context of this study are identified as principals, assistant principals, and district office administrators enrolled in leadership classes at the educational specialist and doctoral levels. The narrative format was chosen because we wanted to encourage thoughtful responses without the emotional and academic constraints of a formal paper. Our directions were deliberately vague because the goal was to identify factors that school leaders perceived as influential in the development of their reading competencies and attitudes toward reading. The only directions given were that the story had to be at least 500 words in length, typed, and clearly focused on the topic.

The primary question guiding our analysis was: What experiences were common to the school participants in this study relative to learning to read? We explored the depth of the common experiences and the influence on the school leaders' current reading habits. Analysis of the stories of those school leaders, all of whom considered themselves

competent and enthusiastic readers, revealed common themes. We believe that these themes have implications for all school leaders, especially those who work with teachers and students in the primary and elementary grades. The three major themes presented below appeared in the writing of nearly all of the respondents.

1. A sense of emotional security and the development of positive, interpersonal relationships developed around books.
2. Books became a means of imaginative escape without distractions from technology.
3. The writers, as they gained competence, read to others encouraging the development of a stream of readers inspiring readers.

Most notable throughout the data is the influence of adult role models in fostering a love of reading, the sense of emotional security provided by reading, and the development of positive interpersonal relationships. Words such as passion, love, immersed, mesmerized, and involved were used to describe influential adults. Parents and grandparents were often cited as influential in the development of reading competencies and the love of reading. Common throughout the stories were accounts of school leaders being read to by their parents, and, in turn, reading aloud to their own children. Reading aloud was a critical factor in fostering enjoyment of books. The stories told by our school leaders confirm what researchers have been determining for a long time. For example, extensive review of research led The National Academy of Education (1984) to conclude that:

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. ... The benefits are greatest when the child is an active participant, engaging in discussions about stories, learning to identify letters and words, and talking about the meanings of words. (p. 23)

Many school leaders reported that their parents encouraged them to read aloud to them. Confirming what Durkin (1966) concluded, a nearly universal theme among participants is that early experiences with books and being read to by more competent readers fostered both their confidence and competence as readers. In addition, school leaders confirmed that "people begin developing knowledge that they will use to read during their earliest interactions with families and communities" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2004, p.1). School leaders reported that these reading experiences were shared experiences – adults read with the child, not to the child. This dynamic interaction between the child and adult enhanced the reading experience. Anecdotes were written about trips to book stores, book fairs, and libraries with a parent who not only loved to read, but recognized the importance of reading from an educational standpoint and the pleasure inherent in reading. Consequently, these school leaders indicated their desire to provide the same experiences for their

children and grandchildren. For example, a school leader wrote:

My father is probably the one who influenced me the most in my love of reading. When I was small, he would read things to me that were way over my head: newspapers, horticulture articles, and Bible excerpts. Then he would explain what he had read to me. Later on, he would take me to the book store and buy me anything from comics to magazines to entire series of books. Often, he would read the books too and we would have in-depth discussions about the themes, characters, and meanings in the story. These are some of my fondest memories

On the other hand, some of the school leaders did not develop interest in reading for pleasure until middle school or later. Alarming, many school leaders reported moving away from reading during their middle school and high school years. They cited compulsory reading of books which did not interest them and subsequent assignments that they often found tedious and uninspiring. For example:

"I found it difficult to have my reading choices dictated by the teacher."

"I had a teacher who only let us read what she wanted us to read. I was interested in other things."

The positive emotional connection between child and adult role model (whether parent, grandparent, or teacher) was reported in vivid terms. For example:

"My mother read to us before we were born."

"I sat on my grandfather's lap as he read to me and I felt safe."

"We knew the teacher loved us when she read aloud to us."

The feeling of security and love was also a factor in the desire to pass along the love of reading. One writer explained that she takes her daughter to bookstores just as her mother took her. Another writer recounted how she is exposing her son to the same books she read as a child.

I hope/believe that I have instilled that same love of reading in my own children (although they look at me like I'm crazy when I suggest they read the whole book through on the first day they receive it!). I buy my children books every year for Christmas presents, and at other times throughout the year.

Many writers stated that reading provided a means of escape from everyday life by allowing their imagination and curiosity to develop.

"As I grew older, books became a means of escape for me. Books allowed me to escape problems with health, relationships, and life in general."

"I take pleasure in reading since I can envision myself as the characters in the book and compose my imagination with visions of what I think the storyline should be. Reading provides one the ability to create a chronicle in thought."

Educators' Reflections on Learning to Read Can Encourage Stronger School Reading Programs - continued

The opportunity to have the time to read during childhood was attributed by several writers to the fact that television viewing time was strictly limited or virtually non-existent in the home. "Today, technologies such as television and video games have replaced reading. Why should children take the time to develop pictures from words when the images are there at their fingertips without any effort at all?"

The final theme we identified was of reciprocity: readers inspiring readers. School leaders explained the pleasure they receive when others are influenced by their reading choices. For example:

"Some of my favorite childhood memories of my father are going to the book store together and having discussions about the Hardy Boys series, the Nancy Drew series, and the Star Wars series. Later on, during my teenage years, he introduced me to the Chronicles of Narnia, The Knights of the Round Table series, and The Lord of the Rings series. He even broadened his own horizons by tolerating my teenage fascination with horror writers like Stephen King, Dean Koontz, and Ann Rice. He read several books by these authors, just so we could discuss them together – and we still do that and I still treasure those times. This past semester, my father read Leadership Strategies of Attila the Hun after I told him I was reading it for a class."

Implications and Conclusions

Our goal was to identify factors that encouraged school leaders to learn to read and enhance their competencies as they became more established readers. Insights gained through memories and writing about how they learned to read are highly valuable in informing school leaders as they lead and support literacy initiatives in schools. In other words, experiences in learning to read inform theory. The link between early reading experiences and the development of confidence, competence, and a love of life-long reading has been established (Carlsen & Sherrill, 1988). This study can encourage school leaders to write their own My Life as a Reader memoir and, in turn, reflect on their story as it relates to the reading program in their schools. In this light, school leaders might more clearly understand the problems of some struggling/reluctant readers who, more than likely, did not enjoy abundant early opportunities to experience a print rich environment or encouragement from interested adults.

Not surprisingly, school leaders' perceptions of learning to read reflect what Rasinski (2010) described as scaffolding experiences. Through scaffolding, a more competent reader models, encourages, and provides opportunities for a developing reader to move from total dependence on the more competent reader to independent reading. For example, one writer recalled:

"When I was about three or four years old my parents gave me a copy of a book called Leo the Late Bloomer. I remember asking to hear "Leo" night after night at bedtime and eventually I wanted to read it to my parents. I could look at the pictures and tell the story. I loved the pictures and still have a copy of this great book."

It is interesting to note, for most of these school leaders, the influence of school was not the primary factor in fostering interest and early competence in learning to read and enjoying reading as a lifelong activity. One writer summed up her experiences as follows:

"The art of learning to read often happens without the reader's knowledge. It's almost as if one goes to sleep one night being a nonreader and wakes up the next morning with all the skills needed to be a reader. Thinking back over my life about when and how I learned to read, I really cannot remember the exact time. Learning to read just seemed to happen. I understand that through phonemic awareness, sight word recognition, and lots of practice, I was able to learn to read. However, learning to read and becoming a reader are two different things."

Most of the writers emphasized the influence of interested adults, usually parents, but often grandparents, in fostering a love of books, interest in reading, and the social climate that made reading seem to be a highly worthwhile endeavor. On the other hand, there were some writers who largely credited a teacher for inspiring them to want to read. This was usually the result of a teacher reading engaging material in a classroom setting. Virtually all of the writers describe learning to enjoy listening to books being read aloud in a comfortable social setting, whether at home or in a school environment. This evidence is not surprising and is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) findings concerning the influence of positive social interaction for enhancing cognitive development among children.

Overall analysis of findings suggests that much support must be provided to young children in learning to read and appreciate literature. The writers, all successful learners, emphasized the importance of early positive experiences with books and socially positive interaction with more competent readers. Please see Appendix A for a full length memoir. This writer chose to emphasize the relationship between reading and writing. The writers generally indicated that because of their early experiences they were confident that they would be successful upon entering school. The authors further suggest that all school leaders be encouraged to write their own story about how they became readers. In addition, this activity can be a valuable and entertaining school in-service project that encourages reflection as well as a community building within the school.

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Appendix A

My Life as a Reader and Writer

Because I am the youngest of four children in my family, their influence on my early reading was remarkable. It wasn't because they read to me or did any number of things that others have said their siblings did to help them be early reader. They began school when parents had to buy text books for their children, so we had stacks of basal readers in our home. These books came in very handy once I had mastered the initial skills of reading. Learning to read actually came about for me through writing.

My oldest brother joined the Army just before I turned four. He was my absolute favorite and I was crushed when he went off to boot camp. Long distance telephone calls were very expensive in the early '50s, so we were seldom able to speak to each other. Letter writing was the way to go. I knew I couldn't write a letter, but he encouraged me to try. At first, I just scribbled—shorthand—as he called it and he assured me that he could understand it. But, I started to notice that he didn't always answer my many questions, so the doubts set in.

The previous Christmas I had received a chalkboard easel with the alphabet painted across the top so I had already mastered writing the A-B-Cs. With that skill I approached my mother about helping me write "real" letters to my brother. She provided me with a small cardboard-backed paper pad and pencils. Armed with my implements, I followed her from room to room in the house and outside to the garden or wherever she was working. So I could be comfortable and stay out of the dirt, I carried along my tiny stool, plopped it down within ear shot of Mama, and proceeded to ask, "How do you spell....?" Sometimes within a short span of time, I would ask her to spell a word the second time. When that happened she did the absolutely guaranteed thing to teach any child to read. She responded, "I've already spelled that for you. Go back and re-read your letter and find that word." And I did. Soon I was looking in those basal readers for the spelling of words I wanted to put into letters for my brother.

I never learned phonics, but I had the longest list of mastered "sight" words my first grade teacher had ever seen, and I could write above average sentences. Now I believe that the skill of writing should come before reading and the secret to good writing is finding the child's interest and purpose. I see this philosophy in effective writing/reading programs such as Reggie Routman's *Writing Essentials*. And I am still appalled that states want to test our students' ability to write with canned prompts that resonate with few children. Purpose and audience, people, purpose and audience!!

Quantum Learning: Making Prodigious Strides in Education



Conducted by: Dr. Tonja Y. Trice

The Problem

Educators on the front line are battling students who are over stimulated outside of the classroom through too many hours of television, video games and computers. While at one time teaching students in a classroom with straight rows and a tranquil atmosphere was a standard practice recently, teachers have had an arduous time gaining and retaining the attention of their students. Rosen (2000) conducted an empirical study on how video and arcade games can impact students' behavior and found that too many hours of video games and television has increased hyperactivity in children. A suggestion came out of the study on what type of environment schools might use to avoid disengaging over-stimulated students, and the author suggested instructional techniques that capture and maintain a student's attention. The environment suggested in the study closely parallels Quantum Learning.

The Solution

Quantum Learning is a systematic approach to learning that prepares teachers to augment their own personal style of teaching to enhance classroom experiences (LeTellier & Parks, 2007). The methods that are the foundation of Quantum Learning are ingrained in brain-based research, music, art, positive feedback, role playing, cooperative learning, the Eight Keys of Success, Twenty Effective Reinforcement Moves, and Sixty Effective State Management Moves that can help ensure success in the classroom. Quantum Learning has taken the best practices of education and the most invigorating practices of education from the early philosophers and combined them to reflect the most successful practices available today. Research indicated that students who are immersed in a Quantum Learning environment have higher test scores and retain more information than their peers who are not (DePorter, 2003). Even the students who are not expected to excel are making tremendous strides in classrooms where Quantum Learning is practiced (Meyer, Pedigo, & Terrell, 2005).

Research Study

Action research was conducted at a rural middle school in Sumner County to determine Quantum Learning's effectiveness on the seventh and eighth grade students in Reading and Language Arts classes. The study commenced in August 2010 and ended in May 2011. There were eight classes included in the study. The

design consisted of four eighth-grade classes and four seventh-grade classes. Two seventh- and eighth-grade classes were taught using Quantum Learning, and two seventh- and eighth-grade classes were taught using Differentiated Instruction only. The assessments were formative and summative. The Orchard Benchmark was administered three times during the year, and the TCAP assessment was administered in February and April. The TCAP Writing Assessment was administered in February to the eighth graders, and the TCAP multiple-choice test was administered in the spring of the year.

The data showed favorable results for Quantum Learning's methodology. The students in the classes where the teachers taught using Quantum Learning's methods (treatment group) outscored the students who were taught using differentiated instruction only (control group). The results showed a strong correlation between Quantum Learning and higher test scores. There were significant findings on the scores of the seventh grade TCAP tests for the students who were taught using Quantum Learning. Consistently, there were additional significant findings run to compare the control and treatment groups on TCAP scores of the eighth grade students. The students in the treatment group accordingly scored significantly higher than the students in the control group on the TCAP writing assessment in February and multiple-choice test in the spring. These findings further substantiated the impact of the treatment. Quantum Learning not only showed consistently higher differences on the scores of the seventh and eighth grade students on the TCAP test during the duration of the study, but it also helped to solidify the findings that Quantum Learning Network reported when it found that the Quantum Learning model has a consistent impact on student achievement. The impact included statistically and educationally significant gains in reading, mathematics, writing and more comprehensive measures of core academic achievement (Quantum Learning Network, 2006).

There was a significant interaction found between the Orchard test and condition for the seventh and eighth grade students in the group who took the assessment three times during the school year. The students in the treatment group had higher scores overall on the Orchard test than the students in the control group each time the test was given. Once again, Quantum Learning showed a significant impact on students and their performance level on required assessments.

Finally, student and teacher surveys were administered to evaluate Quantum Learning's effectiveness. The seventh grade students who were in the classes with the Quantum Learning teachers reported increase confidence levels while completing class work, an increase in the amount of assignments completed during the year, a greater interest in learning, a higher level of understanding, and an increase in the amount of fun while learning. The eighth grade students in the treatment group reported they paid more attention in class, had the ability to memorize more

information, completed more class work, and understood more information, and enjoyed the learning process over the students who were not taught using Quantum Learning. Conclusively, teachers who were Quantum Instructors reported they took more risks, made learning more meaningful, had the ability to interest their students, had better classroom management skills, and noticed an increase in their students' ability to retain information over the teachers in the control group.

Conclusion

The results of this study have shown a strong correlation between Quantum Learning's instruction and an increase in student retention and success in the classroom. During the duration of the study, the students who were instructed using Quantum Learning's methodology scored higher on the TCAP test and Orchard Benchmark assessments in comparison with the students who were taught using differentiated instruction only. The results of this study are encouraging and provide educators with additional resources to educate their students on a level that will encourage success and positive results. Quantum Learning has taken the best practices of education and has

provided the research and training which allows teachers to augment their personal style of instruction to maximize classroom experiences.

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Quantum Learning®

Transforming Education. Transforming Lives.


Professional Development that Improves Instructional Best Practice

Attendees:

- develop student skills in critical and analytical thinking
- make difficult content easier to comprehend and retain
- increase percentage of effectiveness in RTI Tier 1 and reduce Tier 2
- improve student study, test prep and test taking skills
- increase student engagement and motivation to learn
- improve student behavior and appropriate participation

Student Improvement following Quantum Learning Implementation:

- 89% increased self-esteem
- 73% improved grades
- 68% higher attendance overall
- 66% demonstrated better behavior



"Our students scored 90.2% in Science (42.9% prior year) on TCAPS." –Elementary Principal, TN

"We achieved 94% passing rate on the state math test this year after QL training." –Principal, TX

"We increased our API scores 110 points over the last two years after QL." –Principal, CA

To learn more about how your school can achieve this level of results, contact your Tennessee Regional Quantum Learning Consultant, Carol Fetzer, at 800-285-3276, ext. 106 or cfetzer@QLN.com. Visit our website at www.QLN.com.

Reflections on a Half-Century of School Reform:



History and Impact of Three Major Reform Movements

Over the last 50 years, Americans have tried various approaches to increase children's chances for success by improving the schools. Of the many reforms undertaken, three major movements equity-based reform, school choice, and standards-based reform have had broad support and considerable impact. I've been closely involved in the equity and standards-based reform movements and have studied and carefully followed the development and implementation of all three. So the analysis that follows is based on both personal observations and objective research.

Equity-based reform

In the 1960s and 1970s, the federal government enacted a variety of programs and policies to improve educational equity for minority children, poor children, children with disabilities, children with limited English proficiency, and women and girls. The federal government stepped in because local school districts and state governments were not providing these students with equality of opportunity.

This movement took shape in the 1960s when the dominant domestic policy issues were expanding civil rights for African Americans and reducing poverty. The Civil Rights Act in 1964 marked a breakthrough by not only eliminating officially-sanctioned race-based discrimination, including separate school systems for white and black students in the southern states, but also opening the door to remedies for past discrimination.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) instituted another tool for equity-based education reform the use of separate, or categorical, aid programs to provide extra educational services for specific groups of students at risk of educational problems. Title I of this act introduced a flagship program to improve education Reflections on a Half-Century of School Reform 2 for children from low-income families, and this was followed in subsequent years by other smaller programs focusing on the needs of additional groups of students.

Another major law, enacted in 1975 to ensure a free, appropriate public education for children with disabilities, blended civil rights protections for these children with categorical federal aid for their education. Unlike Title I and other categorical programs, this statute, later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), incorporated strong procedural rights and the authority for parents to sue in court if their children did not receive services guaranteed under the law. Also unlike other categorical programs, IDEA obligated school districts to pay for the range of services agreed to in a students individual education plan, regardless of the level of federal and state funding earmarked for the education of children with disabilities.

Title IX of the education amendments of 1972 was also heavily influenced by the civil rights movement. This law forbids recipients of federal aid from discriminating against girls and women, but unlike IDEA or Title I, Title IX provides no major financial assistance for programs for girls and women.

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that children must be given a meaningful education regardless of their language background. The Lau remedies, taking the name of that case, lay out how school districts can offer such aid to students who do not speak English. Backing up this obligation on school districts is a federal program under ESEA to provide aid for educating English language learners.

As this brief history illustrates, the equity-oriented 1960s and 1970s saw the creation of categorical aid programs, programs of aid backed up by legal protections, and civil rights statutes that apply regardless of whether states and districts receive additional aid. The latter two strategies have produced the greatest success because they are more forceful, and they continue to be used today.

As a result of all of these strategies, discrimination against African Americans and other students from minority backgrounds is outlawed and prosecuted if found. Girls and women have made great advances in education and are now finishing high school and going to college at higher rates than males. Students with disabilities are mostly educated in regular

By Jack Jennings, Retired President and CEO, Center on Education Policy

classrooms, and their rates of attendance at institutions of higher education have reached record levels.

Although test scores have gone up over time for poor and minority children, it is difficult to make a direct connection between these increases in academic achievement and the federal programs intended to help these groups. Among the factors making this task challenging is that Title I and other aids for students at risk have traditionally been treated as separate add-ons to school districts regular education services. Their impact has also been muted because their funding never reached the large amounts originally conceived. Finally, although the law requires comparability of services among schools, over 40% of Title I schools spend less money on instructional personnel than non-Title I schools do.

In sum, the equity programs of the 1960s and 1970s improved education for many students, especially when those efforts were backed up by civil rights guarantees. But they had two major shortcomings. First, their impact was constrained because they became separate; add-on services funded with limited federal aid and placed on top of inequitably distributed state and local funding. Second, by their very nature, categorical funding and individual guarantees of civil rights were not designed to generally improve the broader educational system.

School choice

The choice movement, the second major school reform, is based on the premise that parents ought to choose, at public expense, the school their child attends. Some proponents contend that parental choice will bring market forces Center on Education Policy 3 to bear on education, weeding out ineffective schools by promoting competition. Others advocate choice out of a desire to pick a school for their children that is compatible with their religious beliefs. Still others believe that low-income parents should have the same right as higher-income families to pick a better school for their children.

School choice can take many forms, including publicly funded vouchers for private school tuition, charter schools, tax credits to pay for private school tuition, and public school choice programs. The first form is the most controversial.

In 1990 the Wisconsin state legislature was the first to enact a statute allowing public funds to be used in Milwaukee to educate children from low-income families at public or private schools. In 2011 this program was expanded to encompass more school districts in the state.

In 1995 the Ohio legislature followed Wisconsin's lead by enacting a voucher program for poor students in Cleveland. In 1999, the Florida legislature enacted a general state voucher program that was later found unconstitutional by the state supreme court, as well as a program of vouchers for students with disabilities that remains in place. Since then, several other states and cities have enacted various types of voucher programs, including some that have been declared unconstitutional by state courts. Most recently, in 2011, the Indiana legislature created a broad reaching voucher program, open to students statewide who meet certain income requirements.

Educational choice has also expanded through the growth of charter schools, which exhibit aspects of both public and private education. Charter schools are public because they are generally created or chartered by a governmental agency and rely on public funds for their operation. They must also follow certain legal requirements, such as testing their students for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), and not teaching religion. They are similar to private schools in that they may be free from requirements placed on public schools in such areas as choosing their student bodies and employing non-union teachers. They are also mostly controlled by boards that are not publicly elected and can be managed by profit-making companies as well as non-profit entities.

The first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992, and by 2011 their enrollments constituted 4% of the total U.S. elementary and secondary school population nationwide. Although not affecting many students, charters tend to be concentrated in certain geographic areas, such as in Dayton, Ohio, where one-third of the students are in charters, and Washington, D.C. where 40% of the students attend charter schools.

For those who favor charters because they believe that these policies will provide a better education for children than regular public schools, the facts are discouraging. Only 17% of charter schools produced higher test scores than

Reflections on a Half-Century of School Reform: (continued)

comparable public schools, according to a comprehensive national review of such schools. Moreover, 37% of charters produced lower scores than public schools, and the remainder showed no difference from regular public schools.

Regarding vouchers, religious proponents are satisfied by just having the right to use public funds to send their children to religious schools. But, for those seeking higher achievement, the results are similar to charters: test scores for students who attend private schools with vouchers are generally no higher than those for students with similar characteristics who remained in the public school. And, in those studies that do show higher scores, these gains are inconsistent across grade levels, students of different races and ethnicities, and subject areas.

The choice movement shows no signs of slowing down, despite evidence that its promise of producing better education has not been realized. Parents may be pleased with their choice of school, but in general their children's achievement is no greater than if they had stayed in the regular public school. It is an interesting case of convictions trumping evidence.

Reflections on a Half-Century of School Reform 4

Standards-based reform

The original purpose of the standards-based reform movement was to identify what students should know and be able to do at specific grade levels and to measure whether they were mastering that content. As the movement matured, it took on the additional purpose of applying consequences to schools whose students did not show mastery. In this way the standards movement morphed into test-driven accountability.

Standards-based reform originated in the late 1980s when the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics wrote a set of national standards for mathematics. The nations governors and the George H.W. Bush Administration subsequently adopted that approach for other subject areas and proposed the adoption of national academic education standards and national tests to measure how well students were learning, but this effort was not successful.

Bush's successor as president, Bill Clinton, continued to advocate for the basic approach of using standards and tests to reform education, but with a key variation. Rather than promoting national standards and tests, he urged states to develop their own standards and tests to measure student proficiency. Clinton's legislation was enacted, but, after great debate, that law did not include proposals to require states to provide the educational opportunities for students to reach those standards.

By the time George W. Bush was elected president, all of the states were either in the process of implementing standards and aligned tests or had done so. The No Child Left Behind Act proposed by Bush, ramped up the intensity of Clintons laws by prescribing more extensive grade-level testing, setting a deadline of 2014 for all students to be proficient in English language arts and mathematics, and mandating specific actions that schools and school districts had to take if they did not reach the state-prescribed yearly goals for student proficiency.

The enactment of NCLB in 2002 was a turning point for the standards movement. Instead of academic standards serving as a focal point to raise the quality of instruction in schools, test-driven accountability became the norm. Teachers understood that if their students did not pass the annual state accountability tests, their schools would be labeled as failing by the news media because of the penalties prescribed by NCLB. In 2011, nearly half of U.S. schools did not meet their state targets for student proficiency.

The standards and testing movement has resulted in clearer expectations for what should be learned in school. For the first time in American history, every state has made public its academic standards in the crucial areas of English language arts and mathematics. Moreover, the problems that emerged from having different standards in each of the 50 states spurred the nations governors and chief state school officers to develop Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics, which have now been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia.

The standards movement also has promoted greater equity. The same academic expectations are set for all students in a state, and far greater attention is being directed to narrowing the achievement gap between various groups of students.

10 Ways to Change the Minds of Tech-Reluctant Staff

I recently ran across this on-line article which had some good take-aways for me. I wanted to share with our readers the 10 major points and a bit more information in #2 which came from a Tennessee Principal who gave permission to use his comments. I hope you find it useful.
- cp

Start small, make training personally relevant, pair staff with knowledgeable co-workers and keep it fun, readers recommend

We often hear about tech-savvy educators and administrators who have an array of best practices and whose love for technology is evident. But as anyone who's ever been part of a school or district knows, not all teachers and administrators are as comfortable or familiar with technology.

In a recent Question of the Week, we asked our tech-savvy readers: How do you get tech-reluctant teachers and administrators to use technology effectively? Here are our readers' top answers (edited for brevity).

1. Use technology for personal reasons first.
2. Emphasize how it helps them specifically.
"As a principal, I make time to offer and teach the [professional development] myself. I make the training mandatory and ensure that I do the trainings in a helping tone as opposed to an

administrative tone. If teachers feel comfortable integrating the technology, and feel as though they are supported, they are more willing to incorporate it [with] buy-in as opposed to something we have to do. I also, as much as I can, go into classrooms and model lessons using technology. I try to make a point to emphasize to the teachers that time on task increases learning for students. Engagement = student success. Technology, when implemented correctly in classrooms, can yield large amounts of time on task!"

- Dr. Chris Marczak, principal, McGavock Elementary

3. Take small steps.
4. Pair staff members with a knowledgeable co-worker. *
5. Let students lead.
6. Allow paid leave for educators to get up to speed.
7. Be sure to offer continuous training and support.
8. Plan a fun event.
9. Realize technology can be intimidating.
10. Make sure the technology works and is easily available.

* Recently we invited a teacher from another school to show us how he used in his classroom the recent technologies we had just purchased. My teachers felt very comfortable asking questions of a colleague. - cp

Results on state tests are generally increasing although this is not matched with the same level of increase on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Despite these benefits, the major problem with standards-based reform is that it has become test-driven reform. The accountability provisions in particular have created a culture in which teachers' actions are motivated by the need to meet annual state targets for the percentage of their students that must score proficient on state tests; if too many Center on Education Policy 5 students fall short, the school will fail to make adequate yearly progress, or AYP. In the most egregious cases, such as in Atlanta, this has led to teachers falsifying test results. In other cases, teachers have set aside their regular lessons during the weeks before the state test in order to spend the time prepping students on material that is likely to be tested. In many cases, it has meant a narrowing of the curriculum to place greater emphasis on English language arts and mathematics, the two subjects that must be tested under NCLB.

Other aspects of NCLB are also troublesome. Schools are equally labeled as failures whether just one group of students, such as students with disabilities, fails to meet achievement targets or their entire student body falls short.

By 2011, opposition to the law had become so intense that some relief from its provisions had to be provided. Since Congress had not reached agreement on changes, the Obama administration took action to grant waivers from some of the most troublesome provisions of the law.

Clearly, standards-based reform has gone astray. Few would argue that it has broadly raised the quality of American schools. **(For the full article go to the TPA website <http://www.tnprinassoc.org> for the link)**

Study Links Academic Setbacks to Middle School Transition

While policymakers and researchers alike have focused on improving students' transition into high school, a new study of Florida schools suggests the critical transition problem may happen years before, when students enter middle school.

The study, part of the Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Papers Series at Harvard University, found that students moving from grade 5 into middle school show a "sharp drop" in math and language arts achievement in the transition year that plagues them as far out as 10th grade, even risking thwarting their ability to graduate high school and go on to college. Students who make a school transition in 6th grade are absent more often than those who remain in one school through 8th grade, and they are more likely to drop out of school by 10th grade.

"I don't see eliminating the transition at the high school level as important or beneficial as eliminating the transition at the middle school level," said Martin R. West, an assistant education professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a co-author of the study.

"That to me is a really robust finding," said David L. Hough, the managing editor of the *Middle Grades Research Journal* and a dean emeritus of Missouri State University's college of education, in Springfield. "All these people are focusing on the transition to high school; it looks to me like they need to be focusing on that transition to middle school."

Mr. Hough, who was not involved in the Harvard study, has been developing a database of nearly 2,000 schools covering middle-level grades across 25 states. He said that roughly 6,000 schools nationwide are structured in the K-8 configuration and 8,000 as 6-8. While so-called "elemiddle" K-8 schools had been spreading more rapidly than regular middle schools in recent years, Mr. Hough said district moves to swap middle for elemiddle schools have "leveled off" since 2010.

For the Florida study, Mr. West and Guido Schwerdt, a researcher with the Ifo Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich in Germany, used the state's longitudinal database to track more than 450,000 students in the state's public schools who proceeded from grades 3 to 10 between 2000-01 and 2008-09.

They found students who attended elementary schools ending at grade 5 had an early edge over those attending K-8 schools in mathematics and language arts, but their performance in both subjects dropped dramatically when they switched to middle school in 6th grade. After the 6th grade transition, middle school students fell by .12 standard deviations in math and .09 standard deviations in reading compared with students at K-8 schools, and then that gap continued to widen throughout middle school and into high school.

Moreover, students who had attended a middle school were 18 percent more likely than students who attended a K-8 school before high school to not enroll in grade 10 after attending grade 9—an indicator that they may have dropped out.

While the middle school drop was most pronounced in urban schools, Mr. West said the same general pattern was repeated in suburban and rural schools.

The Florida findings are "almost identical" to the results of a smaller, 2010 study of New York City public schools, Mr. West said. In it, Columbia University researchers found that students who started in K-5 or K-6 schools performed slightly better than their K-8 peers in math and language arts in 5th grade, but when they moved to a middle school, the K-8 and middle school students changed places, and the achievement gap between those groups increased through 8th grade.

Middle Versus High

Mr. Hough has found there is "much popular experience about the shock students experience when first entering middle school from an elementary school, but precious little empirical data have been collected to examine it."

Rather, he said, most researchers and policymakers focus on the transition into high school. In part, that may be because most students who drop out of high school do so in 9th or 10th grades, yet the Florida study found that the transition from middle to high school was much less traumatic for students than the one from elementary to middle school.

Florida students entering high school did see a drop in achievement, but it was temporary and only one-fifth the size of the drop seen during the middle school transition. "For the high school switchers, they suffer a little one-time drop but then recover," Mr. West said. "It looks like a much less disruptive transition than the one to middle school; the high school transition is not that different from what you'd see in a typical school transition."

The onset of puberty can exacerbate normal transition problems for younger students, according to Patti Kinney, an associate director of middle-level services at the National Association of Secondary School Principals, in Reston, Va. "You're looking at students making a transition during a time when tremendous physical, cognitive, and emotional transitions are going on at the same time," Ms. Kinney said. "There's a wide variety of maturation among different children at that level."

In contrast, the Mountain View, Calif., research group EdSource found no difference between K-8 and 6-8 school achievement overall in its 2010 study of middle-grade achievement in California, "Gaining Ground in the Middle Grades," but it did find students often faced a tougher

transition into middle school than high school, according to Matthew Rosen, an EdSource senior research associate.

"The picture we got was schools that were having higher-achievement outcomes were being more intense and intentional about looking at a wider array of student data [during the middle school transition] and finding out what interventions were needed quickly," Mr. Rosen said.

Easing Transitions

For example, the 1,400-student La Merced Intermediate School, part of the Montebello Unified School District outside Los Angeles, asks the elementary teachers of all incoming 6th graders to fill out academic-history reports, including their previous grades and test scores, problem areas, favorite subjects, and extracurricular activities.

"Those sheets allow teachers to go, 'OK, what is the range of our students' interests and how do we get them involved in the activities that really resonate with their interests?'" Mr. Rosen said.

The teachers from the smaller elementary schools that feed into La Merced also accompany their 5th grade students on a site visit to the middle school, to help the students learn the campus layout and prepare for the differences in structure from one grade to the next.

For the Florida study, the researchers used a survey of principals to compare instructional practices at the various schools, but did not find much difference between practices or class sizes at K-8 and 6-8 schools. However, they did find that 6-8 middle schools had more than twice as many students at each grade level, 363, than the 125 students per grade on average at K-8 schools.

That larger grade-level group may make it harder to tailor instruction and ease the moves from grade to grade, Mr. West suggested.

Ms. Kinney of the NASSP said that effective transitions should be "a process, not an event."

"A lot of times, people talk about transition programs, and they are talking about what they are doing in 9th grade, when they really need to be working with their middle schools to support students much earlier," she said.

"Kids develop at their own rates; what's important is how you are personalizing that environment for them," Ms. Kinney said. "The grade configuration in a lot of ways is a secondary consideration."

The NASSP's *Breaking Ranks in the Middle* book on improving student achievement in middle grades calls for schools serving those grades to provide each student with a "personal adult advocate" to help him or her understand the changing academic requirements and social dynamics.

"It is easy for those who don't work regularly with middle-level students to forget that 6th graders are only five or six years removed from their teddy bears," *Breaking Ranks* notes, and "those who do work with middle-level students sometimes forget that, by the time students leave 'the middle,' the rigors of college are only four short years away."

Special coverage on the alignment between K-12 schools and postsecondary education is supported in part by a grant from the Lumina Foundation for Education, at www.luminafoundation.org.

Great Books and Common Core State Standards

I've found in trying to implement Common Core State Standards, the biggest selling point is that CCSS is about the "what" and not the "how." Teachers have the opportunity to insert their own creativity into their teaching. That can also be a stumbling point for teachers who are inexperienced or who haven't departed from the manuals enough to gain confidence. I recently saw a promo for Great Books that showed how their program is directly aligned with CCSS. Some Tennessee Teachers who have used this program in the past have done so in isolation simply for the sake of introducing well written literature. There is definitely nothing wrong with that. But if you are interested in seeing more on the connection between Great Books and Common Core State Standards, go to www.greatbooks.org for the full comparison. - cp

Enrichment Programs: Essential for Successful STEM Education

by Judi Colloredo
Regional Co-ordinator
Tennessee and Arkansas
Invent Now, Inc.

Twenty-two years ago, Camp Invention was founded to help promote a love of science, teamwork, and critical thinking. Recently, elementary schools focusing on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education have become an admired talking point among teachers and curriculum enthusiasts. At Camp Invention, each of our weeklong programs support STEM education, and we like to think we were a pioneer of this very topic.

Why a STEM Education?

The need for STEM-based learning opportunities is crucial. In our society, our dependence upon technology and science increases each day. It is vital that children have the educational opportunities to deepen their understanding about science and how it applies to their daily lives.

Today, Camp Invention has over 1200 sites in 49 states, proving the theory that STEM education is as important (and popular) as ever. A March 2011 poll completed by Your Congress-Your Health says that 74% of those surveyed consider STEM Education to be very important. And a topic that's been in the forefront of news headlines for years is how U.S. students tend to score low on standardized tests in science and math sections.

What can be done to change the U.S.'s history of below average test scores? Enrichment programs, motivation, and fun can be used to boost a passion for these topics. After all, when some students think of math and science, the word fun doesn't typically come to mind. Well-planned programs, like Camp Invention, build self-esteem, and show children that a passion for science is a remarkable quality. Having fun, while supporting STEM education, will help encourage future learning.

How to Plan Ahead with STEM

At Camp Invention, we target children in grades 1-6. These grades were chosen for a specific reason: at these ages, children are forming opinions of specific industries, their brains are still developing, and they are as enthusiastic as ever. These are also critical grades where students might get frustrated if they're not catching on as quickly as their peers. A bad experience early on with a subject might change their perception of that topic forever.

People, in general, tend to like a subject more when they find themselves excelling in it. Our post-Camp surveys reflect that children who like science have an even larger passion for STEM after the week is over. Whether they're learning the importance of instilling green qualities in eco-friendly buildings or developing engineering skills on a faux-island called Magnetropolis, children are challenged to think creatively and work together.

Our administration and staff embrace out-of-school time as a platform for hands-on experiences. Boys and girls who are able to satisfy their natural sense of curiosity throughout the summer are bound to enter their next school year with a better understanding and a higher level of appreciation for STEM education, as well as a new outlook on the importance of science in our environment.

To learn more about Camp Invention or to find a program near you, visit <http://www.campInvention.com>.

Seven Misconceptions About How Students Learn

By Valerie Strauss

Will Rogers once said, "It isn't what people don't know that hurts them. It's what they do know that just ain't so."

That's the introduction to a list of seven myths about learning on the Web site of the Independent Curriculum Group, which is part of a movement of leading private college preparatory schools with teacher-generated curriculum.

Many people — educators included — still cling to some of these misconceptions about learning because they base what they think on their own experiences in school, ignoring what 21st century science and experience are revealing.

Here are seven of the biggest myths about learning that, unfortunately, guide the way that many schools are organized in this era of standardized test-based public school reform. The list is from the group's Web site:

1. Basic Facts Come Before Deep Learning

This one translates roughly as, "Students must do the boring stuff before they can do the interesting stuff." Or, "Students must memorize before they can be allowed to think." In truth, students are most likely to achieve long-term mastery of basic facts in the context of engaging, student-directed learning.

2. Rigorous Education Means a Teacher Talking

Teachers have knowledge to impart, but durable learning is more likely when students talk, create, and integrate knowledge into meaningful projects. The art of a teacher is to construct ways for students to discover.

3. Covering It Means Teaching It

Teachers are often seduced by the idea that if they talk about a concept in class, they have taught it. At best, students get tentative ideas that will be quickly forgotten if not reinforced by a student-centered activity.

4. Teaching to Student Interests Means Dumbing It Down

If we could somehow see inside a student's brain, its circuitry would correspond to its knowledge. Since new learning always builds on what is already in the brain, teachers must relate classroom teaching to what students already know. Teachers who fail to do so, whether due to ignorance or in pursuit of a false idea of rigor, are running afoul of a biological reality.

5. Acceleration Means Rigor

Some schools accelerate strong students so that they can cover more material. Schools in the Independent Curriculum Group are more likely to ask such students to delve deeper into important topics. Deep knowledge lays a stronger foundation for later learning.

6. A Quiet Classroom Means Good Learning

Students sitting quietly may simply be zoned out -- if not immediately, then within 15 minutes. A loud classroom, if properly controlled, includes the voices of many students who are actively engaged.

7. Traditional Schooling Prepares Students for Life

Listening to teachers and studying for tests has little to do with life in the world of work. People in the work world create, manage, evaluate, communicate, and collaborate.

For Kids, Laughter Really May Be the Best Medicine



Scans show that humor activates parts of the brain linked to resilience, well-being in children

Specific areas of children's brains that are activated by humor have been identified by researchers in a first-of-a-kind study.

The findings, published Feb. 1 in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, will provide a base for understanding how humor and other positive emotions can affect a child's well-being, according to the Stanford University School of Medicine team.

"Humor is a very important component of emotional health, maintaining relationships, developing cognitive [brain] function and perhaps even medical health," senior study author Dr. Allan Reiss, director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences

Research at Stanford, said in a university news release.

A strong sense of humor is an important part of positive emotion and may help children to be more resilient, he noted.

"In particular, we think a balanced and consistent sense of humor may help children negotiate the difficult period of pre-adolescence and adolescence," Reiss said.

The researchers used functional MRI to scan the brains of 15 children, aged 6 to 12, while they watched short video clips that were categorized as funny, positive or neutral. The positive clips were rewarding to watch but not funny. The neutral clips were neither rewarding nor funny.

The brain scans showed that the funny videos activated two regions of the children's brains that also respond to humor in adults. However, these circuits aren't as developed in children.

Humor activated the children's mesolimbic regions, which process rewards, and the temporal-occipital-parietal junction, which processes perceived incongruities. Incongruities are things that go together that represent opposites (for example, many clowns emerging from a tiny car).

The positive videos activated the reward-processing area but not the area that processes incongruity. This suggests that incongruity -- a surprise for the brain -- is an important factor in humor, the researchers concluded.

"Negative emotional states such as depression or anxiety are compelling to study, but you can't completely understand why a child has emotional stability or instability until you look at both sides of the coin," Reiss said in the news release. "This work is setting the stage for helping us look at how humor predicts resilience and well-being."

NAESP and Crayola Offer Arts Education Grants

Applications are now being accepted for the Champion Creatively Alive Children grant program. The deadline for proposals is June 15, 2012. Sponsored by Crayola and NAESP, Champion Creatively Alive Children seeks to help educators integrate the arts across the curriculum to build students 21st century skills in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Up to 20 elementary schools will receive grants to implement, document, and share results of an innovative arts-infused project. Each grant includes \$2,500 and \$500 worth of Crayola products. The grant recipients will document outcomes via NAESP's website in order to help other educators develop promising practices.

Champion Creatively Alive Children encourages educators to explore a what if learning opportunity. For example, what if arts-infused learning thrived every day in schools? What if schools relied more on project-based authentic assessment rather than standardized tests? What if parents and schools found ways to document and articulate the value of creative experiences? The entries are judged on innovation, collaboration, and sustainability.

Among the 2011-2012 winners were projects about teaching citizenship principles through art, using art to restore a flood-devastated community, exploring international cultures through art, and creating puppets and clay-character animation inspired by international folktales.

Proposals must be submitted by principals who are NAESP members. Educators whose schools received a grant in 2011 are not eligible to apply in 2012 but are encouraged to become judges of 2012 proposals.
Dateline NAESP



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