

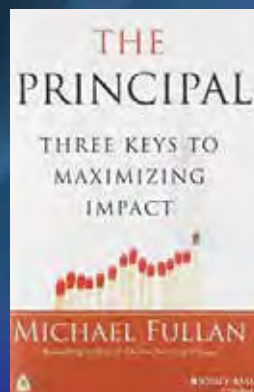
School Administrators Association of New York State

Vanguard

FALL
2014
Vol. 43 No. 3
Exploring
Educational
Leadership

BEST PRACTICES
PROVEN METHODS
STRATEGIES
GROWTH
LEADERSHIP
RESULTS

TRUE IMPACT



**BECOMING THE
LEAD LEARNER:
AN INTERVIEW WITH
MICHAEL FULLAN**

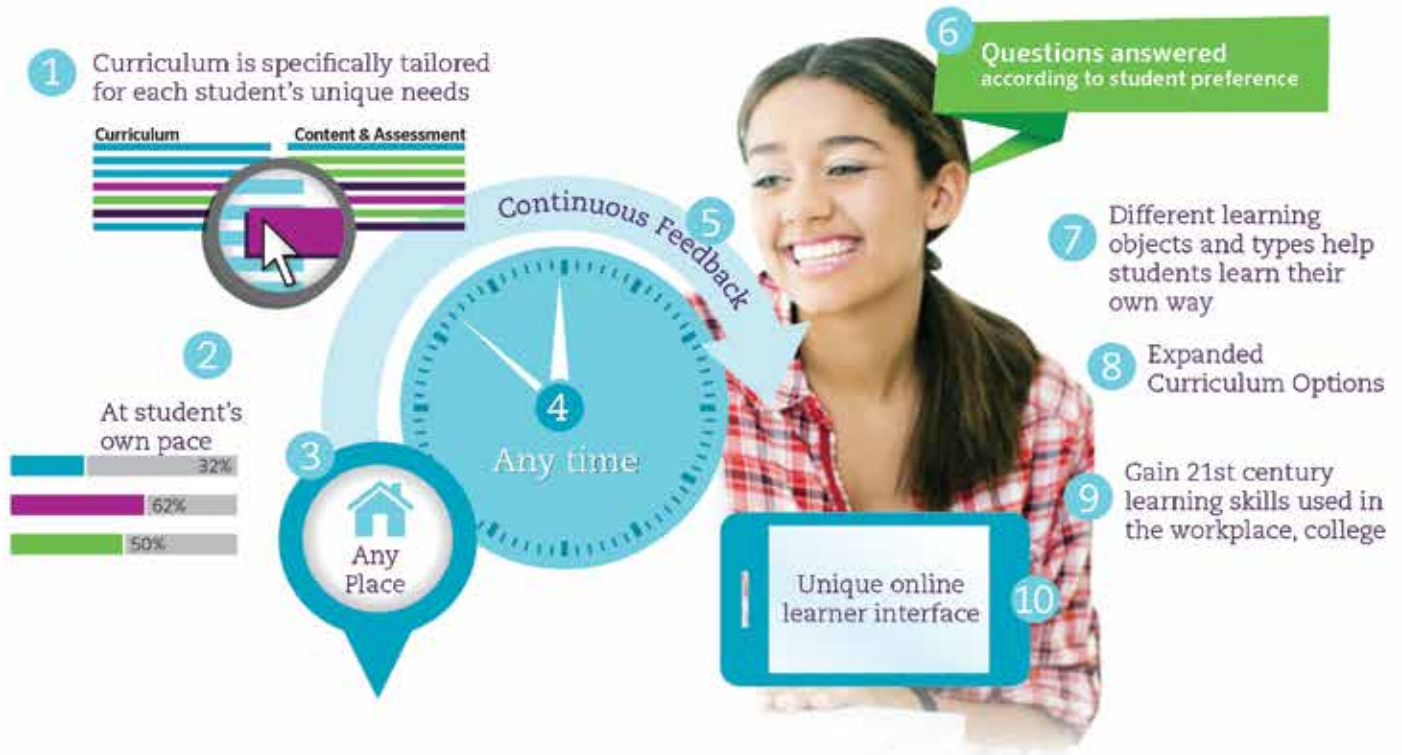
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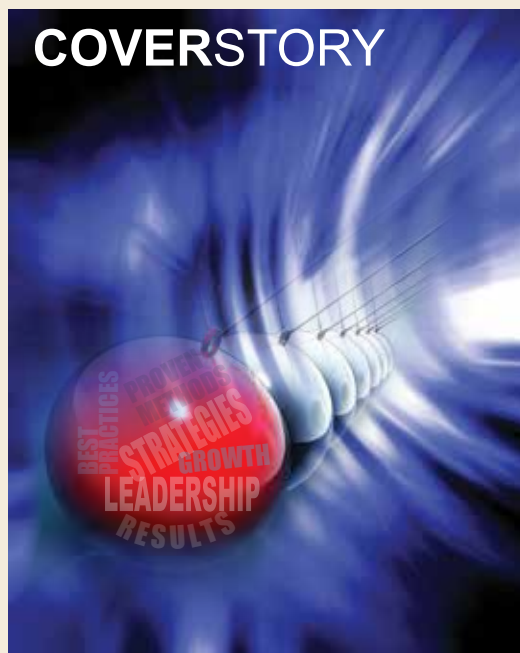


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FALL
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Practices
from practitioners

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Traveling at the Speed of Sound While Stopping to Strategically Plan for the Present



Today's leaders have the unique task of figuring out the formula to effectively balance the demands of being a successful instructional coach and operational manager. No matter how your role is defined in your district, the significant educational reform that is currently occurring has transformed all of our day-to-day responsibilities. You are attempting to move at the speed

of sound to stay abreast of the changes while slowing down to proactively plan for your present circumstances.

I find myself both excited and uneasy about the fast pace of our schedules. The quandary of looking forward to reflection time with colleagues to discuss such topics as assessment review protocols, data analysis for the purpose of driving instruction, grant opportunities, response to academic and behavioral interventions, and technology enhancements, to name a few, while being distracted by thoughts of numerous emails, unanswered telephone messages, faxes, and incomplete paperwork sitting on my desk.

We have heard over and over again that the current educational system was developed for the industrial era and

educators are not changing at the same velocity as the rest of the world. Therefore it is essential that we continue to discuss strategies to move the critical mass forward in order to improve instruction and student achievement, while balancing the ability to efficiently manage our buildings on a day-to-day basis.

In Michael Fullen's book: *The Principal: Three Keys To Maximizing Impact*, he invites readers to contemplate leading learning in a focused, collaborative way by building capacity; being a systems player by building a coherent structure district wide and working with successful schools beyond your own district; and understanding the elements of a change agent. When I consider how to overcome the challenges this time of substantial change presents, the answer keeps coming back to this: we are in this together and by capitalizing on our collective strengths, we will create a better system for children.

The *Practices* component this issue offers is a resource to you. It is a collection of experiences from your colleagues from across the state on ways they are attempting to make a true impact!

I truly believe that by working together we will meet the challenges that we are presented with; this issue starts us on our way.



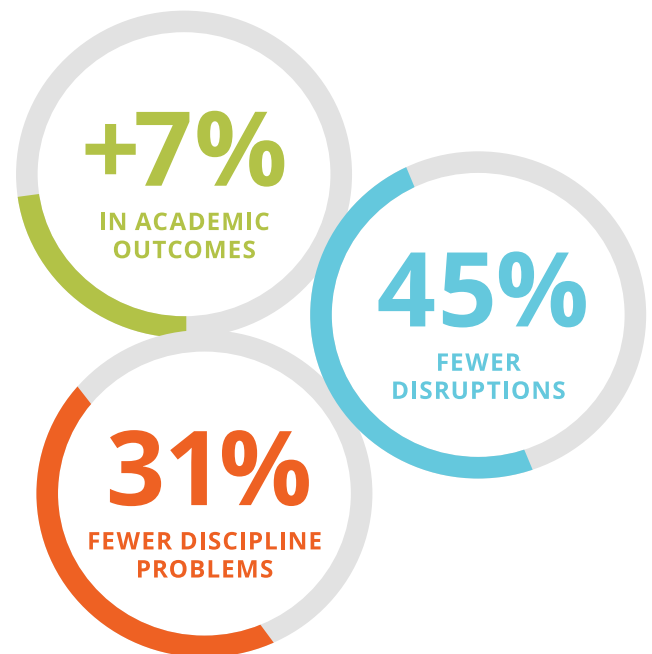
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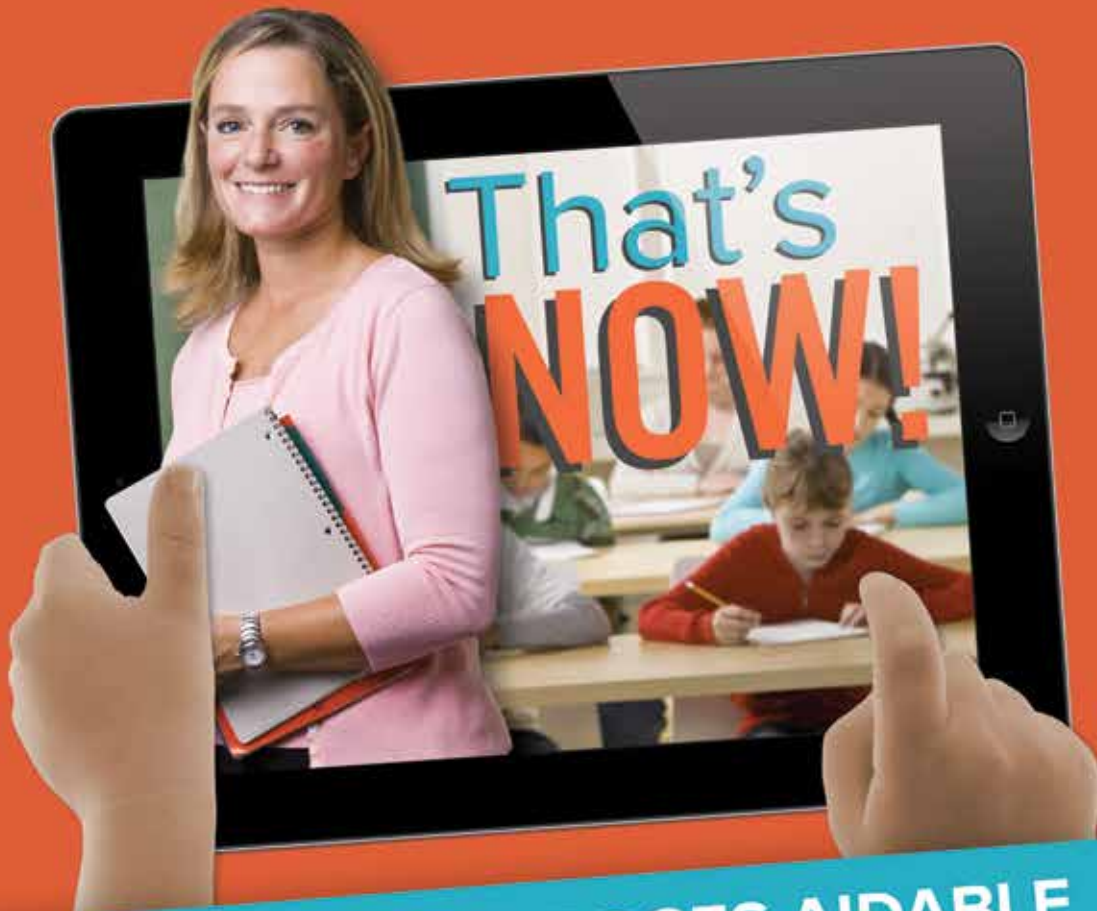
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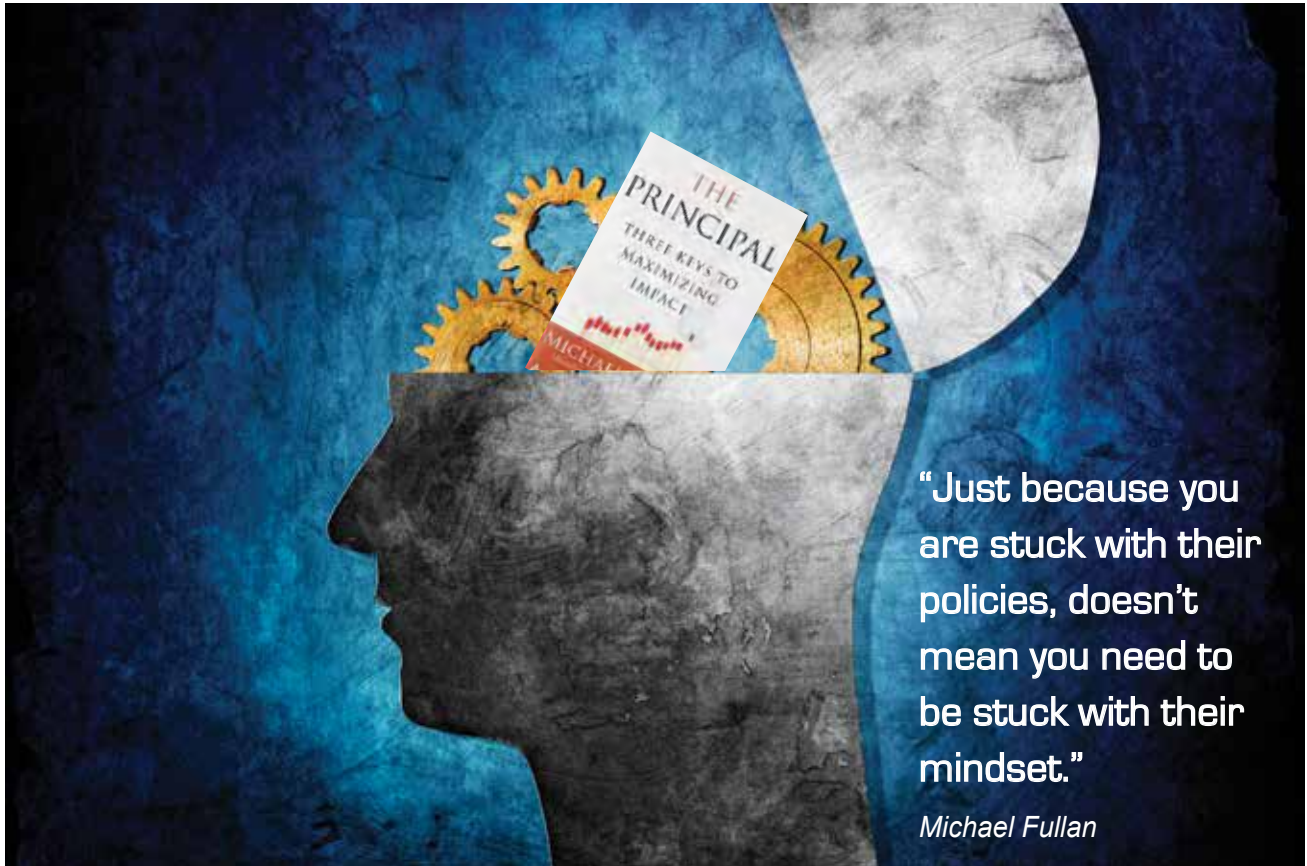


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“Just because you are stuck with their policies, doesn’t mean you need to be stuck with their mindset.”

Michael Fullan

BECOMING THE LEAD LEARNER:

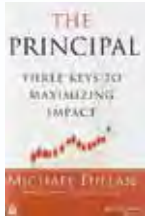
An interview with Michael Fullan

By Peter DeWitt, EdD

Any leadership position comes with challenges. In education, leadership can be rewarding, but it takes work to get through all of the noise that sometimes comes with the position. Whether the leader is in the district, building, or department role, there are mandates, accountability measures, the pressure to be connected through social media and technology tools, and now a new pressure to become a “lead learner.” Michael Fullan defines *lead learner* as *“one who models learning, but also shapes the conditions for all to learn on a continuous basis.”*

Of course, all of these pressures are on top of the day-to-day strains of working with a diverse thinking population of students, staff, and parents. How do leaders focus on the tasks at hand, when there seem to be many more than ever, and no more time in the day to get them completed with integrity? Relationships and trust are vitally important to moving forward, but you have to build relationships and prove trust.

Relationships have always been a key part of any leadership position. School leaders have to foster relationships with students and parents to help them feel engaged, and at the same time they walk a delicate balance between working with teachers on teaching and learning and addressing the personnel issues that are bound to take place every year. All of this relationship building takes practice and is what Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan refer to as “building professional capital” – a concept that Fullan expands on in his new book, *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*.



Scan or visit:
<http://youtu.be/kmYzIDi0a9Q>

Michael Fullan on *The Principal*

An internationally respected leadership and systems expert, Fullan begins his latest book by laying out the wrong drivers of educational reform, and turns our attention instead toward the right drivers that leaders should be pursuing, along with the three key roles every leader should aspire to. In the following



interview, Michael Fullan explains his way of thinking.

PD: In *The Principal* you wrote that the principal has a trio of defined parts – the lead learner, system player, and agent of change. **Why are these three the most important roles for a principal?**

MF: To me, the lead learner is the key one. The principal needs to be the lead learner in order to develop the group itself. Use the group to change the group, but also develop a collaborative culture that is focused on learning. Lead learners do that, and the other two keys ask the teams to reinforce that in detail.

PD: You wrote that the U.S. has been in a constant state of urgency (referring to the work of John Kotter), which has led policymakers to choose the wrong drivers for educational reform, those being accountability, individualistic solutions, technology, and fragment changes. **Why do you believe they haven't chosen the right drivers of capacity building, collaborative effort, pedagogy, and systemness?**

MF: I think there's two levels of that response. One is, if you think of those four wrong drivers, they're easy to select because policymakers can legislate them. Secondly, those drivers have a strong sense of urgency, so it looks like those are things in action today – even though they don't get implemented correctly, it feels like action. Thirdly, these drivers can be made to appeal superficially to the public. So, I think that policymakers get trapped in that urgency and superficiality unwittingly.

On the other side of that thought, I don't think we, the educators who believe in the right drivers, have done a good enough job spelling out the alternatives to the wrong drivers. In other words, we've got the four right drivers identified, but we haven't best explained how to use capacity building, collaborative effort, pedagogy, and systemness.

In fact, what we [Fullan and team] are working on right now is an updated version of what the right drivers would look like

“The principal needs to be the lead learner in order to develop the group itself.”

in action. This should help leaders operationalize the right drivers in practice.

PD: **How do administrators stay present, grounded, and focused on the correct drivers and the three primary roles when so much is pulling at them elsewhere?**

MF: Our research group in Ontario is working on context and coherence right now – what leaders need to do, and there are some examples of this that have been documented. Sanger Unified School District is a smaller district in California where over the last 10 years, despite all the noise, they've been able to focus on getting with it, getting the results, going from below average performance in the state to above average.

This is what we've done in Ontario, too. Focused on a small number of ambitious goals, so not to jump at everything. Stay with those goals as you build capacity. Use data to inform what you're doing and monitor progress that way. Create a developmental atmosphere within which people develop the capacity and clarity to employ and integrate the right drivers.

The wrong drivers have an accountability feel to them. That's how they come across to people. Whereas with the right drivers we're investing in what I would call developmental assumptions – that is to say, there are some strong interventions that are in the spirit of, “How do we get better at this?” – the wrong drivers seem to be in the spirit of, “How do we reward and blame

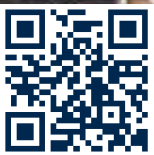


people for what’s happening?” The right drivers have a growth rather than a blame feel about them.

Basically, there are about six or seven things that need to be done and you need to stay with them so that you don’t jump at every opportunity that comes along – what we call reduced distractors. Those factors for system success are a part of what I call the moral imperative. Here are a core seven: a small number of ambitious goals relative to student achievement agenda relentlessly



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<http://youtu.be/Mjiz7bXEhVM>



Scan or visit:
http://youtu.be/pw7qiy_m32c

pursued; the use of data/evidence to identify focus; investment in capacity building and professional capital to build competencies; transparency of data about progress; a nonjudgmental, developmental stance about performance; cultivating leadership at all levels; and strategies to learn from implementation.

PD: You wrote about Viviane Robinson’s five leadership domains, and said, “She

found that the principal who makes the biggest impact on learning is the one who attends to other matters well, but, most importantly, participates as a learner with teachers in helping move the school forward.”

How does the principal actually become this lead learner?

MF: If you look on my *YouTube* channel, we have several recent 10-minute clips. One is from W. G. Davis, a middle school, and then we have three others from Garden Grove in California. If you take any of those – and these are all examples of success – you see that the school principal literally “participates as a learner,” which is moving the school forward.

These types of principals don’t necessarily lead everything but they have to be there. They have to convey to the staff: I’m a learner too, we’re all learners, let’s get going, and they have to do things to make it happen – it’s that very proactive role. Principals can’t, in other words, just get resources or get time for teachers to meet.

Providing the resources is helpful but it doesn’t really carry the day unless you as a principal are participating with staff and trying to move the school forward. When a principal does that each year, for let’s say five years, he/she becomes very good at it. If they don’t do it, the staff doesn’t develop at all. It’s a very high-leverage thing to do. You’ll see examples in those video clips of people who’ve done it and they’re getting big results.

PD: You wrote, “If principals directly influence how teachers can learn together, they will maximize their impact on student learning.” **How do school leaders do this without micro-managing their teachers?**

“Providing the resources is helpful but it doesn’t really carry the day unless you as a principal are participating with staff and trying to move the school forward.”

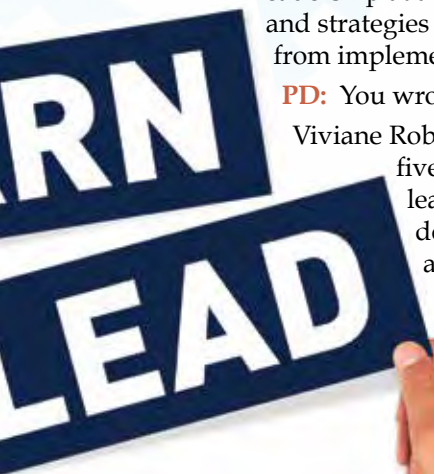
MF: What principals do is they help set a small number of ambitious goals – a directional vision. They then say we need to build our capacity to implement teaching practices in line with those goals. And, we need to have data that align with that to see what our progress is, but the leader needs to involve staff in that goal-setting process. Without doing so, they will not have the motivation to move forward.

Daniel Pink, in his book, *Drive*, has proven what works and what doesn’t work when it comes to motivating people to do things that require judgment. If a task is mechanical, you can have surveillance and micromanagement. You can get some people who will follow a mechanical task, but if it requires any judgment, they don’t go to the next level.

When I talk about the principal, I say they affect the teachers indirectly, but nonetheless explicitly, which means that the principal is part of the group. They’re developing some things to get teachers to work together. They start to show each other results.

There’s a lot of transparency, practice, and progress that keeps people going.

Once that’s all out in the open, what is happening is that the culture is doing the work. It’s not a specific thing, like a particular evaluation. It’s the daily interaction that teaches what we call social capital, and decisional capital – the daily interaction between and among teachers, which has a focus to it. The focus is on certain goals. The focus is on the capacity that will allow instructional practice and



"I think people who haven't really become effective haven't actually mastered that ability to interact with the good ideas and the development of ownership at the same time."



pedagogy that will make progress on those goals. And the focus is on the questions, "How well are we doing?" "What does the data tell us?" "And how do we get better and better at this?"

If principals are lead members in this process, they will have an influential impact because they're part of the culture, and in some ways the group is doing the work as well. That's why we say, "Use the group to change the group."

PD: Why do you think it's so hard for school leaders – whether they're department chairs or directors, whatever that leadership role is – to be change agents?

MF: All effective change processes are a combination of two things. First, the process shapes and reshapes good ideas. So that's the content of the change. Secondly, the process builds capacity and ownership as you go.

Those two things are hard to do together. To be able to work with ideas and to work with a process that builds capacity and ownership, during which some people might initially be against the ideas.

It's not as simple as saying, "Here's a good idea, I support it, let's implement it." You have to actually sort out in the process: is it really a good idea, how do people buy in, what skills do they need, how do you deal with conflict, and how do you leverage success.

I think people who haven't really become effective haven't actually mastered that ability to interact with the good ideas and the development of ownership at the same time.

IN THE END

Over the years, through leadership preparation programs, leaders have been told they should be transformative leaders. Then, the pressure was on to become instructional leaders, but this became overly narrow. This is not to say that instructional leadership is not important, but leaders need to know how to do it correctly. They need to involve stakeholders, and not just the ones who will tell them what they want to hear. There must be structures in place where stakeholders can discuss, debate, dissect, and then move on with a common goal. Some time spent with Fullan's latest book shows us how to get there.

PETER DEWITT, EdD, writes the Finding Common Ground blog for *Education Week* and is a former K-5 principal now working with John Hattie, Jim Knight, and Russell Quaglia, as well as conducting keynotes and workshops nationally and internationally. His two latest books are *School Climate Change: How Do I Build a Positive Environment for Learning* (co-authored with Sean Slade) (ASCD), and *Flipping Leadership Doesn't Mean Reinventing the Wheel* (Corwin Press), a book in the Connected Educators Series, of which Peter is the series editor.

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- Hargreaves, Andy and Fullan, Michael. (2013). *Professional Capital*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hattie, John. (2009). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*. New York: Routledge.
- Robinson, Viviane. (2011). *Student-Centered Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

In the interview, Michael Fullan referred to Viviane Robinson. Robinson is a distinguished professor at the University of Auckland (New Zealand), and the director of their Center for Leadership. She has done a great deal of work around instructional leadership and the role of lead learner. Robinson outlines the characteristics needed for leaders to be instructional leaders. They are:

LEADERSHIP CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Robinson says, "Their (Nelson & Sassi) research showed that as leaders gained a deeper understanding of what is involved in effective teaching of particular curriculum areas, they were able to detect and correct mismatches between those understandings and the administrative routines that were intended to support them."

SOLVING COMPLEX PROBLEMS

Robinson says, "Experts in their field use problem-solving processes that are distinguishable from those of less expert performers and that expertise is inextricably linked with that discussed in the first capability – leadership content knowledge."

BUILDING RELATIONAL TRUST

Robinson says, "The importance of relationships is evident from the fact that leadership is, by definition, a social process. Leadership is attributed to those members of a group or organization who are seen to influence others in ways that advance the group or organization's progress toward its goals (Katz and Kahn, 1966; Robinson, 2001)."



PRESENT AND FOCUSED:

The Mindful Leader

By Paul Grondahl

Here's a modest proposal for school administrators. How would you like to learn a new approach in your role as a school leader that requires learning simple breathing exercises, periods of silence, and practices for focused attention incorporated throughout your day in exchange for these attributes: **better concentration; increased sense of calm; decreased stress and anxiety; expanded self-awareness; deeper empathy; and enhanced organizational and leadership skills.**

This approach is called mindfulness, and its heightened focus on the present moment and paying close attention has been practiced by American professionals for more than 30 years, and much longer internationally. Mindfulness has a well-documented high return on investment and the research to back it up, including numerous scholarly studies and the peer-reviewed literature of brain science. Several universities have also opened mindfulness institutes.



Before you dismiss these claims as far-fetched and impractical for the increasingly demanding role of school leader, consider that a February 2014 *Time* magazine cover story heralded “The Mindful Revolution.” A documentary, “Room to Breathe,” was released last year, and the Mindfulness in Education Network enters its 13th year and continues to grow. Mindfulness is being practiced in settings as diverse as elementary schools and at Fortune 500 companies such as Google. The mindfulness movement is a response to technology addiction, the tyranny of multitasking, and constant digital distractions. You know the feeling. As you’re reading this, your smartphone is pinging with incoming texts, your laptop screen is fluttering with a steady stream of e-mails filling your inbox, and the light on your desk phone is flashing with two aggrieved parents on hold. And did you update your status on

“The benefits include improved mental health, which reduces absenteeism, burnout, and lost educational opportunities.”

Facebook recently or Tweet about the latest curriculum reform presentation you gave to the school board? Is your hashtag #overwhelmed?

Before you gnash your teeth as you get pulled in one more direction from numerous constituencies vying for a few minutes in your overextended, never unplugged, nights-and-weekends frenetic work schedule, listen to the wisdom of Christopher Willard, a Tufts University psychologist and author who has developed a popular presentation titled “Growing Mindful: Integrating Mindfulness in Education.”

“Mindfulness just makes sense,” said Willard, who defines *mindfulness* as paying attention to the present moment with acceptance and nonjudgment. “The present moment is helpful because it keeps us from getting caught up in the future or stuck in the past. Non-judgment or acceptance is also helpful because professionals like school administrators are often self-critical and highly judgmental of themselves on the job.”

Willard teaches mindfulness practices to help children be more focused, calm, and relaxed. The beneficial techniques can translate to educators and administrators in high-stress jobs. “There is a growing body of scientific research plus the experience of thousands of professionals that demonstrate the benefits of mindfulness and the fact that it can become contagious,” Willard said. “Integrating mindfulness into the classroom where students and teachers can practice together is so beneficial. It works even better if a school leader is practicing mindfulness as well. The benefits include improved mental health, which reduces absenteeism, burnout, and lost educational opportunities. Mindfulness can reignite the inspiration that initially drove smart, talented, idealistic people into education in the first place.”

The best place to start is with yourself and then spread

“The mindfulness movement is a response to technology addiction, the tyranny of multitasking, and constant digital distractions.”

mindful practices to a few other interested parents and colleagues, Willard said. Forming a weekly mindfulness group that meets after school or hosting an occasional mindful meal is a good way to start. Consider opening and closing staff meetings with short practices to integrate mindfulness into the week. Gradually expand to include interested community members in a mindfulness practice group and also organize mindfulness in-service trainings or pay for staff to attend workshops. “It’s encouraging to see the growth of mindfulness,” Willard said. “I met a man recently in Finland who started what is essentially a day of mindfulness in his small town with a program he calls, ‘Do One Thing at a Time Day.’ There are many ways to be mindful and administrators can choose the ways that work best for their schools.”

“It’s a backwards world when school administrators, who are the CEOs of the most important companies in the world, don’t get the encouragement and support they need,” said Megan Cowan, co-founder and program director of Mindful Schools in Emeryville, California. The not-for-profit organization has trained more than 5,000 educators in 60 countries through six-week in-person and online mindfulness courses since 2007.

“Administrators face a conundrum,” Cowan said. “The more stressed they get, the harder it is to take time to access patience, presence, thoughtfulness, and the ability to see multiple sides of a situation. Mindfulness is a practice of self-awareness and self-reflection and it only works if

there is genuine interest on the part of school administrators.”

The Mindful Schools’ six-week online course provides a base for incorporating mindfulness into the workplace. “Six weeks of training provides a solid foundation and then it requires just five minutes a day to apply the techniques in relative quiet and aloneness,” Cowan said. “Mindfulness will help administrators become more thoughtful in how they make decisions. It’s important to acknowledge that this is not going to fix everything. I don’t want mindfulness to get co-opted as the thing that makes a broken educational system manageable. Mindfulness produces more calm, but I don’t want to use that to subdue the things administrators are rightfully frustrated about and they shouldn’t stop fighting for educational reform.”

Cowan honors the spiritual roots of the Buddhist tradition and meditation practices of mindfulness, but Mindful Schools is grounded in a pragmatic approach. “It seems like a big mistake to me to make self-awareness solely a spiritual thing,” she said. “I truly believe mindfulness is a life skill and that’s why we’ve stayed on the secular side. It’s a basic human capacity that is not taught routinely in our culture. My experience has shown me that many school teachers and administrators have innate qualities of patience, respect, making connections, and staying present. They might not know they’ve already gone through the door of mindfulness, and additional training can help them learn how to practice it consciously.”

Consultant Hal Williams, a senior fellow of The Rensselaerville Institute – a think tank he previously led that focuses on turnaround school projects and not-for-profit community

organizations – advocates a pragmatic, outcomes-oriented approach to improving school performance. “I’m interested in helping results leaders who are totally focused on academic achievement in their schools,” said Williams.

“I’ve read books on mindfulness and I’m all for it as a means to the end of achieving results,” Williams said. “The organizing principle for great school leaders is not about reworking the mission statement, but achieving practical results.”

Sharon Salzberg, an author and meditation teacher who is a co-founder of the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, advocates a mindfulness approach for school leaders such as what she has taught in settings as diverse as a hedge fund in New York City and a domestic violence shelter in Massachusetts. This fall, she will present programs in Montreal and Ireland. “There is a mindfulness revolution going on and it can be applied to any kind of work,” she said. “Happiness and ease brings with it a lot more productivity and protects against burnout. One of the great myths of our time is that if we multitask, we’ll get a lot more done. Studies have shown that’s not true. I recommend that people uni-task. It’s OK just to enjoy a cup of tea without any distractions like checking texts and e-mails and reading the news crawl on a mute TV screen. It’s very important for school administrators to understand a lot of stress comes because they actually care and not because they’re weak or can’t do the job. **The key is to find a balance that allows us to sustain the work and to do it well.**”

Jessica Morey, executive director of Inward Bound Mindfulness Education of Northampton,

**LEARNING MINDFULNESS
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



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Look for more on Mindfulness in Schools in “Vanguard Extras” at the new saanys.org coming soon.

Massachusetts, said her organization is expanding beyond the weeklong intensive mindfulness retreats and wilderness backpacking trips for adolescents and teenagers to include daylong programs for high school administrators. “A daylong program is helpful, but my ideal would be to get every administrator to sign up for a seven-day immersive retreat experience,” Morey said. “It’s a combination of mindfulness practices, meditation training, nature awareness, and relational mindfulness. This year we have new retreats in Nashville and Kalamazoo organized by educators who formed mindfulness groups. It’s growing in America because we don’t have much mindfulness built into our lives anymore. A century ago, being mindful was a natural human quality: we went for walks, had quiet time, and focused on one thing at a time. Now, with technology and our over-scheduled lives, we don’t make that time anymore. That’s why we have to relearn and consciously use mindful practices in our everyday lives. That’s especially true for school administrators.”

“The more stressed they get, the harder it is to take time to access patience, presence, thoughtfulness, and the ability to see multiple sides of a situation...”



RECOMMENDED READING

“Search Inside Yourself: The Unexpected Path to Achieving Success, Happiness (and World Peace),” by Chade-Meng Tan
A guide by one of Google’s earliest engineers and a personal growth pioneer, with practices he taught to Google employees for applying mindfulness in the office and beyond.

“Child’s Mind: Mindfulness Practices to Help Our Children be More Focused, Calm, and Relaxed,” by Christopher Willard
This guide teaches parents and educators how to integrate mindfulness and meditation into their work with children and their own lives.

“Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence,” by Daniel Goleman
The author of the best-seller *Emotional Intelligence* combines cutting-edge research and practical findings in this book that examines the secret to high performance and fulfillment: attention.

“Meditation for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment – and Your Life,” by Jon Kabat-Zinn
A guide by the noted teacher, scientist, and clinician who first demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness within mainstream Western medicine. He is executive director at the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center.



LINKS

- www.drchristopherwillard.com
- www.mindfulschools.org
- www.halwillguide.com
- www.dharma.org
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PAUL GRONDAHL is an award-winning reporter at the *Albany Times Union*. A paperback edition of his political biography, *Mayor Corning: Albany Icon, Albany Enigma*, was recently published by SUNY Press.

RESOURCES

Here are simple practices of mindfulness for school administrators from the experts interviewed:

- **When the phone rings, don’t pick it up right away.** Let it ring three times and breathe before answering.
- **When writing an e-mail, don’t hit Send right away.** Reread it carefully and take a few seconds to consider its tone and your motivation. If it’s highly provocative, send it to yourself and read it again before sending it out.
- Whenever possible, **disconnect from multiple forms of technology** and uni-task rather than multi-task in your daily work.

- **Set up pause buttons** when the pace gets too hectic. Stop. Take a breath. Observe what is happening. Notice your breath and what is occurring in your body. Observe a few moments of silence before proceeding. This pause can take as little as 10 seconds.
- **If you notice your stress level rising, go outside and take a short walk** before returning to the difficult task.



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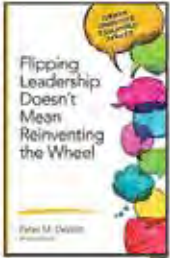
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I am one of those people who can get lost in a bookstore. I pile books on my end tables and start many of them. Most of the books I read relate to education as I am always searching for more ideas to enhance my practice. Like all administrators, I have less time to do more work. When I pick books to read and actually finish reading, they have to be worth my time. I have to see the value in them. *Teach Like a Pirate* by Dave Burgess and *Flipping Leadership Doesn't Mean Reinventing the Wheel* by Peter DeWitt are two books well worth an administrator's time to begin and finish reading!



Flipping Leadership Doesn't Mean Reinventing the Wheel by Peter DeWitt, EdD

This book is part of the Corwin Connected Educators Series and is described by Corwin Press as "short volumes that feature practical strategies to use right away." DeWitt's book is 63 pages long and contains concrete

examples throughout. Each chapter answers an essential question, presents a vignette to illustrate the tenet, includes a reflection, and closes with action steps for administrators to consider moving forward. The five chapters are: (1) Connected Learning: The Precursor to Flipped Leadership; (2) Is Flipping a Passing Fad?; (3) The Flipped Faculty Meeting; (4) Flipping Parent Communication; and (5) How to Flip Communication.

In the flipped faculty meeting, Mr. DeWitt suggests sending out instructional videos (think *Teacher Channel* or *YouTube* resources), selected articles, or blogs to faculty before the scheduled meeting. Teachers are asked to watch or read it before the actual faculty meeting. This allows the faculty meeting to move from being "sit and get" to having more of a professional and collaborative dialogue around the assigned topic.

In flipping parent communication, administrators are challenged to build a better, improved home-school partnership. DeWitt explains how he uses Touchcast to create videos of his school to send home to parents. This allows parents a glimpse into what is happening in school.

An incredible idea in this chapter also involved report cards. In many schools, a child's report card is distributed to his/her parent at the parent-teacher conference. What might very well be a more powerful move, suggests DeWitt, would be to provide that report card to parents before the actual parent-teacher conference. Similar to how the faculty meeting was flipped, parent-teacher conferences could be restructured to allow deeper, real conversations about students instead of a surface level review of grades or progress notes.

If you've ever had the privilege of attending a professional development session with Peter DeWitt, you'll notice his voice in this book. He provides humor, insight, and honest reflections as part of each chapter. He kindly but firmly reminds us, as administrators, that we need not request something of our teachers that we are not comfortable requiring of ourselves. "Our students deserve more than people who play it safe, and our staffs deserve principals who lead the way by trying something innovative... It is really hard for a principal to preach innovation if they are not using it in the venues they lead" (p. 34).



Teach Like a Pirate by Dave Burgess

This book contains three parts: teach like a pirate, crafting engaging lessons, and building a better pirate. Outside of the image created by the word *pirate*, the letters stand for passion, immersion, rapport, ask and analyze, transformation, and enthusiasm. Those six parts make up what Mr. Burgess calls the heart of being a pirate.

Near the end of the last school year, I was able to lend a copy of the book to each teacher in my building. I asked them to at least read part two, which contains the "hooks" for lesson planning. When we read the book as a faculty and later discussed it during our September faculty meeting, we admitted we "used to know" some of the hooks. We knew about including music, incorporating a kinesthetic hook, or using art as a means to understand information (the Picasso hook). Yet, we hadn't learned about the life-changing lesson hook (p.104), the board message hook (p. 110), or the magic, and the amazing hook (p. 134). Those were hooks that challenged us.

The book is an easy read with reflective anecdotes by Mr. Burgess. While Burgess's book is a positive and quick read, it honestly notes: "To ascend to the level of greatness, you have to be on fire with passion and enthusiasm. Mediocrity is incapable of motivating. You just can't be on fire about mediocrity." This book uses the mnemonic for and image of a pirate to remind us (teachers and leaders) to be and do all we can within the classroom to transform our learning spaces and experiences for students.

Both of these books are ones that an administrator can use to impact both the practices of teachers and that of becoming a lead learner.



BOOK REVIEWS BY LISA MEADE

Lisa Meade is middle school principal and director of special education for Corinth CSD. You can find her on Twitter at @LisaMeade23.

TWO MINDSETS

CAROL S. DWECK, Ph.D.

Graphic by Nigel Holmes

Fixed Mindset
Intelligence is static



Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to...

Growth Mindset
Intelligence can be developed



Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to...

CHALLENGES

...avoid challenges

...embrace challenges

OBSTACLES

...give up easily

...persist in the face of setbacks

EFFORT

...see effort as fruitless or worse

...see effort as the path to mastery

CRITICISM

...ignore useful negative feedback

...learn from criticism

SUCCESS OF OTHERS

...feel threatened by the success of others

...find lessons and inspiration in the success of others

As a result, they may plateau early and achieve less than their full potential.

All this confirms a **deterministic view of the world.**

As a result, they reach ever-higher levels of achievement.

All this gives them a **greater sense of free will.**

OPINIONS

"Great leaders do what needs to be done, not what has been done."

– Todd Whitaker

"...if we take a little empathy and sprinkle it upon some trust, chances are we are well on our way to success."

– Tony Sinanis, Jericho CSD
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The Center for Teaching at Vanderbilt University and the Pedagogical Role of Mindfulness



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Daniel Pink: The Puzzle of Motivation



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The Principal Story, a Documentary on School Leadership & Education



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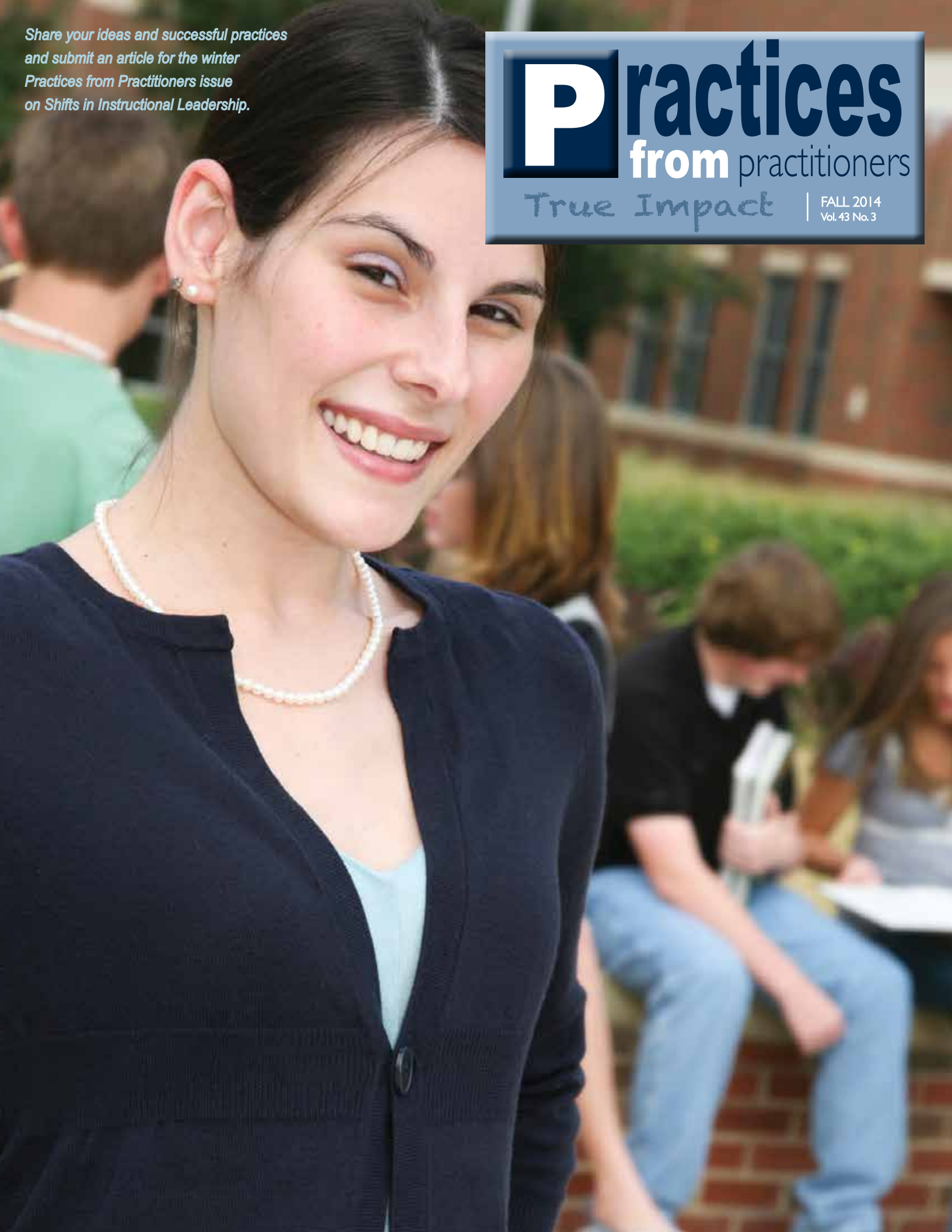
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The Importance of a Growth Mindset



By Paul M. Fanuele

Have you ever wondered why some students respond to failure better than others? How would you feel if the students and staff in your school building thought that failure was good? How can you foster resilience during these challenging times? **Administrators need to focus on creating a positive climate that emphasizes the benefits of failure in order for students to succeed** - a climate that will enhance the abilities of their faculty and students and focus on what Carol Dweck (2006) calls a "growth mindset."

Dweck (2006) discussed the differences between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. A fixed mindset means that “your qualities are carved in stone” (p. 6) and that you have a fixed amount of intelligence. Since your intelligence is fixed, effort does not increase your intelligence or enhance your abilities. The growth mindset, however, focuses on the belief that “everyone can change and grow through application and experience” (p. 7). This mindset allows schools to thrive during challenging times, take risks, and persist under difficult circumstances (Dweck, 2006).

Obviously, with Dweck’s definitions the idea of utilizing a growth mindset not only makes sense, it is imperative that a school should focus on creating a collective growth mindset. This has been a focus at Arlington High School starting in the 2013-2014 school year. While our mindset was not in a bad place to start, all of the “noise” of the reform agenda made focusing on a growth mindset appropriate. I will outline some of the steps we took to make

our students and staff aware of the importance of a growth mindset.

First, the administrative team at the high school read Dweck’s *Mindset* over the summer of 2013. We discussed it in a book talk format and felt it would be a great message for our building. We decided to use the concept at our school’s 2013-2014 opening day conference in September. Having our administrative team of nine read the book gave us ownership of the professional development we created for opening day and gave us a degree of confidence to speak about the growth mindset concept.

The opening day conference featured a PowerPoint presentation and discussion on Dweck’s ideas. We started it off with a quick video of John McEnroe, who Dweck uses as an example of a person with a fixed mindset. McEnroe’s famous “You cannot be serious” (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekQ_Ja02gTY) tirade set the tone for a discussion on fixed mindset. We next described the differences between fixed and growth mindsets and how each concept fit with adolescent brain development.

We watched a short video of Dweck herself discussing a child asking “Am I smart” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUGYqGc8iNo>).

This was followed with a discussion on understanding and changing students’ mindsets. Working in small groups, we asked our faculty to list five statements they have heard from students with a fixed mindset. We brainstormed appropriate responses to these statements that would help students shift to a growth mindset focus. Also discussed was the idea that if a student has failed to learn something, the student could add “yet” to his or her vocabulary. As in, “I can’t do quadratic equations, yet.” We ended the presentation by showing a video of Angela Duckworth discussing the concept of grit. As the faculty members left the presentation, they were handed a follow-up article by Dweck (2010) entitled, “Mindsets and Equitable Education.” This article gave our staff an additional resource on the day’s subject matter.

The opening day conference was followed up with an invitation to our staff to join a low-pressure book talk

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on Dweck's *Mindset*. We were able to secure some funds to purchase numerous copies for both individual use and for our professional library. Over 30 staff members participated in our original book talk and many others decided to read the book on their own. The book talk was a tremendous success. The members attended three one-and-a-half hour sessions including one off-site to discuss the book in chapter order. We provided guiding questions in advance to keep each session on topic. The administrative staff attended the sessions and we were impressed with the high level of thought and discourse that our staff displayed. Our staff was so committed to the growth mindset concept that some of them volunteered to share at a faculty meeting their insights on how to develop a growth mindset in students. Their presentation was enthusiastic and it energized other staff members to read *Mindset* and seek out additional resources on the topic. As interest grew, two more book talks were created to accommodate 30 additional staff members.

Finding time to include the concept of a growth mindset at meetings was another key idea to keep the momentum going throughout the school year. Besides faculty meetings and conference days, we embedded quick discussions of the growth mindset at other meetings including coordinator meetings, building leadership team meetings, and school climate team meetings. Our teaching assistant staff received mindset training and raved about its importance. At our high school cabinet meetings with our administrative staff, we discussed numerous related books and articles including Paul Tough's *How Children Succeed*, which fostered a discussion on the value of mindset and noncognitive skills. In addition, this author presented the concept of a growth mindset to our high school PTA. Members of the parent organization enjoyed the presentation, and some even borrowed copies of the book.

By emphasizing the concept throughout the year, many of our

teachers felt comfortable discussing the concept of growth mindset with their classes. In doing so, they were challenging students to replace their previously held beliefs that they "can't" with a belief that they just haven't "yet." Another way to reach our students was for this author to write an article in our school newspaper (see sidebar). The article was written to students and further explains the growth mindset concept. Recently, some of our teachers presented at an area conference on the topic of fostering a growth mindset in the classroom. This presentation was duplicated at our end-of-year board of education meeting when this author presented the concept of a growth mindset, which was followed by a presentation by three teachers on how they utilized the concept in their classrooms. A member of our board of education recommended mindset trainings for other district schools. Administrators from other district schools have witnessed its impact and are implementing growth mindset trainings. This is encouraging and shows its importance.

Our growth mindset focus is continuing as this article is written. We opened the 2014-2015 school year with presentations at our ninth-grade student and parent orientations. Our school library has acquired multiple copies of *Mindset* for its collection that are available for both students and parents to borrow. This was followed with the development and execution of growth mindset lessons in all ninth-grade English classes as well as specific lessons designed for our special education students [available at saanys.org/VanguardExtras]. We hope to continue our momentum and enhance our already good climate into one that will meet the challenges of the reform agenda head-on while developing resilience in our students.



Article written to students

UTILIZATION OF A GROWTH MINDSET

We all have felt frustrated at times when solving a new math equation, or learning an innovative defense at basketball practice, or learning a challenging music piece. In the book *Mindset*, Carol Dweck discusses the importance of a growth mindset and lifelong learning. Students need to learn as children in school and continue to learn as adults throughout their life. Dweck (2006) stated that "people have more capacity for lifelong learning and brain development than they ever thought" (p. 5). Whichever path to learning people take, it is important to keep a growth mindset. A growth mindset, Dweck (2006) argued, will allow anyone to change and grow through application and experience. A fixed mindset would hinder any knowledge acquisition as a person believes that she/he only has a fixed amount of intelligence. Therefore, acquiring new knowledge would be futile. A growth mindset, however, allows people to thrive during challenging times, take risks, and persist under difficult circumstances (Dweck, 2006).

Students should strive to focus on developing their growth mindset. Students should believe that they can learn anything they want. It will not always be easy and will often require hard work, but with resilience and perseverance, success is inevitable. Students should focus on the word "yet" when confronting failure and add it to sentences that contain "can't," as in, I can't do that "yet" or I can't play the piano "yet."

A student with a fixed mindset will give up easily and not put forth great effort. This student tries to "look smart" at all costs and often avoids difficult tasks because she/he fears failure (Ricci, 2013). When failure occurs, a person with a fixed mindset will often blame others for the failure. Dweck (2006) used tennis player John McEnroe as an example. McEnroe was known for both his excellent tennis play as well as his antics on the court when the match did not



go his way. John Wooden, champion basketball coach at UCLA, said, "You aren't a failure until you start to blame" (Wooden and Jamison, 1997, p. 55).

Do not fear failure. Learn from it. Try to have a growth mindset, especially as a learner. You will face academic challenges throughout your life. A student with a growth mindset will be able to deal with these challenges more effectively. A test score only tells you where you are; it does not tell you where you will end up. Learn from setbacks and failure. "Exceptional people seem to

have a special talent for converting life's setbacks into future successes" (Dweck, 2006, p. 11). A growth mindset will help you navigate whatever life throws at you.

Many faculty members and staff have been reading *Mindset* this school year and it has been a topic at faculty meetings and conference days. Please ask any of your teachers about the power of a growth mindset. Also, feel free to ask me about it and if you want to borrow the book, just let me know. Changing your mindset is hard work, but it can be done. The first step is to become aware of your current mindset. Take an interactive quiz found at the following link to find out if you have a growth mindset. Go for it! <http://mindsetonline.com/testyourmindset/step1.php>.

PAUL M. FANUELE is the executive principal at Arlington High School and member of the SAANYS Executive Committee.

RESOURCES

- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House.
- Dweck, C. S. (2010). Mind-sets and Equitable Education. *Principal Leadership*, 10 (5), 26-29.
- Ricci, M. (2013). *Mindsets in the Classroom*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, Inc.
- Tough, P. (2012). *How Children Succeed*. New York: Mariner Books.
- Wooden, J. and Jamison, S. (1997). *Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations On and Off the Court*. Lincolnwood, IL: Contemporary Books.

VIDEO LINKS

- Dweck, C. S. "Am I Smart" video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUGyqGc8iNo>
- McEnroe, J. "You Cannot Be Serious" video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ekQ_Ja02gTY

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Lead Learner:

What Does That Mean?



By Victoria L. Day

Principals are often seen as managers of their building. We oversee the budgets to get the supplies needed to make their schools run or help develop curriculum and professional enrichment. Now, **we deserve to be seen as more than managers**, which is why we hear the phrase “instructional leader” so often.

LEARN & LEAD

Working side by side with parents and the community to create the best environment for students, principals become ambassadors between parents, faculty, students, and the board of education. We are a jack-of-all-trades, making sure our schools run smoothly and efficiently as well as having the best teaching core for our students. But, in this day of accountability and high stakes, are we on the correct path as instructional leaders? We hear, "The principal is the instructional leader of the school." But, as the instructional leader, do we know everything? Do we know what quality instruction looks like? I worry because I am not the expert on everything, but I also understand that I do not have to know everything. An instructional leader isn't someone who has to know everything. What they do know is that the power is with the people. Division

principal George Couros often says, "No one is the smartest person in the room. The room is the smartest person in the room."

To survive and thrive in our present changes in education, we need to look at the principalship in a different way. We call it being the "lead learner." Two years ago, I volunteered to help be a social media ambassador for the NAESP conference in Baltimore, Maryland. I met Tony Sinanis and Joe Mazza, who were my co-social media ambassadors. Joe always labeled himself as the Lead Learner of Knapp Elementary School in Pennsylvania. Tony labeled himself as the Lead Learner of Cantiague Elementary School in Jericho, New York. I was intrigued. They were principals, but called themselves lead learners.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? IS IT SOME NEW LEADERSHIP FAD?

After NAESP, I started to investigate what a lead learner meant. I needed to know how I could become a lead learner. I liked the sound of it, "Victoria Day, Lead Learner of East Side Elementary School." The reality

was, and still is, I love learning and try to model that with our staff. If the principal doesn't love to learn, how could the rest of the staff be expected to? How could students be expected to?

TOO EARLY TO TELL

Lead learner has a lot of positive connotations. It represents the idea that school leaders are a bit different than the image people have of us. Unfortunately, it may be too soon to tell how well it will resonate with others. In a recent e-mail from a colleague, I introduced myself as the Lead Learner of East Side Elementary School rather than the principal. In the response at the end of the e-mail, they asked, "Would you clarify the role of the lead learner?" I was excited. Perhaps I was on my way to get another principal to start changing their own image. I quickly responded:

My official role is as principal of the East Side Elementary School, but I consider myself a lead learner. There are three keys to maximizing the impact a principal can make, as Michael Fullan states [see cover story]. He defines those roles as:

1. Agent of Change
2. Systems Player
3. Lead Learner

As the lead learner, I model and shape the conditions for all to learn. I learn alongside my teachers. For instance, we moved to a responsive classroom philosophy that has dramatically improved our culture, and I was trained alongside my teachers so I, as the lead learner, can have sustainability in the program. We are being trained in PBL. I will be at that three-day training so I can sustain the outcomes and learning for the staff and students.

It is a new way of thinking about the role of the principal. There are a bunch of us that are calling ourselves lead learners. It's also about building professional capital. Our staff and teachers can be lead learners, too.

Unfortunately, I haven't heard back as of yet. Crickets. But I'm hopeful that this leader will read



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something from Fullan or get on Twitter and see principals refer to themselves as lead learners and jump on board because it is more than just a change in name. Being a lead learner reflects an important move forward on our part.

As Fullan stated, there are three systems that work simultaneously within the principalship, but I feel that the most important is that of the lead learner. As the lead learner, you are the role model for learning, for your students, parents, and staff. This means that you are working together to create a common vision, and that is to make an environment that is an exciting place to learn. It means that the lead learner is like a shepherd. The shepherd has to lead his flock and choose the meadow they will feed in. It has to be a safe place, where no one wanders off and we all look out for each other, working together for a common vision. Sometimes the shepherd will be immersed in his flock, learning simultaneously to provide sustainability.

As lead learners, sitting side by side with your staff and working on complex problems and change for what is best for kids are powerful

ways to build trust. It's having compassion for being human. Having an open door, walking the talk, and listening are key elements as lead learners. It's about building relationships among the staff, the students, the parents, and the community. You will see that the lead learner shares the responsibility with staff. Building the capacity in our staff to be leaders and developing a strong teaching core will give autonomy to the professionals who teach the curriculum and develop trust. The lead learner will provide guidance, but the majority of the work will be developed by the professionals who actually teach the material. This in turn builds the trust for shared leadership. The staff will have opportunities to become lead learners as well, bringing to the table their expertise for what is best for the students. Is being a lead learner easy? Absolutely not, and it can become messy at times, but the main focus at the end of the day will always be what is best for our students.

We are in an educational system of compliance, data, and accountability. They have their place, but it isn't what will drive students to be career and college ready. What will help our

students the most are educators who sift through the minutiae of mandates and compliance and do what is right for our students and our future. As administrators, we cannot do it all and we need to give autonomy and professionalism back to our teachers, or our "flock."

Build the professional capital and capacity in your staff and become a lead learner. It will build trust in your students, staff, and parents, and they will follow you on this journey!



RESOURCES

Fullan, Michael. (2013). *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

VICTORIA DAY is the lead learner – principal of East Side Elementary School in Gouverneur, New York.

TONY SINANIS is the lead learner at Cantiague Elementary School in Jericho, New York, and the 2014 NAESP/SAANYS New York State Elementary School Principal of the Year.

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A Shift in Perspective on the **Role of the Principal**



By Andy Johnsen
and Jill Pancoast

The problem of stress in the principalship is an issue that almost all school leaders are confronting these days. From the first-year, small town, elementary principal, to the urban, high school veteran, school leaders of all kinds are suffering from too much work and not enough time. **For many, “stress in the principalship” is a redundancy – the two terms are synonymous.**



A casual observer might not catch this by watching principals joyfully interact with students, lead the monthly awards assembly, or fawn over kindergartners' artwork. But pull them aside and ask them how things are going and they will invariably tell you, "I'm exhausted. I can't seem to get caught up." Or, as one seasoned administrator recently told me, "I'm just not sure how much longer I can do this." Principals are professionals and they can put on a good game face when all eyes are on them. But at the end of a long day when – yet again – theirs is the last car to pull out of the lot, many wonder if it's worth it.

Much has been written about the sources of stress in the principalship. Increased mandates, shrinking budgets, and staff reductions certainly contribute. But perhaps the greatest source of school leader stress is one that is rarely, if ever, articulated: principals simply don't know what their actual job is.

THE PREVAILING MENTAL MODEL

Close your eyes and imagine a typical school leader. What do you see? Chances are you envision a busy principal – a very busy principal. You see a man or woman who is constantly on the go. She is the first one to arrive in the morning and the last one to leave at night. She often goes without lunch and always seems to be late to a meeting somewhere. Sometimes she is seen walking a clip through the hallways, but most of the time she is at her desk signing requisitions, reviewing attendance reports, and replying to e-mail. She answers every question, involves herself in every decision, and has her hands on every lever and dial required to run the school. She is the

principal who does it all!

Why is this mental model of the overworked principal – the principal who does it all – so easy to conjure up? And why do so many principals fit the bill? One answer is "monkey see – monkey do." Generations of aspiring administrators have watched their mentors live this way – working 70 hours a week, running from one thing to the next, lugging briefcases

full of paper home to complete at night and over weekends. They have witnessed the constant interruption of school leaders in meetings to handle minutiae. They have rarely seen a school administrator enjoy a 30-minute sit-down lunch. Then, when they become principals themselves, they very naturally continue to do the job the way it's been modeled for them – and the cycle continues.

Administrator training programs are co-conspirators in perpetuating this vicious cycle. Universities teach school law, district policy, education theory, and leadership principles. Graduate-level work in these areas is often rigorous and beneficial. But the prevailing mental model of the overworked, stressed out, do-it-all principal is rarely challenged or even addressed.

The result is a public school system full of disillusioned, overwhelmed, and frustrated principals. Drawn to the job because of a desire to make a difference with teachers and students, the prevailing paradigm has them stuck in their offices – their energy, enthusiasm, and expertise steadily waning.

A BETTER MENTAL MODEL

The well-known movie *Master and Commander* offers an alternative backdrop for studying the complexities involved in leading large numbers of people who are charged with fulfilling a specific mission. Cannonballs and scurvy aside, leading schools and commanding sailing ships can be quite similar, and embracing a mental model of the principal as "captain of the ship" can give school leaders a whole new sense of what

their job really is – one that gives them permission to do less and focus instead on the high-impact activities that make the greatest difference.

Nineteenth-century sailing vessels were busy, complex operations. Hundreds of seamen had to work together to operate sails, yardarms, and rudders to navigate the ship. Cargo had to be stored, meals had to be prepared, and the sick or injured required treatment. The crew included gunners, sail makers, coopers, and carpenters – each with specific technical skills and tasks to accomplish. Sometimes these were experienced seamen who knew their jobs well. Other times, crews were outfitted with whoever was available and newbies received on-the-job training. However, in order to reach their destination and accomplish their mission, every crew member needed to properly complete his task at the right time; failure to do so put everyone at risk. As it was in the nineteenth century, so it is today.

ENTER THE CAPTAIN.

Sailing vessels, both historical and modern, carry hundreds of crew members, each responsible for performing a specific job. But each ship has only one captain, and his job is qualitatively different from the rest of the crew. The captain has two primary responsibilities: (1) To keep an eye out to sea to ensure the ship remains on course; (2) To keep an eye on the crew to make sure their work is coordinated and executed well. That's it.

Keeping an eye out to sea involves maintaining a proper course toward the intended destination, speeding up or slowing down when appropriate, navigating safely through storms, and getting back on course after the tempests have passed. No one but the captain has this responsibility.

Keeping an eye on the crew is just as important. Each crewmember is a specialist who performs a particular task, and relies on others in their respective roles to do the same. Crew members haul the

ship's lines, trim its sails, and grind its winches. The captain observes, coordinates, and supports their work. The captain has the unique job of ensuring that crew members perform well by providing training, oversight, acknowledgment, and corrective feedback.

A ship captain earns his position by moving up through the ranks. He may know how to trim sails, haul lines, and grind winches – all skills he acquired earlier in his career. However, the moment he is commissioned as captain, he must let go of performing

the aforementioned tasks and take up the business of leading and managing the crew. Essentially, the captain must stop working in the system and start working on the system.

THE PRINCIPAL AS CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP

The parallel to the principalship is clear. The principal's role in a school is the same as that of the ship's captain: first, attend to the school's mission, vision, and direction; second, make sure that each staff member has the support needed to do his or her work

well. The principal's primary functions include training and developing, coaching, and supporting and directing staff. Nobody else in the entire school has this

charge. If a principal does not do this work, it goes undone and the entire organization suffers.

The stress and strain principals feel is the inevitable result of doing two or more jobs simultaneously. Principals are trying to do the leadership work that they have been charged with, while at the same time tending to a whole host of administrivia. They labor relentlessly in a futile attempt to perform both captain's and crew members' work, and many of them would end that sentence with "and doing neither one particularly well." The result is that principals spend the bulk of their days hunkered down in their offices, buried under mountains of paperwork, doing their employees' jobs.

But just as the captain needs to plant himself firmly up on deck to know where the ship is headed and to monitor the crew's performance, a school principal needs to be "up on deck" at school, present where



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the real work is happening. "Up on deck" includes walking the hallways, interacting with parents at drop-off and dismissal, and most importantly, in classrooms observing teaching and learning. This can only happen when the principal ceases doing their employees' jobs and instead, begins training and developing their staff to do their work themselves.

If you are a principal who is burned out, overwhelmed, and frustrated because you have been doing the work of captain and crew members for far too long, here are five steps you can take to "stop the insanity" and provide your school with the leadership it desperately needs from you:

1. **Change your point of view.** Look at your school through the eyes of a ship captain and take note: What "up on deck" work is there to do that only I, the principal, can do? Given sufficient training and development, what

administrative work could others do?

2. **Review every piece of paper strewn across your desk** and ask yourself, "Is this my job or is there someone else in my organization whose job description actually includes this?"

3. **Deliver each piece of paper to the specific person who is responsible** for its completion and ask them to handle it.

4. **If a staff member is not yet competent to perform a certain task(s), train them so they become competent.**

5. **Get out of your office and into classrooms.** When you are interrupted from this mission-critical work because front-office staff requires your assistance to complete their duties, make a note and schedule a "training and development" session for them. Shifting principals' efforts into "captain-only work"

takes time and practice, but it is energy well spent. Indeed, it is the most effective way for school leaders to stop working in the system, get "up on deck," and start working on the system that requires their leadership and direction. Then it is smooth sailing ahead!

DR. ANDY JOHNSEN is the principal at Valley Elementary School, Poway, California, and the master coach of The Breakthrough Coach.

JILL PANCOAST is the vice president of The Breakthrough Coach.



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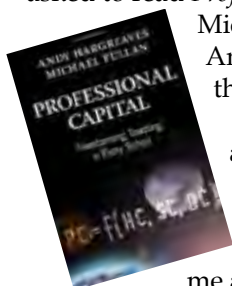
Professional Capital Indeed



By Russell Moore

Each summer our district provides a professional development workshop for all instructional administrators. This group of administrators, referred to as the Instructional Administrative Council (IAC), usually is given a book to read before the workshop and then the workshop time is devoted to activities based on understanding, discussing, and working, to integrate the tenets espoused in the book into our daily instructional lives.

This summer was no different, and the members of the AC were asked to read *Professional Capital* by Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves for the workshop.



I can't speak for all of my district colleagues, but I know that the book resonated with me and my two hall principals. The idea of tapping into the human capital that exists in every school, providing opportunities for greater networking among teachers, placing teachers in leadership roles and, thus, developing the professional capital of a school's faculty made sense to us. During our discussions, we decided that our faculty was well suited for this approach and we brainstormed ways to utilize the most valuable resource, our staff. The approaches we are taking this year will give all teachers the chance to broaden their professional interactions with colleagues, engage in and even lead discussions focused on instruction in a wider arena, and share their best practices with the building-wide faculty. Several specific initiatives and activities are being implemented to address these objectives.

We decided to begin the new school year in a different manner to set the tone for our planned approach. Annually, we start the first day with a faculty meeting at which highlights from the previous year are reviewed, objectives for the new school year are shared, and reminders about various priorities are given. In the spirit of increasing the social capital of our school, however, we instead conducted a "get-to-know-you" activity within which staff members shared details about themselves that were most likely not known to the majority of their colleagues. This activity WAS our opening day faculty meeting! The next day, when we again had time as a faculty, we conducted another activity based on our district's mission statement and our school's vision. This was another interactive approach, as teachers ended up working in groups to highlight

portions of the statements and relate them to their instruction. Our opening to school was human capital and instruction focused, a beginning that tied directly into our plan for accessing our faculty's collective expertise.

The new philosophical emphasis set the stage for our new initiatives. The first one is peer observation. Every school most likely encourages peer observation, as we do, but little actually takes place. Teachers get into their teaching and don't want to take time from their priority, the academic success of their students. But, as we shared with staff in a subsequent faculty meeting, we are pushing the strategy of observing colleagues from the perspective that we all have things to learn about instruction, and the best source of learning is quite possibly the teacher next door. We stressed that our faculty is definitely highly qualified, but we're not equally qualified. We all have strengths and areas that could use attention. We are approaching it as internal professional development; there will be no monitoring of the observations, and we will trust our staff members to observe and have follow-up discussions about instruction as they deem appropriate. All a teacher needs to do is request the time for observing. We will provide it as professional development time, and it is up to them to make it such.

The second step in our approach is based on providing collaboration time for teachers to do just that. We request teachers to give us an overview of the planned topic of collaboration (which we need to approve), who the involved parties are, and how much time is required. We will take care of providing the necessary time. With collaboration, the team of teachers will have to report back to the faculty about what was accomplished. This reporting is required not as a monitoring practice, but, again, as a professional dialogue that continues the expectation of sharing ideas, practices, and accomplishments.

Another facet of our approach is geared to increasing decisional capital, giving teachers more say, providing opportunities for teachers to influence our practices on a grander scale. We are assigning each department the responsibility of planning and conducting one of our monthly faculty meetings. For example, the English department is responsible for the October meeting. Anyone else who has a desire to speak at that meeting, including myself, needs to schedule the time with a member of that department. The major expectation and rationale for this department assignment, however, is that the department has to share an instructional approach, topic, technique, etc. with the faculty. There are no specifics as to what is, or is not, included in this instructional sharing expectation. The responsible department could share an article with the staff ahead of time and then lead a discussion based on the article. Members of the department could have a specific instructional strategy that they want to demonstrate/share. Another idea could be a technology application that has direct classroom implications. There are no limitations



or guidelines placed on what could be included. Again, the point is to allow teachers the decisional capacity, increase professional dialogue, encourage the discussion of relevant instructional practices, and have teachers lead the discussion.

Related to this sharing of instructional expertise and increasing professional dialogue, my two hall

principals and I are doing the same thing on a department level. One of my hall principals chairs the junior high science department, the other chairs the English department, and I chair both the social studies and math departments. We are assigning each teacher the responsibility for sharing an instructional approach or topic at a monthly department meeting, just as departments are given this responsibility at faculty meetings. Again, there are no restrictions on what can or cannot be shared. Each teacher will have the responsibility once over the course of the school year to lead an instructional discussion within their department. We have

asked the district administrators who have supervisory responsibilities for the other departments, such as art, music, technology, etc. to do the same. We want each teacher to realize that he/she has much worth sharing, and that we trust each one to initiate and lead an instructionally based discussion.

Our last innovation is to provide “think time” to teachers as they deem necessary. Often we have programs or initiatives that could be improved. We may have a segment of our student population that would benefit from a different support service. We could have a perceived need for a specific program or approach. Any of these

possible scenarios, or a host of others as well, require time to think of the issue(s) involved and to put ideas on paper. We are telling teachers that



if there is an issue meriting attention, and they wish to spend time to think about it, we will give them all the time they need. We will provide time for teachers to participate in a “think tank” setting. As with collaboration time discussed previously, all we ask is for those involved to report back to the faculty on the issue and the possible solutions, if any were identified. We are telling teachers that we trust their perspectives and their thought, and we want to give them an opportunity to put them to good use.

We will see how the year goes. Some teachers will be very comfortable with any and all of the five initiatives implemented. Some will be willing to try one or two. We know that we also have some colleagues who will not want to step outside their comfort zones. Regardless, we believe in the potential that is housed in our human capital, and we want to begin encouraging the development of it. As with all change, small inroads will be encouraging to us and to the rest of the faculty. We are hopeful that we can begin to operationalize professional capital within our school, a process that will significantly enhance our instructional environment and which will provide nothing but benefits to each of us, our students, and our school.

RUSSELL MOORE is the principal of Shaker Junior High School.

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You Give a Little to Get a Lot



By Don Sternberg, EdD

The job of school principal is rapidly transforming and **for those who do not accept the new reality and seek methods to embrace the change, there are potentially dire consequences.** The smorgasbord of responsibilities of a principal is constantly being added to and with each new responsibility placed upon a principal's table, we are moved further and further from contact with students and teachers.

There is no stronger evidence of this time erosion than in the area of professional development. The all-important emphasis on improving pedagogical practices can have less time devoted to it due to an overwhelming and increasing array of responsibilities for a principal.

Peter Northouse, in his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (2013), points out the many perspectives used to define leadership but finally settles on the definition of leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Within the context of a school system where school leaders, most notably principals, have an increasing array of job responsibilities, is it any wonder that these new layers of responsibility are starting to become the proverbial straw on the camel's back?

How can a principal maintain a highly effective professional development program and still address the multitude of responsibilities that, at times, can stand in the way of that goal?

FROM INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER TO INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGER

Very little will be removed from the table of responsibility set before every school administrator. One place where the drain of time based upon increased responsibility is being felt is in the area of professional development for teachers, which is often directed by the school administrator. While the building principal should never fully abdicate his or her instructional leadership responsibility, a smart leader realizes that creating an ethos and practice where teachers take on the mantle of instructional leaders serves everyone well. My suggestion is that a principal alter his or her perspective and

practice and transform their role from instructional leader to instructional manager and, subsequently, share



responsibilities with highly qualified teachers.

Becoming an inclusive leader, one who understands and recognizes that most of the best academic gains toward improving instruction are made within the walls of classrooms by highly talented teachers, allows the principal to commit to a more productive use of his or her time.

How do principals influence others and commence action in this changing environment? The huge shift from instructional leader to instructional manager will take courage! William Treasurer, in his book *Courageous Leadership* (2009), outlines the importance of courage within a leader. He, in fact, points out that a courageous leader has a strong belief system and pursues goals with values and passion for the good of the students. It will take courage to admit and/or assume the position of being an instructional manager and not the instructional leader. But as the reservoir of our time is drained based upon a myriad of directions that require our attention, this becomes an adjustment well worth the effort.

COMPASSION AND INSPIRATION

For this shift to be successful, a leader must be able to inspire leadership roles in others. It is the job of a principal to be both compass and inspiration. What principals must do today is find emerging leaders within their faculty who can and will embrace the role of instructional leader, either within their grade level and/or department. Today's principal should muster his or her courage and recognize faculty leaders (they are already in your cohort of teachers but, in many cases, they are dormant) as curricula specialists and as those who will perform many of the instructional leadership functions that at one time were solely within the purview of principal. Absent this passing of the pedagogical-based touch, the building principal will find it increasingly more difficult to find time to serve as the sole guide of professional development.

I have always been confident and comfortable in knowing that many curricula development functions,

once exclusively housed under my tent, are being successfully handled by highly effective teachers with a passion for creating and including into classrooms vibrant and exciting curricula for students. Who best but classroom teachers to make these efforts and decisions?

As time commitments become more compressed by the anvil-like pressures that tend to drift administrators further and further away from professional development efforts, it is imperative that our mindset should not be that we can still deliver what we used to, but rather how do we get the same results by using our time and professional resources more effectively. In essence, we are not giving away our power or authority; we are adjusting responsibilities and moving areas of certain responsibilities to highly qualified teachers who are close enough to the process to create the best kind of results.

Principals must have the courage to realize that they do not have all the time in the world and an app has yet to be developed that creates a 25-hour day. However, there are highly capable colleagues within our schools who can accomplish a component of our job better than we can. It is a strong leader who realizes delegation is sometimes their most powerful action tool.

EMERGENT LEADERS

There are emergent leaders within every faculty. The foundational question becomes: How can a building principal harness and utilize the talents of teachers and create a cohesive cadre of change agents who drive professional development, such as the infusion of Common Core modules, into the mainframe of our teaching?

This process of letting go by the principal instills confidence, trust, and respect in each and every teacher embedded within the change process. The principal must develop an institution that embraces change on the level that it is not something new, but rather something regularly performed within the school to improve and benefit students. Who

"I can't come down off the high from the weekend. Y'all knocked it out of the park with this one."
 Lisa Meade, Corinth
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better than pivotal and knowledgeable teachers to make this occur?

In addition, the clawback of time gained by the principal and the trust and respect that will be reciprocated between an administrator and the teacher become enormous. Staff members who have been encouraged to analyze pedagogical issues within the school, determine what needs improvement, and lead in the development of the improvement will be more likely to fully participate in the steps to improve. When staff has a vested interest in the process, they will certainly do everything possible to get the job done because they own the process. There are two separate but nevertheless equally beneficial outcomes. The first focuses on helping individual teachers reach their potential, and the second focuses on student acquisition of knowledge and ability.

This leads me to the concept that as the time of a building leader becomes more constrained, a leader must first and foremost focus on the ethos they build in their school. They must

build an atmosphere where individuals feel they are a part of the bigger picture and committed to each other and the school. The educational leader and the teachers must see that they are better as a team than they are as outstanding individuals. When teachers are supported in improving their craft, feel their expertise is valued, and serve as instructional leaders, the culture of the school and the movement forward allow the principal to lead from the middle and not necessarily always from the top down.

ASSESSMENT OF THE PARADIGM SHIFT

The proof that this shift has produced the desired results will come from many sources, not the least of which will be student academic achievement. When teachers improve, students improve, and certainly it is possible to measure that quantitatively via longitudinal data analysis of both state and local assessments. A less formal way that we can measure improvement and growth is through anecdotal evidence of student, par-

ent, and teacher satisfaction with the curriculum and programs offered. When it is evident that people enjoy coming to work – either because they tell you they enjoy it, they smile all day, they volunteer for extracurricular projects, or they are first to volunteer for what they see as another opportunity to improve – the overall success of the school will inevitably grow too. Teachers become more intrinsically involved by their own leadership and sense of investment. Principals must never fear asking teachers what they think will make them better teachers and, subsequently, taking a leadership role in making that happen.

It is extremely important that teachers in today's schools have enough pride in what they do and genuinely care about their students to strive to professional growth and improvement. It is the courageous principal who allows and encourages this type of teacher investment by stepping to the side and recognizing and allowing highly skilled teachers to step forward.

DON STERNBERG, EdD, is currently the principal of the Ivy League School in Smithtown, New York.



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That Was Then!

Changing Landscapes for School Building Leaders



By Linda Rae Markert, EdD

If you have recently had an opportunity to eavesdrop on a lively conversation wherein teachers and/or school administrators were reminiscing about the “good old days,” the chances are good at least one person lamented about the relentless pace of change we are dealing with right now. For reasons that are often unclear, when we reflect on the past, there is a tendency to recount events from a nostalgic or even sentimental perspective.

Oddly enough, some 40 years ago Otto L. Bettmann released a book titled *The Good Old Days: They Were Terrible!*¹ and gave his readers reasons to stop fretting about changes in society that might be construed as negative. On the topic of teaching methods in the late 1800s, for example, he noted, “Education had been devalued to a factory-style routine in which the pupils were regarded as exactly similar and therefore could be drilled with mechanical efficiency” (p. 166).

There is no question that the landscape of responsibilities, challenges, and expectations is continuously changing for today’s school building leaders. Those men and women who earned their administrative certification decades ago are perhaps more likely to view these new duties with greater incredulity than prospective educational leaders who are just beginning their administrative careers. Why is this? Since veteran school building leaders have more life experiences to draw from, they may choose to remember times when teachers and other staff members seemed less harried. They may also view the changes they were asked to make in the past as somewhat evolutionary, and then describe the ones being imposed on them now as vastly revolutionary. Conversely, today’s rapid pace of change in education is the only reality within which newly licensed school leaders have been employed, meaning there are no “good old days” to draw upon for comparison. They are therefore less likely to ruminate within a “That was then!” mentality.

In an effort to test this hypothesis, I used a simple fill-in-the-blank statement survey to discern school building principals’ beliefs about the changing nature of their assigned duties, the challenges they are confronting, or the expectations others have for them as leaders. I asked a small group of principals to comment on how various policies, practices, or procedures have changed for them, and are thus impacting the way things need to be done today. Half of these

practicing administrators have been in their appointments for more than five years, and the others were hired just two years ago.

Similar to an “elevator speech,” where a person only has a short spurt of time to get an idea across to a complete stranger (i.e., the number of seconds it takes to reach his/her destination floor), each principal was asked to provide a brief text box response for this statement:

Five Years Ago, I . . .

And Now I . . .

The newly hired leaders’ survey form offered a “Two Years Ago, I” introductory phrase. This strategy is often employed by professional development consultants at the end of their seminars or workshops to determine the extent to which attendees have increased their understanding of a topic, or changed their opinions or attitudes about an issue. Their evaluation forms might include a similar fill-in-the-blank statement: “With reference to the subject matter discussed today, I used to think . . . and now I think . . .” As an educator who prepares candidates for school building level and school district level administrative positions, I used this simple technique to take a snapshot of the ideas being championed by a few building leaders during the first week of the 2014-2015 school year.

Recently hired principals, who are also newly certified, often bring exuberance to their positions that mirrors something Zen Buddhists refer to as *shoshin*, or a beginner’s mind². They approach their new assignments with a sort of professional naiveté, and are not afraid to ask questions; they are also eager to view challenges through a lens where they come into view as

interestingly new possibilities. Years ago, an academic leader to whom I reported was fond of reminding us that the Chinese symbol for crisis was identical to the one for opportunity. And, while the accuracy of that statement is often debated, since she was herself Chinese American, we believed her; furthermore, we worked hard to turn budgetary crises into opportunities for new partnerships – we were less apt to find ourselves waxing nostalgic!

The recently hired school leaders who responded to my simple survey commented on their eagerness to provide supports for teachers, thus enabling them to grow as professionals who are better equipped to meet the needs of all students. They espoused an intrinsic desire to nurture and sustain an academically rich and socially supportive school culture.

Their remarks regarding the teacher evaluation process were especially enlightening. One elementary building principal stated that two years ago her classroom walk-throughs were completed using a checklist with minimal quality feedback given to teachers. In just a short time, however, she finds herself conducting walk-through observations on a prescribed schedule, and not as if they were an afterthought while moving around the building. This principal is now providing conscientious, quality feedback to teachers every time a walk-through is completed; this strategy creates interactive dialog that clearly informs her about staff members’ professional development needs. None of these



“...the 60-point portion of the APPR process has essentially created a better dynamic for communication between teachers and their principals.”

newly hired building leaders implied a desire to return to an earlier time.

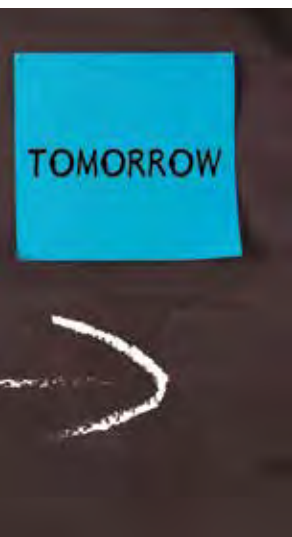
Among the responses provided by the more seasoned building leaders, one might infer a bit of yearning for a less hectic daily schedule, where the number of work hours spent completing paperwork at night and on weekends was considerably fewer. Five years ago, some veteran leaders felt like they knew their staff members well and had fostered a very positive/productive school building culture and work climate. Their sentiments regarding the contemporary building environment were less uplifting. One middle school principal noted that he constantly found himself working to salvage a badly bruised school culture where members of the staff had become disenchanted with the changes taking place across the educational landscape. On the topic of student management, another building leader suggested the passage of DASA legislation has created a different mindset regarding disciplinary procedures among students, parents, and staff members. In his experience, routine behavior management issues are being misconstrued as bullying events; and while many of

these incidents are unfounded as bullying, they consume a great deal more administrative time than in previous years.

For the most part, though, the group of veteran building leaders I surveyed had very positive reflections to share. One elementary

principal reported that five years ago she was excited about getting into classrooms, and leading her monthly faculty meetings where she modeled best practices for teachers and professional staff. As the 2014-15 school year began, this individual seems somewhat frustrated with the APPR system and its focus on ratings and scores, but she is still excited to work closely with teachers to convince them the process is truly about continuous improvement; further, the focus for her school’s faculty meetings this year will be on student engagement. Another elementary building principal finds himself spending a lot of time completing teacher observation rubrics, but is actually delighted to be having better focused conversations with the teachers regarding pedagogical strategies and academic achievement for all kids. He presented a convincing statement that the 60-point portion of the APPR process has essentially created a better dynamic for communication between teachers and their principals.

Another middle school principal concurred, stating that five years ago she was more of an instructional manager, and has now become a true instructional leader. She reported the supervision and review process back then was perfunctory at best. Today she finds herself having reflective and much more focused conversations with individual teachers as well as entire departments. Simply stated, the Regents’ reform agenda has both motivated and allowed her to build a more systemic and cohesive culture around instructional excellence in her building. Finally, on the topic of interactions with parents and family members, a long-term middle school principal remarked that her connections with these groups five years ago were about celebrations and annual school events, and not about building a true partnership in educating their children. Today this leader confesses that she still struggles with how to better engage and educate her students’



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parents about the need for a mutual commitment to preparing their daughters and sons for college, career, and civic responsibilities. She noted with sincerity that principals cannot achieve this heavy lifting alone, nor should they!

Two main tools these successful building leaders draw on to deal with the changing landscape in the profession are resilience and agility. Both the newly appointed and the seasoned administrators seem acutely aware of the importance of:

1. being able to bounce forward, cope with disappointments, renew enthusiasm, and revitalize in the face of difficult challenges; and
2. doing this with a quick, easy, mentally alert, almost graceful fashion. Resilience coupled with agility may very well lessen a school building leader's retreat to the "That was then!" mindset.

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RESOURCES

¹ Bettmann, O. L. (1974). *The Good Old Days – They Were Terrible!* New York: Random House.

² Suzuki, S. (2006). *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind.* Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc.



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