GREAT IDEAS ISSUE

**STOP SEPARATING.
START COLLABORATING.**

**RETHINK EVERYTHING:
SPARKING TRANSFORMATIONAL
CONVERSATIONS IN YOUR SCHOOL**

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Rethinking Grading
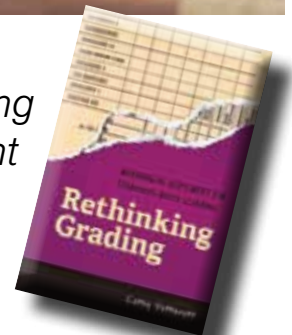
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A message from
Dr. John E. McKenna
SAANYS President
2015-16

How Great Administrators Foster Great Ideas

Great schools have great administrators that know how to create a climate and atmosphere where great ideas are born and flourish. Great administrators foster creativity, imagination, and value individualism.

The problem administrators face today is "how do you foster innovation and creativity in a compliance-based profession?" Through my twenty-two years of being a building principal I have learned some valuable lessons to cultivate great ideas in challenging times. The following are recommendations I would make to any administrator who wants to foster a culture where great ideas prosper every day.

Build A Culture of Shared Decision Making

Productive leaders believe that teamwork and cooperation are essential in developing a culture where ideas flow and people feel valued. Great leaders make sure this happens by developing organizational structures that allow all staff to contribute on a regular basis regarding big and small decisions. When staff ideas and opinions are listened to it builds an atmosphere of collegiality and trust where people feel comfortable sharing and want to contribute to solutions.

Destructive bosses believe that sharing decisions is a sign of weakness and that the staff are subordinates that must follow their directives. This alienates the staff and stifles creativity and new ideas.

Empower Staff to Lead Projects and Initiatives

Productive leaders know the strengths of their staff and encourage them to take leadership roles. This builds people's confidence and allows them to develop personal leadership skills. It is a proven way to unleash new ideas and help people reach their full potential.

Destructive supervisors use words like "consistency" and "fidelity" to justify their stance that everyone must do as they say and follow prescribed programs. No creative ideas will ever come from a compliance model.

Use Data and Evaluations to Help and Support

Productive leaders are instructional leaders who use data to inform and improve instruction. They understand that data is constantly changing and multiple measures must be used to get the best picture of student achievement. Instructional leaders know that students can perform well on one measure and poorly on another depending on how they correlate to classroom practice. They also realize that a variety of factors impact data and many of them are outside the control of the school. Therefore, they design systems for constant and ongoing review of data to analyze program effectiveness and individual progress. Productive leaders utilize the APPR in the same way. They provide support and work collaboratively with staff to help them grow professionally and become self-reflective practitioners.

Destructive bosses use data to create fear and compliance to directives. Data is used to micromanage and force staff to follow prescribed programs. Evaluating people into submission may make people compliant but those tactics will definitely squelch creativity, imagination, and innovative thinking.

Be An Optimizer and Empathizer

Productive leaders who inspire others have a positive, optimistic attitude. They understand that in the arc of progress mistakes and setbacks are part of the process. Productive leaders don't just talk the talk but they walk the walk by directly participating with the staff in all aspects of the school including training, staff development, committees, and even teaching in the classroom. This front line experience is critical for the productive leader to have empathy for the difficult challenges that teachers face every day.

On the other hand, destructive bosses believe that optimism and empathy are signs of weakness. They use the word "accountability" to implement autocratic policies that are punitive and unfair.

Have Fun!

In my many years of experience the number one way to cultivate innovative ideas and foster an environment of creativity is to have fun! I have found the best educational ideas have come when we are all working together in spirit of collegiality, harmony, and fun! The good news is that as leaders we are the ones who determine the atmosphere in our buildings. That is powerful! Use your power wisely to create a culture where everyone feels valued and great ideas are unleashed every day.

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SAANYS New York State

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THE BIG IDEA:

Stop Separating.
Start Collaborating.

By Peter DeWitt, EdD

School leaders and teachers are different. We know that. After all, school leaders are considered administrators, and teachers are considered, well, teachers. As time goes on leaders are accused of not understanding the role of teachers because leaders are getting further and further away from being in the classroom. Those leaders who consider themselves instructional leaders do their best to get into classrooms every day, but the division between the two roles has already begun. It's human nature to treat school leaders with a different status than teachers.

Unfortunately, schools often help perpetuate these differences. It happens a great deal when schools are offering professional development opportunities. For the last two years I've had the opportunity to run a lot of workshops and keynotes around North America, the UK, and Australia. Many times I get to visit the schools, talk with teachers and leaders, and get into classrooms to see what students are learning. As much as I loved being a teacher and principal, this opportunity to work with John Hattie, Jim Knight, and do my own work on safeguarding LGBTQ students or collaborative leadership has offered another learning curve in my career.

In Hattie's research, which involves the largest meta-analysis ever done in education and became his first best-selling book called *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement*, he found 138 influences on learning, and by 2013 after the release of *Visible Learning for Teachers* in 2012, Hattie's research showed 150 influences on learning. In 2016, John has collected over 200 influences on learning.

Hattie's research uses effect size, which has become a popular method among researchers to show the impact an intervention is having on learning. Generally, influences with effect sizes of .40 or higher show a year's worth of growth for a year's input. In Visible Learning trainings we refer to that as the hinge point. Out of the 200 influences Hattie's research has found, professional development showed to have an effect size of .51, because what teachers learned, they used in the classroom, and it resulted in higher effects on student learning.

The complicated side of Hattie's research is when we begin looking at one influence and then discovering all of the moderators within them. For example, parental involvement has an effect size of .72 but when we look at just the research around special education, the effect size of parental involvement goes up higher. In Hattie's research, the effect sizes are an average of all of the meta-analyses together. Meaning, some research showed that professional development was well under a .51 and

other research showed a much higher effect.

Professional development may include instructional coaching, traditional PD found in many schools, edcamps, workshops, or even chat sessions that take place through social media. Some of these lack the research to show whether they have a high effect or not. Many leaders and teachers, in the last five years or so, have been forced to sit through professional development that didn't seem professional nor did it add to their development. This happened because of state mandates, unrelated topics to the needs of the participants, or a bad trainer, something I am always conscious of now that I am that face of professional development when I walk into school settings.

> "If district and building leadership so believe in the initiative taking place, they should be at the training with teachers."

There are times when teachers and leaders don't care about the topic, nor do they care who the trainer is, but they do care that they have been pulled from their rooms or buildings to attend a one day training. It's incumbent on the trainer to make sure that they follow through and win the naysayers over. It also means the district needs to make sure that they do an effective job getting people to understand why they have to attend the training. Everyone is 100 percent responsible for their 50 percent.

Although professional development, in Hattie's research, has shown to have an effect size of .51, it can get better. Just because something seems to be working doesn't mean it's always working as well as it could. Michael Jordan and Wayne Gretzky wanted to improve in their practice, even when they were at the peak of their performance.

A PROBLEM THAT SURFACED TO THE TOP

A few months after I began running workshops and giving keynotes, I realized something was missing from the equation when districts were adopting a new framework. That missing piece is that when the trainings occurred, principals and teachers were very rarely at the same one. Ultimately, within a few hours questions and comments arise such as, "How will I get administrative support?" "Will my principal be getting the same training?" "My principal doesn't really understand what I do and they put me into positions that don't fall under the job description of the original role."

Even if leaders are invited to the teachers' training, rarely do they ever attend, and then without fail, a few weeks or a month later, I get asked back to give the same training to leaders. And when that training happens, leaders will ask, "What sort of questions came up with the teachers?" "I wish she told me that I wasn't supposed to do that or I wouldn't have in the first place." They leave with a better understanding of the content and purpose, but it could have all been resolved, for a lot less money, if leaders and teachers were all in the same room in the first place.

This issue, which happens about 90 percent of the time that I'm on the road, which is well over 100 days a year, made me realize that we have an easily fixable issue when it comes to professional development. School districts should set up a culture where leaders and teachers are in the same room during professional development, so they can gain the same understanding, and ask questions to provide clarification.

When school districts set up a culture of different trainings for leaders and teachers, when the initiative is supposed to be adopted by all of them, this creates a situation where leaders or teachers have to be reactive rather than proactive. It creates the need for another step where leaders may have to go back

to a faculty and run through the same steps. When questions come up, the facilitator isn't there to help work through it. It becomes piecemeal.

NOT WITHOUT **OBSTACLES**

There are many obstacles to this issue of bringing everyone in for the same professional development. As a former principal and teacher in New York State I understand the fact that many professional development days may already be earmarked for other state compliance professional development.

Additionally, I understand that principals are very busy blending the roles of being a manager, instructional leader, and student advocate; not to mention working through the flurry of phone calls that come in from parents. However, teachers would tell you that they are just as busy within their own teaching role. That role comes with a lot of responsibilities as well.

If a new initiative or framework is being adopted by a district, and it's that important that it takes district funds, shouldn't we ask that leaders and teachers attend the same training, which will be much more impactful and cut through some of the time it takes to get everyone on board?

On the teacher side of things, it has come up in conversation that teachers may be scared to ask questions that they believe will upset their leaders. As a consultant, I believe the person running the workshop should be sensitive to the roles of everyone in the room, and set up enough dialogue time in small and large groups that this issue can be alleviated. However, when a teacher is afraid to ask a question in front of their leader, I believe this is also a school climate issue. In an age when we want students to ask more questions in classrooms, why is it still OK for teachers to not be able to ask questions in professional development settings?

IT'S ABOUT **COLLABORATION**

New initiatives are at risk of failing, especially in a school climate that hasn't focused on true collaboration. If any initiative is going to be successful, it needs the collective work of all stakeholders. One way of doing this is through building collective teacher efficacy, which needs collaborative leadership.

Recently, Hattie has explored collective teacher efficacy, which has an effect size of 1.57, which is almost quadruple the hinge point. Collective teacher efficacy means that leaders help find the strengths of all teachers and help build those strengths together. The reason why this is so important is that Ashton et al. found,

> Teachers with low teaching efficacy don't feel that teachers, in general, can make much of a difference in the lives of students, while teachers with low personal teaching efficacy don't feel that they, personally, affect the lives of the students (Ashton & Webb, 1986).

Every school, no matter how good it might be, has teachers with a low level of self-efficacy. Through the collaboration that takes place among leaders and teachers in professional development sessions, leaders can help build the self-efficacy of teachers, which will help lead to the greater good of the district.

The days of teachers and leaders learning about different things that have nothing to do with a district mission are in the past, but in order to get there, school leaders must find ways to build the human capital (Hargreaves) of the collective group. The reality is that, if a district has a stakeholder group that truly represents all the different groups within a school community, then the mission that is chosen should be representative of all of their needs. Therefore, the professional development, and the goals among individual teachers, should focus on that mission or initiative as well.

This does not mean that everyone loses their voice for the collective voice of the district. It means that everyone can retain their voice, at the same time they all work in their unique ways, with their individual creative ways of thinking, toward that mission. The only way to really understand those collective voices is by getting them in the same room to open up the dialogue and bring about a better understanding. Teachers dislike when they feel manipulated into feeling as if they have a voice, and then when the professional development day happens, none of the leaders who told them they would work with them are in the room to work through the learning.

We all want our students to collaborate, but as adults we do not collaborate all that well. If district and building leadership so believe in the initiative taking place, they should be at the training with teachers. When they aren't at the training, we create segmentation among groups. It helps to perpetuate that leaders make the decisions and teachers have to follow them, and that's not collaboration.

Although training leaders and teachers in different rooms on different days provides comfort, it doesn't always provide deep conversations and action steps to move forward, because the teachers being trained separately begin thinking about how they have to ask the leader for permission to move forward, so they never get to a clear action step. Teachers end up feeling as though they have to go back to the building to ask for permission before they can take the action step. This, of course, can result in more questions, and a lack of movement or chaos.

Separate trainings can contribute to the dysfunctional relationship between leaders and teachers,

especially if it already existed before the new initiative. This is not a secret. In many districts there are teachers who do not trust leaders, and in those districts leaders talk negatively about teachers. Often, leaders don't make the commitment to be at the training because they "don't have the time." We seem to always find the time to commit to the things we want to and make excuses not to commit to the things we don't. If this new initiative is that important, everyone should make time.

IN THE **END**

Leaders wouldn't start moving toward another initiative unless they believed it was important. Hopefully, they believed it was important because they had a stakeholder group involving teachers who felt as though they could be open and honest. Let's face it, any of us who have been in education long enough have begun to hate certain words that popped up in conversations, and *professional development* and *initiatives* are probably

among those words.

It would be better for all involved, if leaders and teachers were able to sit in the same room and have open dialogue about how to move forward. In the long run this will help build the collective efficacy of the group and lead to stronger professional development, which will hopefully lead to a stronger initiative.

In my experience over the last two years, the school districts that brought together district and building level leaders, along with teachers, and encouraged them to have truthful dialogue, were the ones who were most successful in the long run. The districts that had separate trainings for leaders and separate trainings for teachers were the ones that struggled to get the initiative moving. Being successful means we have to look at doing things differently, and bringing teachers and leaders together for professional development around a new initiative is a good place to start.

REFERENCE

Hattie, John (2012). *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement.* Routledge: London.

PETER DEWITT, EdD is a former teacher and principal, and now works nationally and internationally as an author and consultant. He works with John Hattie, Jim Knight and does his own work around safeguarding LGBTQ students and collaborative leadership. His forthcoming book *Collaborative Leadership: 6 Influences That Matter Most* (Corwin Press) will be published in July 2016. He can be found at www.petermdewitt.com.
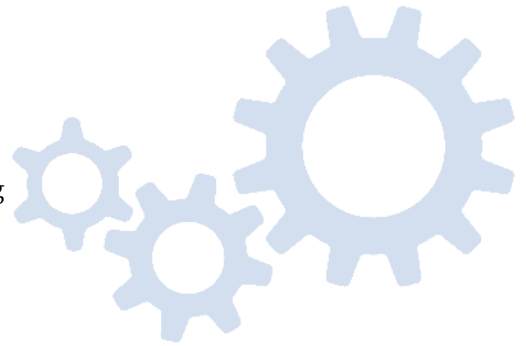
RETHINK EVERYTHING:

Sparking Transformational Conversations in Your School

By Karen Bronson

"The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn't need to be reformed – it needs to be transformed."

   – Ken Robinson

We are living in a time of unprecedented change, both within and outside of our schools. In *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*, Michael Fullan describes an "..unplanned digital revolution that is so volatile that it cannot be controlled in any traditional sense of the word." He describes the push and pull factors that we are experiencing firsthand in our educational systems: the fact that schooling is increasingly boring for students and alienating for teachers and the pull of the ever more alluring digital world.

His solution to the current instability will encompass four criteria: curriculum that is "irresistibly engaging" for students and teachers, "elegantly efficient and easy" from a technical standpoint to use, "technologically ubiquitous 24/7" and "steeped in real-life problem solving."

Wow. This is not tinkering we are talking about. This is a sea change. This is transformation from the ground up that requires the rethinking of most if not all of the traditional tenets that have supported our aging

and obsolete educational models. Ken Robinson likens this to moving from "..what is essentially an industrial model of education, a manufacturing model, which is based on linearity and conformity and batching people … " to a model that creates the conditions for our learners and teachers to flourish.

If we can agree to acknowledge that the world has indeed changed over the last ten years, not to mention twenty, thirty or forty, we have to also acknowledge that inside some of our schools, it's still 1972 ('62? '52?) only with a Smartboard that replaced the whiteboard that replaced the green board that replaced the blackboard. A grown-up is talking in front of the room. Students are listening to varying degrees, reading, writing, saying things, using some iPads …. what is being covered will be tested and regurgitated in some form, a grade will be assigned based on what the teacher now knows kids did or did not know all along, the grade will go in the book and everyone will march on because there is just so much to cover.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the time that we are living in now in our schools is that we are trying, honestly trying, to change in the interest of kids and the vision of "student centered learning" our teaching rubrics demand. However, we are trying to do new things within the same tired and rigid frameworks: a day Ken Robinson describes as arranged into "standard units of time, marked out by the ringing of bells, much like a factory… Students educated in batches, according to age, as if the most important thing they have in common is their date of manufacture."

What we end up doing is tinkering around the edges (which is really what educational "reform" is about, which is why it fails) rather than thinking about how schools and learning need to be transformed by rethinking long established practices from bygone days from the ground up. Homework is a great example of the difference between tinkering and transforming. This soul-crushing juggernaut, which has the power to disrupt family life and cause unparalleled angst on a nightly basis (with no established benefits to learning) is a practice that needs deep review. Yet in school districts where the issue rises to the top as a priority for review, a typical approach is to form a committee and see how new "policies" for the old wine can be poured into new bottles. Perhaps the committee recommends "guidelines" for the amount of homework in different grades: a half hour in fourth grade, an hour in sixth

grade, etc. None of this works because the "guidelines" are absolutely meaningless and unenforceable for a myriad of reasons, and nothing changes. The real questions about the purpose of homework and the human feelings around it (teachers afraid that they will look bad compared to their colleagues if they assign little or none, the inequity of the playing fields at home with regard to the level of parental "support," the dark side of homework co-ops where groups of students rotate doing it for others to copy) are never addressed in the tinkering designed to look like action. Rather, the conversation about transforming homework by flipping instruction, redefining the goal and purpose of homework, changing the way homework compliance "counts," and collaboratively designing homework that truly promotes learning is where the real conversation needs to be.

This is the time to question and rethink everything from homework to the way the furniture looks and is arranged in classrooms, to one-size-fits-all academic models and pathways, to school cultures that "stigmatize mistakes and result in educating people out of their creative capacities" (Ken Robinson), to the way our teachers learn and grow professionally.

So where to start? Perhaps by getting the conversation started about a few of the biggest and most deeply embedded bedrocks. Rather than purporting to have all the answers, starting with the hard questions around a topic is often the best way to start the conversation. So, for a topic like rethinking traditional approaches to grading, some of the starting questions might be:

- How do we separate assessing learning from assessing compliance?
- How do we ensure that we are assessing work that the student himself or herself actually did?
- Why is retesting a regular part of big important things in real life (driving tests, professional certifications, licensing) but so absent in schools?

- What are grades for? Are we worried that students wouldn't comply without the threat of a poor grade hanging over their head? What does that say about the quality of instruction and where does that leave kids who don't care about grades?
- Would a coach look at a young baseball player's swing and say, "That's a B+. Next."? How do we give growth-focused feedback to students?
- What place do zeroes or late penalties have in a grading system that measures learning?
- If four seventh-grade math teachers use the same curriculum, but make up their own tests individually, with some giving credit for covering the book, and four students from four of their classes all end up with a B on their report card, does that grade mean anything? How can we move from idiosyncratic individually created teacher tests to common formative assessments that are the result of collaborative efforts? What could I, as the school leader, do to create the conditions so that this could happen?
- How do we move from a traditional grading paradigm where mistakes are punished and students are judged with grades while still learning to one that reinforces a growth mindset, promotes learned optimism and perseverance? (*Rethinking Grading*, Cathy Vatterott)
- What schools around us have made the transition to standards-based grading, and what are they learning? How can we learn from them?

Or, making the Move to Project-Based Learning –

- How did Crellin Elementary School, a small, rural K-5 school in Oakland, Maryland, take hands-on, project-based learning to a level that extends far beyond one or two projects a year to inspire a growing population of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds? How did these efforts result in Crellin being an Intel School of Distinction, the Maryland State Assessment Top-Performing Elementary School, and the winner of the Ernest L. Boyer Best Practices Award for Character Education? (http://www.edutopia.org/school/crellin-elementary-school)
- Why do we persist in focusing on our old toolbox of disciplinary consequences to manage behavior rather than seeking radically different instructional approaches that engage even the most reluctant students?
- What schools around us are making the transition to PBL, and what are they learning? How can we learn from them?

After the questions, seeking out the most current learning around the topic is a next step. For the grading question, this could mean bringing in the work of thought leaders like Tom Guskey, Ken O'Connor, Cathy Vatterott, Myron Dueck, and others. Look for video clips that bring the questions into focus and use them at any opportunity: administrative team, faculty team, or parent meetings to spark awareness and discussion. Look for small steps in these resources that some will be willing to take to keep the learning going and the topic on the front burner. Here's an example: Leah Alcala teaches seventh- and eighth-grade math. She has made one small change that has big payback in getting students to focus on learning rather than grading. See how she does it at https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/math-test-grading-tips.

Taking continual actions to nudge thinking that brings us closer to the realization that our schools need to change to engage today's students is essential. Here are two video stories that are sure to prompt thinking and discussion:

- Watch Ken Robinson's TED talk: "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" (https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity?language=en) and then follow up with excerpts from his book, *Creative Schools*.
- "The Rule": the story of how St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, NJ, reinvented itself to meet the needs of a new population and now achieves nearly 100 percent college acceptance for inner-city boys (http://www.pbs.org/show/rule/) or the 60 Minutes feature (http://www.sbp.org/60Minutes).
- Read *Transforming Brockton High School*, Sue Szachowicz's story of how perseverance and true collaboration over time transform a troubled high school – and meet Sue at the SAANYS Annual Conference in October! (http://bit.ly/1TgNOUD)
- Watch Operation Lighthouse Rescue (Nova) (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/tech/lighthouse-rescue.html) to see how the saving move of the Gay Head Lighthouse in Martha's Vineyard was accomplished through a team using problem-based learning in its purest form. Show it to students and the grown-ups to spark conversation about the difference between abstract and applied learning.

Transformational change in schools will not happen easily or quickly, but it is already happening in your schools and schools nearby in transformational conversations that spark thought that ignites action. Get the conversations going in your school by asking tough questions and finding the resources that hold some answers. It is leadership at its finest.

KAREN BRONSON, SAANYS director of professional development, is a frequent presenter on topics related to instructional leadership, APPR, and Common Core implementation. Her background as a teacher of English, principal, assistant to the superintendent, and professional developer gives her a perspective grounded in the most current developments and challenges of educational reform.

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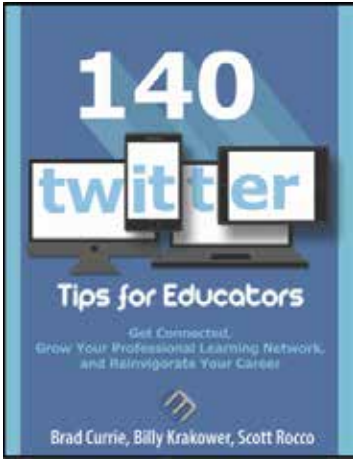
140 Twitter Tips for Educators
Brad Currie, Billy Krakower, and Scott Rocco

I've had the privilege of speaking to many administrative groups across New York State about being a "connected leader." Connected leaders leverage the power of social media and technology in their practice. One of the most powerful yet still underrated tools is Twitter.

Twitter is easily one of the best ways to gather information and resources from colleagues 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Setting up a Twitter profile can be relatively easy. However, those new to Twitter become confused with the different functions and possibilities that exist within the tool. Many get overwhelmed and move away from using it.

Whether you are a seasoned Twitter user or an overwhelmed new user, *140 Twitter Tips for Educators*, by Brad Currie, Billy Krakower, and Scott Rocco, is the book you need (immediately!) to maximize Twitter use in your leadership role.

The book is made up of three sections. Each section applies to the stage of Twitter use you are in. Section 1 is for new users. Section 2 is for experienced users while Section 3 is for users who are ready to maximize their online Twitter presence. Each section includes tips for the user and screenshots to provide a visual reference. Examples of tips modeled for users include learning what a retweet is, how to join a Twitter chat, how to use tweetdeck and how to brand your school or education business.

From *140 Twitter Tips for Educators*, p. 99 (Currie, Krakower, Rocco)

Whether you're dipping your toe into the Twitter pool or jumping from the high dive, this book will meet the needs of all Twitter users at various levels. It has quickly become my recommended resource for any colleagues who ask me about Twitter!

BOOK REVIEW BY LISA MEADE

Lisa Meade is middle school principal at Corinth CSD. She is also the 2015 SAANYS Middle School Principal of the Year and the NASSP 2015 NYS Principal of the Year. You can find her on Twitter at @LisaMeade23.

Tip #139 is likely the *best advice* in the book.

Tip #139 Just Be You!
Tweet about what you believe in. Tweet about how educators can come together, how we can improve, and how we can promote the success of students. Tweet often and tweet with passion! Above all, be authentic. Authenticity rules on Twitter.
But while you're "just being honest," remember that if your tweets come off as negative, overly critical, or focused on your personal agenda, you are probably wasting your time – and others' time. Instead, share resources that can ultimately have a positive impact on the world of education.

Be daring and take risks with Twitter to start new conversations. Being a connected educator on Twitter provides so many opportunities to change the educational conversation and move everyone forward in a positive direction.

Tweeting is all about passion, brevity, reflection, sharing, and most importantly learning. Use this magnificent tool to grow as an educator. The more you grow the better chance there is to help other like-minded educators and help students become the best they can possibly be.

Don't worry about knowing all the answers or having the right title behind your name. Share generously. Be authentic. Chat honestly about what needs to change and about what's working well. Just be yourself because as the saying goes, everyone else is already taken.

FYI

TRENDING GREAT IDEAS

"""Love the kids with all your heart and you will be successful."

– Richard Loeschner,
*SAANYS 2016 New York State
High School Principal of the Year*

""In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun, and the job's a game."

– P.L. Travers, *Mary Poppins*

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Just Use It!

"Our students don't come to school saying, "Hey, I think I'll use technology today!" They just use it because it's like an appendage that they grew up with. We should stop using it as if it's an add-on."

-Peter DeWitt @PeterMDeWitt

www.bamradionetwork.com/quotED

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Download a QR code reader app on your smart phone or tablet to launch these videos.

Practices
from practitioners

Total Quality Management to
School Improvement

By John P. Sawchuk

You may remember the total quality management movement back in the nineties that took the business world by storm. It has since taken on a lot of different forms and names over the years but the concept of continuous improvement can assist schools to improve their culture as well as academic results. **Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management approach based on quality. Quality is achieved through customer satisfaction and benefits all members of the community.** It provides an organization with a way that enables it to meet stakeholders' needs and expectations efficiently. It enables you to look at goals, processes, and people to ensure the right things get done.

Before I share with you how we at Columbia High School utilized the principles of quality management to improve our culture, let's look at the total quality management's eight principles:

1) <u>Customer-focused organization</u>: You must understand the needs of your community, meet their requirements, and exceed their expectations.
2) <u>Leadership</u>: Establish a strong sense of direction. Everyone knows the purpose of what we do.
3) <u>Involvement of people</u>: People at all levels of the organization are involved in achieving goals – "Total Accountability."
4) <u>Process approach</u>: A desired result is achieved when resources and activities are managed as a process.
5) <u>System approach</u>: Identifying, understanding and managing a system of intervention processes for a given problem contributes to efficiency.
6) <u>Continual improvement</u>: Is a permanent objective and considered a renewal process.
7) <u>Factual approach to decision making</u>: Decisions are based on analysis of data and information.
8) <u>Mutual beneficial relationships</u>: Relationships between the organization and the community create value.

Over the past nine years, we have seen considerable change at Columbia High, a suburban school with a population of 1,300 students. When I became principal, the groundwork had been set with a multimillion-dollar construction project that turned our facility into a modern state-of-the-art learning environment. The expectations were high and the goal was to transform Columbia High School into a premier Capital Region school.

The task when we began our journey was significant. We had only an 83 percent graduation rate (significantly below other similar schools) and were underperforming academically in many areas (ranked 30th in the *Business Review*). Our school culture was not representative of our community's expectations. We had a high suspension rate that included student issues with fighting, drug use, and insubordination.

The first step for me was to surround myself with assistant principals who had the same core values that I did. We would be leaders who made a commitment to be proactive, inclusive, responsive, and problem solvers. In everything we did we would shape direction by stressing high expectations and working with every student to maximize their potential.

We reached out to our community to find out what was important to them. Because of our diverse population we found out it was important to not only provide programs for our gifted students but also provide safety net programs for our at-risk students. We challenged ourselves each year to maintain a balance; it would be the only way to make progress.

Our organization on all levels would be built on accountability. We would take great pride in constructing our LEP (local education plan) each year. It would set our yearly goals and initiatives that stressed closing learning gaps and constantly comparing us with the best high schools in the area. We would present our plan to our board of education (BOE). Department leaders play a large role in making sure our goals and initiatives are carried out.

We have made continuous improvement a priority. We used data analysis to determine what students we were losing each year and why. We added a new at-risk program for seniors called operation graduation. This program was a self-contained program that utilized a shorter school day, small environment, and online credit recovery to prevent students from dropping out. We added a ninth-grade semi-contained class for special education freshmen named Jump Start when our data showed we were losing students early in their high school experience. Over the last two years we have had an 80 percent special education graduation rate and a 93.4 percent graduation rate for all students.

Our school culture changed over time when we made it clear to all students that fighting and drug use would not be tolerated and would result in a yearlong suspension. With the commitment of our board of education, we added breathalyzers, K-9 drills, and video surveillance along with two full-time security supervisors. Over the past three years our suspension rate continues to decline to historic lows.

With our philosophy of working with each student, we developed a system approach for tracking each student. Our counselors and principals play a huge role in understanding each student's academic needs in our senior cohort. Countless meetings are held to determine student progress. Review sessions are assigned or individual tutors assist students to close learning gaps and prepare for exams.

Our community has played a key role in supporting our efforts of continuous improvement. Over the years we have established an equine learning program for at-risk students at a local farm. Local businesses provide internships and local scientists serve as mentors for our award-winning science research program.

We utilized the concepts of total quality management to guide us on our road to improvement – a road that never ends.

In 2015 the Albany Business Review School Report ranked Columbia High School the sixth best high school in the upstate New York region.

Benefits of Improved School Climate
- Improved test scores
- Improved graduation rates
- Improved school safety
- Improved student attendance
- Reduced dropout rate
- Improved working environment
- Higher rates of teacher satisfaction

REFERENCES
1) Hawkins (2016), CQI; Hub Resources/Factsheets http://www.thecqi.org Hub/Resources
2) Ashley Osgood (2011), Quality Management http://info_ibs_us.com

JOHN SAWCHUK is the principal of Columbia High School in the East Greenbush Central School District and is assisted by Martin Mahar, Tim Malloy and Edward Kilmartin.

Google Apps for Education
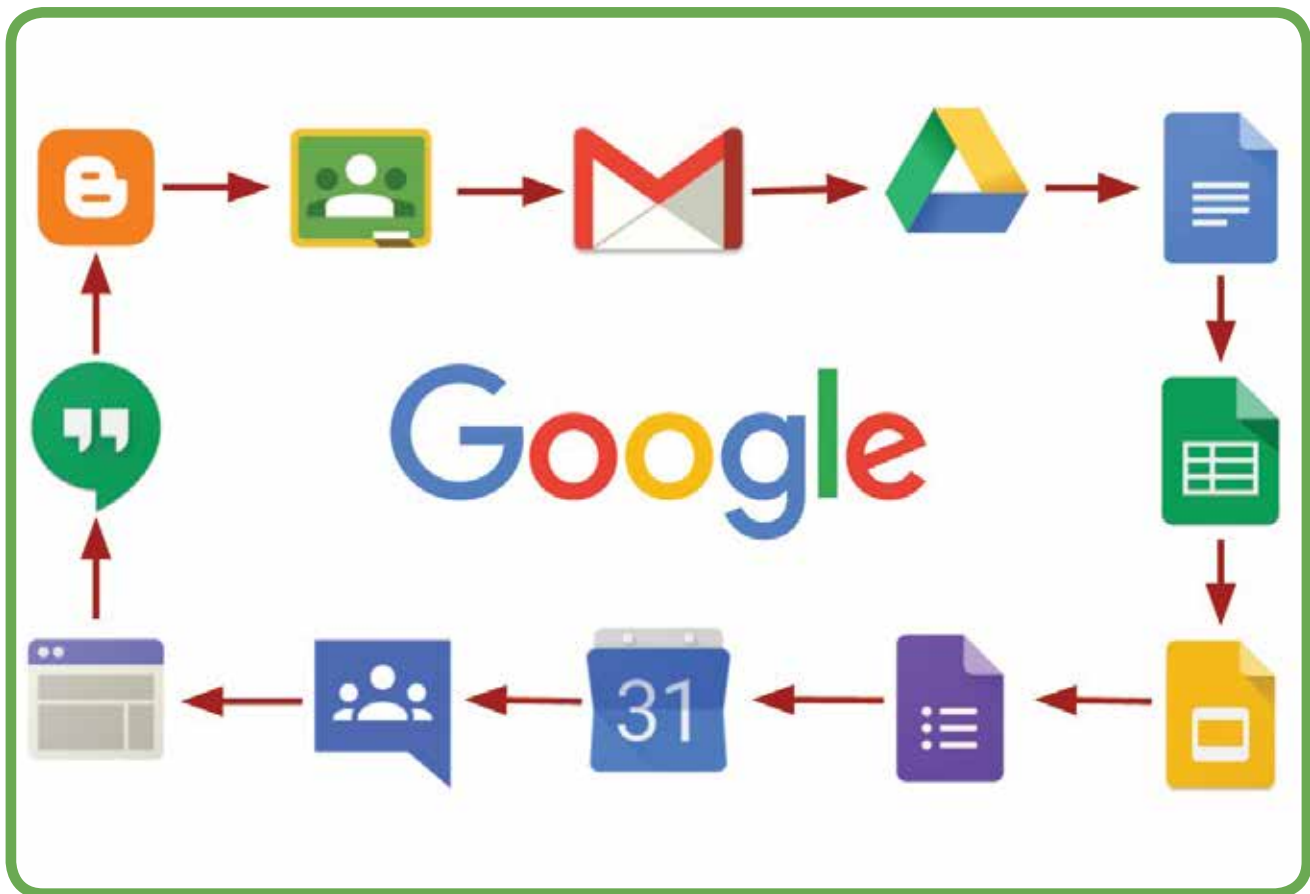
By Lisa Meade,
David Ashdown,
and Michael DeCaprio

Google Apps for Education (GAFE) has grown from 8 million users to over 40 million users in the last five years, with growth expected to reach 110 million users by the year 2020. When school districts adopt GAFE, the focus is almost always on the teachers and students. Districts prioritize teacher professional development on the various Google Apps, and getting devices into the hands of students. Yet, in each of these schools, educational leaders may not realize the tremendous potential for harnessing **Google Apps for the purposes of school leadership and collaboration.**

DAVID ASHDOWN –
LEAD COORDINATOR FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY WSWHE BOCES

Prior to the public launch of Google Classroom in fall 2014, Google Apps was definitely missing something. At best, it provided a free, cloud-based version of the Microsoft Office suite with some increased potential for sharing documents and collaborating in real time. Having been on the educational technology scene for over a decade, I was not, at first, overly impressed with the features. Only a half dozen or so of the 31 school districts in our region had "gone Google." That has all changed with Google Classroom.

In Google Classroom, K-12 schools finally have a simple-to-use and visually appealing platform that makes it easy for teachers and students to share announcements, documents, videos and other resources. Best of all, it is a tool that was built specifically for K-12 education, not a retrofit learning management system that was designed for higher education.

In July 2014, I was invited to participate in a private beta test of Google Classroom, and I was immediately impressed. It sounds clichéd to start using phrases like "game changer," but it was obvious to me that this was going to be a major driving force in providing schools with digital collaboration tools, no matter the device. The response to our first Google Classroom teacher workshops was overwhelming, and teachers who have described themselves as being afraid of technology were surprised how easy it was to use.

With the teachers convinced, the next challenge was to think "outside the classroom," and test out some ways that this new tool could be used by school leaders to communicate and collaborate with students, teachers, parents and fellow administrators.

I had the opportunity to share these "experiments" at the 2015 ISTE conference in Philadelphia to a standing-room audience of over 200 school leaders. The presentation, entitled "Google classroom for administra-tors: modeling digital age learning, communication and collaboration," walked participants through the possibilities for utilizing Classroom for daily school announcements, teacher evaluations, flipped faculty meetings, and a variety of other uses for school leaders. It wasn't until after the presentation that emails began to pour in from people who were closed out of the session asking for access to the presentation materials and for advice:

> "The one session I thought I would benefit from greatly was closed. Traveled from New Hampshire to be closed out. I arrived early to attend. So disappointed."

> "Not enough seating. Many people were unable to get into this session (myself included)."

In the meantime, Lisa Meade and Michael DeCaprio were planning their own use of Google Classroom to enhance their leadership roles. When Lisa posted a blog entry about her experiences using Google Classroom as a school leader, the response was overwhelming! It became clear that there is a genuine need for a definitive resource that provides Google Classroom implementation guidance to principals, assistant principals, curriculum directors, assistant superintendents and even superintendents.

LISA MEADE – CORINTH CSD MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

During August 2015, I attended a Google Camp for Administrators. One of the sessions was led by an edtech expert in my region, David Ashdown. I've followed David's work for nearly 15 years. He's always been in the front of technology use and I've stolen many neat ideas from him.

He offered a session about Google Classroom and I attended, thinking I needed to gather more ideas about this app for my teachers. However, in the session, David pushed our thinking in asking us to consider how we could use Google Classroom as administrators.

He shared an example of setting up classrooms for different work groups and committees. I loved his idea! Almost immediately, I set up classrooms for committees in my
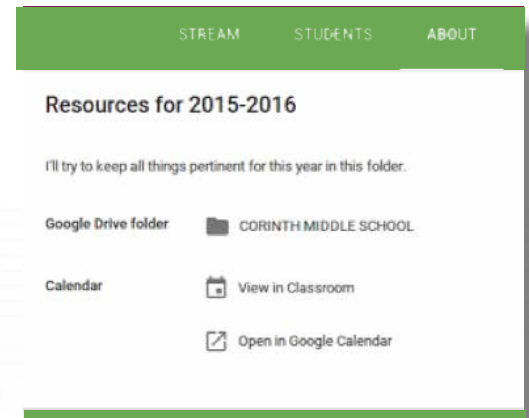
About Tab – shows folders for classroom

building. This kept all of the information collected for each group (SDM, PBIS, etc.) all in one folder on the back end of Drive. I also created a classroom for my building. This is where I would post my weekly messages. Under the About tab, I also collected resources teachers might need for the entire year.

What I hadn't anticipated was how much more organized my folders in Drive would be. Since the classroom automatically feeds to that particular folder, I can find files much more easily than I could before.

After creating Google Classrooms for the adults I work with, I began to think about the students. Could I use Google Classroom, as a principal, in a way to connect with students? YES! I created a classroom and asked students to sign up using the code. I simply hung a flyer outside my office with the code and distributed the same flyer to homerooms for posting.

At first, I used The Principal's Office to post general announcements. But I quickly realized there was more I could do with this. I began to use it in different ways. We now post student surveys, student shout outs (by Google form completion) and advertise for school jobs within the platform!

I haven't mandated becoming a "student" in the classroom. However, I have nearly 200 "students" signed up and about 280 students total in

my building. My hope is that this becomes one more way I can connect with students.

MICHAEL DECAPRIO – LEAD COORDINATOR FOR SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT, WSWHE BOCES

A great part of my role is supporting the adults in 31 public school districts with technical assistance and professional support and development. I spend a small part of my work week at my conference center, and a greater part of my week getting out to my districts. My region has districts with fewer than 100 students K-12 and districts with more than 6,000 students K-12. It's a diverse set of districts, all of which are trying to manage large-scale change.

My use of Google Classroom fits naturally with other transitions I've made. With as much as I need to be on the road, and with as many different topics I need to be ready to address, I've moved to Google Drive for all of my docs and sheets and slides.

But I also need a way to do two other things. I need (now "needed") a way to get my materials into the hands of the educators I'm working with, and I need a way to stay in touch with them as well.

One of my responsibilities is to support my teachers, principals, and districts when making major changes involving new learning standards and educator evaluation. As you can imagine, there is a lot of information to process. It just doesn't make sense to bring piles of paper everywhere I go. By giving the educators access to a shared Google folder, everyone can get the materials, maintain access to the materials, and of course, it's all done digitally.

Secondly, I've been searching (and searching) for some efficient and effective way to stay in touch with those I spend time with. I strive to keep all 31 of my superintendents, hundreds of administrators, and thousands of teachers in the loop when it comes to new initiatives that we have to grapple with. Twitter is great, but it's too "light" for true in-depth communication, and not everyone is there yet. Almost everyone is on Facebook, but I need to be sure educators have access at school. I've also tried Moodle and Schoology. These types of platforms do the job allowing me to stay in touch and share resources, but the downside is that each is just one more place participants have to go online, to join, to check, to log in and learn to use elsewhere to participate.

Enter Google Classroom. Almost all of my districts are GAFE districts.

They are already logged in. They already know how to use the suite of apps. They are adept with Drive. They have access at school. I can say and post as much or as little as I need to in the stream. Everyone included has access to a developing library of resources in the associated folder. And, since it's so easy to set up various Classrooms, I can target who gets which message.

IN THE END

Google Classroom need not be a tool we expect just our teachers to use. Instead, Google Classroom implementation plans and professional development must include other roles within a school so that its capacity can be fully realized. Principals, assistant principals, curriculum directors, assistant superintendents, and even superintendents can all find ways to organize information within their organization, provide efficient feedback, and allow for ongoing communication with faculty and staff. Part of a leader's responsibility as a leader is to find ways to walk the walk. Embedding Google Classrooms into your practice is one definite way to do just that.

LISA MEADE, DAVID ASHDOWN, and MICHAEL DECAPRIO

Summit Locations

August 9, 2016
Lower Hudson RIC
450 Mamaroneck Avenue
Harrison, NY 10528

August 16, 2016
Bethlehem High School
700 Delaware Avenue
Delmar, NY 12054

August 18, 2016
Dansville High School
282 Main Street
Dansville, NY 14437

August 25, 2016
Saranac Lake HS
79 Canaras Avenue
Saranac Lake, NY 12983

August 29, 2016
Hyde Park HS
156 S. Cross Road
Staatsburg, NY 12580

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Summit

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Register online at nyscate.org.

$99 per person, includes full program, lunch, and breaks. All attendees are eligible for door prize drawings to be held during the closing remarks.

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Syracuse City Schools Lead the Way in Prioritizing Excellent Teaching, Improved

School Culture and Student Learning

By Karin Davenport

In Jennifer Benedetto's cultural voices class in the EPIC program at Johnson Center, one day begins with an interactive Kahoot! lesson quiz. Students then watch a series of short videos, interspersed with discussion, and then break out to alternate between group work and independent assignments. This is blended learning at work.

At Franklin Elementary, one group of students sits quietly at their desks, completing an independent writing prompt. Another group sits at computers, working through reading, spelling and sentence completion exercises.

A third group sits with the teacher, working on a character traits lesson, while a fourth group works together to continue the lesson the teacher taught them in another rotation.

Every 15-20 minutes, the Franklin students rotate through the stations in the classroom, where they complete individual work, group work, computer assessments, and lessons with a teacher. This, too, is blended learning at work, and classrooms across the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) are gradually transitioning to this method of instruction.

Personalized, blended learning, a method of instruction that focuses on the individual rather than the group, allows students to use new, interactive ways to learn independently and guide their own instruction to some extent. As part of wave 1 of implementation in the SCSD, ten schools are currently using blended learning, with 10-14 new schools expected to be added to the training and implementation schedule each year.

As part of a district-wide strategy to provide more time for teacher collaboration, a focus on excellent teaching, and an overall positive change in school culture, SCSD schools are also transitioning to an opportunity culture staffing solution.

Now implemented in eight schools, the model will expand to eight more in the 2016-17 school year. The goals of opportunity culture schools are twofold: to give more students access to excellent teaching, and to transform teaching into a highly paid profession with opportunities for career advancement. To achieve this, a structure is put in place in which an excellent teacher – a multi-classroom leader (MCL) – serves in a leadership role, overseeing other

teachers to lead them in executing strategies and best practices.

These multi-classroom leaders specialize in high-priority subjects and the most crucial, challenging roles, opening up time for the classroom teachers to reach more students. Nineteen multi-classroom leaders have been added across all eight current SCSD opportunity culture schools, and nine existing MCLs continued in their roles in these schools.

"The idea behind opportunity culture is to provide more collaborative planning time to keep teachers on the same page, while also ensuring that no children are left without the resources they need to be successful," talent management coordinator Jeanie Aversa explained. "This model gives schools the ability to utilize staff in the best way for their students and their own unique needs."

At Seymour Dual Language Academy, for example, one MCL leads each grade level. The school has already seen great success with opportunity culture in this way, with students outperforming other district schools in assessments for the second year in a row. School staff attribute this to the collaboration and communication encouraged by the staffing model.

"I see all the kids, I have access to all the teachers, I can co-teach, and I'm held accountable just like they are," Seymour science teacher and fourth-grade MCL Russ Stanton explained. "I'm in it with them, so that forces us to have courageous conversations. I can help teachers understand new district and school initiatives and how we can implement them well in our classrooms."

The MCL position has been welcomed by teachers – despite the constructive feedback and difficult conversations that can ensue – because they have seen the benefit of this position on both their students and their own teaching.

"Having the MCL gives us another set of eyes in the classroom providing objective input," fourth-grade math teacher Donna Worden said. "Russ has

helped us work with the kids at the level they're on. Sometimes, children are so far behind grade level that they just give up. Now, we are able to team kids in the classroom with others who are at their ability level. Having the MCL has really allowed us to teach in a new way, focusing on the best practice for each student in each lesson, rather than just moving forward with a one-size-fits-all lesson."

Opportunity culture also allows schools the ability to reallocate their budgets to increase digital learning, expanding a key component of personalized, blended learning in which students spend part of the school day engaged in age and child appropriate digital activities.

From a student perspective, these blended learning opportunities have brought content to life and have brought about better connections to classmates and teachers. "I love this class," EPIC student Jhezzmearr Thompson explained. "The responses we get from each other and the teacher are real. We're talking about real issues, and this is a class you can open up in."

Franklin Elementary School teacher Jessie Pritting said that even in its early stages, blended learning has made a positive impact on her classroom culture. "The programs we're using meet students at their level and help them develop the skills they need," she explained. "They enjoy the computer programs like ST Math because they're very game friendly. We also try to do a lot of cooperative learning with the rotations. This helps meet their attention spans and keeps them busy at the same time."

To help train teachers and administrators in how to implement personalized, blended learning in their classrooms, SCSD staff have been taking part in professional development sessions led by Education Elements. These sessions have focused on the foundations of blended learning, how to design the plans for their school, and how to launch these plans.

Karen Earl, an ELA coach at Danforth Middle School, explained that because blended learning is all about helping students learn in the way that works best for them, developing school

implementation plans should be from the student perspective.

"We are designing our guiding principles in a way that students and staff can share the same vision," Ms. Earl said. "We are focusing on what our students want—what is their mindset? Often, kids don't feel responsible for their own learning, and they learn in isolation. We want to shift that and help them direct themselves more, which will help them be more successful in high school and college."

Grant Middle School principal Pamela Odom said having a school-wide vision is key, noting that her school already uses ST Math and language live programs and that blended learning will enhance those learning opportunities. "We're looking for ways to meet students where they are, and blended learning is a good way to do that," she explained. "Teachers will now know how to meet the students where they are, face those challenges and come up with an attack plan."

In the Engaging People through Innovation and Creativity (EPIC) program at Johnson Center, teachers use a self-paced, mastery-based, flex model of blended learning to serve high school students who need a nontraditional, personalized, supportive learning environment.

EPIC Math teacher Lisa Kopp said blended learning is a great way to help encourage students to achieve their best. "Because we're learning to facilitate more, it allows the students to see how much hard work can accomplish because they are learning more in their own way," she explained. "For some of them, they are achieving for the first time in their lives. The students are saying it's so different from last year – they like it. They are buying in!"

The SCSD is also transitioning high school credit recovery programs and the homebound programs to a personalized, blended learning format. allowing students to be matched with a homebound teacher to receive a blend of online and face-to-face instructions to meet their individual needs.

Together, personalized, blended learning and opportunity culture are helping to lead the Syracuse City School District toward its goal of becoming the most improved urban school district in America. With the goals of recruiting, developing, supporting and retaining effective teachers and school leaders – and of providing all students with equitable access to rigorous curriculum in all subjects and grade levels – the transition to these programs has the district well positioned for success.

KARIN DAVENPORT is a communication specialist in the Syracuse City School District.

The Calm (Un)Focused Leader

By Paul M. Fanuele, EdD

It is time to stop thinking of being unfocused in a negative light. It is time to let go of associating calmness with outdated images such as uncaring, laziness, or an inability to act. Recent studies indicate that **staying calm and finding unfocused downtime can be keys to successful leadership** especially in the stressful environments that currently occupy many schools and workplaces.

The first topic to be discussed will be the level of stress that is currently found in many of our work environments. This will be followed by a discussion on the benefits to remaining calm and taking a pause before rushing to make decisions. Thirdly, the idea that the need for mindfulness is actually created by the need for social norms on technology will be forwarded. Finally, strategies will be suggested to assist leaders in the development of healthy habits. These habits will allow us to remain calm and strike a balance between focused and unfocused time in our hectic personal and professional lives.

STRESS

Many of us are not accustomed to operate in a stress-free environment. Being stressed seems to be an expectation in our lives. If we are not stressed, we feel we must not be working hard enough or that we will not be successful. Some stress does motivate us to complete tasks and "get things done." Even though stress in small doses might help us perform in the short run, too much stress can be devastating in the long run (Seppala, 2016). Stress can occur when we do not concentrate on the present; instead we worry about the past or what will happen in the future. Adults, on average, are engaged 50 percent of their time in the present moment (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010). Johnson (2003) discussed the value of the precious present. The truly gifted leader knows to focus on the present moment. However, this is difficult in the multitasking, constant email checking world that workplaces can become. Studies have shown that people will experience less stress if they minimize the frequency that they check email (Rath, 2015). How often do you check your email or notifications?

REMAINING CALM

Remaining calm and taking a breath before making decisions has its advantages. Delaying action on a task allows for time to engage in divergent thinking instead of jumping to conclusions (Grant, 2016). Grant discussed that forgoing the completion of a task keeps the task active on our minds which gives ideas time to percolate. It allows time for ideas to be tested and improved upon. He even suggested that strategic procrastination has its advantages. Martin Luther King, Jr., had given many speeches the same year as his famous "I Have a Dream" speech including logging over 275,000 miles of travel and delivering over 350 speeches before finally delivering his most famous speech (Grant, 2016). Can you think of a time in your life when waiting ultimately produced a desired outcome?

Seppala (2016) takes the concept of delaying action one step further. She believed that simply doing nothing or taking the time to daydream can help us create innovative ideas. Engaging in relaxing activities or even playing a round of golf contributes to the development of creative solutions to our problems. Imagine that, taking the time to daydream or relax is a key to success. I am not sure all bosses would agree, but science is revealing that downtime is beneficial to the success of your organization or school. Unfortunately, downtime runs counterintuitive to what most of us believe is necessary for success. People often feel that unless they are actively engaged in work, they are doing something wrong. We need to slow our lives down and stop putting off important activities like exercise or family time.

We need to remain in the present moment more often than we do. For example, while reading this article did you stay present in the moment or did you quickly glance at your phone to check an email or notification ding? We also seem to occupy even our idle time and not allow our minds to wander and engage in divergent thinking. Do you check your email or Facebook while in line at the coffee shop? Traditionally, this time was used to allow our minds to roam. Now, not only do we not take time out of our schedules for downtime, we occupy our idle moments. By remaining focused so often, we have no time to not be focused (Seppala, 2016). Being focused does not only occur at work. Our personal lives require plenty of focused time, which magnifies the importance of unfocused downtime.

THE PARADOX OF THE NEED FOR MINDFULNESS

Our minds need the benefit of calmness. This is no longer a secret as we see the proliferation of articles and courses on the concept of mindfulness. Calmness is an integral part of being mindful. Numerous leaders are embracing mindfulness including Phil Jackson (11-time NBA champion coach), William Ford (chairman of Ford Motor Company), and Robert Stiller (chairman of Green Mountain Coffee) (Schachter, 2012). The benefits of mindfulness are hard to ignore. However, we seem to have created a paradox of the need for mindfulness. Our society has clearly advanced technologically in our lifetime. The creation of this advanced technology and its ability to keep people focused 24/7 seems to have also created a need to not be focused 24/7. Society has yet to create new norms to control our advancements. We need norms akin to speed limits. We have speed limits even though cars can travel at faster rates. These limits (often self-imposed) protect both drivers and pedestrians and are obviously a good idea. A world without these limits would be hectic. Similarly, the absence of technology norms is creating hectic lives leading to burnout and an uninspired workforce.

Our best weapon to counteract the detriment of our current reality is to slow down, remain calm, and discover mindfulness. However, this will only treat the symptom that has materialized with the advancement of technology. We need to face the issue head on and figure out how to simultaneously harness the power of technology and the power of the human mind. We need to restore the balance of focused and unfocused time.

Schwartz (2015) argued that human nature is a product of human design. In other words, we created the need for mindfulness and the need to focus on being calm. We created the ability and expectation to be reached 24/7 in order to be more productive or efficient. The question is what do we want to be efficient in? How about our well-being and sanity?

STRATEGIES

These strategies come directly from the field of education. I polled colleagues and asked what strategies helped them to remain calm during difficult circumstances and how they strike a balance between focused and unfocused work.

CALM STRATEGIES

The most common strategy mentioned to help administrators remain calm was to control breathing, especially when you feel you are not in control. Being aware of your breathing is the first step to gaining control. Taking the time to slow down your breathing will give you a little time to gather yourself and be more mindful of the situation. Remind yourself that as the issue moves faster you need to move slower in order to bring order to the situation. Remind yourself that you have handled challenging situations before and you have the ability to handle this one.

Also mentioned was to be an active listener and to learn as much as possible before responding. Repeat back, in a calm voice, what you have heard to indicate your active listening and to give yourself time to think. Do not take what is said to you personally. Focus on the situation and be empathetic to the other person. If you need more time, it is acceptable to make statements such as, "I need to think about this" or "Let me get back to you."

Once you understand the facts, start to internalize a plan based on your role in the situation. Remain positive and always remember the big picture. As soon as you have created some steps internally, the hectic situation will slow down to a manageable level.

UNFOCUSED STRATEGIES

Many of my colleagues' suggestions to find unfocused downtime involved the exclusion of their smartphone. Their strategies included playing golf or cycling with the phone out of sight, having dedicated time with their children or spouse sans phone, and not having work email on a personal cell phone. Some colleagues place limits on email checking after work hours and on weekends including not checking at all on Saturdays.

It is important to get a break from work when at home. Try not to discuss work during family time. One colleague will state that work went fine, even if that is not true, in order to avoid a work-related discussion. Another colleague creates paracord accessories like survival bracelets or key chains during his idle time. Instead of checking emails while waiting for an appointment, he can engage in his hobby. In addition, others read articles or books that are not work-related.

Another important strategy to consider to preserve unfocused time is to set priorities and have a big picture outlook on your work life. Plan for more than just one day or week. Place important occurrences on your schedule at the beginning of the school year such as grade-level testing and plan around these set dates. Also, when leaving for the day, try to leave your work "desk" in good order. This will allow you to feel less stressed and hopefully allow you to not bring work home.

Finally, find a mechanism to release any of your work-related stress before you arrive home. One way to accomplish this is to debrief with colleagues at the end of the day. Rely on each other to decompress after a hard day on the job. Also, try to have a scheduled fitness routine, even one as simple as walking (without your smartphone, of course). Have a no cell phone rule when walking your dog; it is liberating!

CONCLUSION

The need to remain calm and find unfocused time in our lives is apparent. Try to utilize some of the strategies presented or craft your own. Society has created our need to focus on being calm and mindful. Until society sets parameters on our ability to be focused 24/7, we need to take control of our work and personal lives to keep ourselves balanced. Not only can we do it, finding balance and remaining calm will make us more successful as leaders.

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View past issues of *Vanguard* and "Vanguard Extras" at saanys.org/professional-learning/Vanguard, including our Fall 2014 article of "the Mindful Leader."

Building a Parent Connection
on Curriculum

By Robert Messia
Beth Magill

THE NEED

Communication to support strong school-parent relationships should involve many aspects of the daily lives of students. One area of typically **limited focus in parent communication** is that of the curriculum, grade-level expectations, and actual instructional practices students participate in each school day.

We know that characteristically, when parents ask, "How was your day?" or "What did you learn today?" middle school students either do not reply at all or say nothing. So it would follow that students share a limited amount of context about the learning activities and content they experience with their parents.

As a result, when we made a significant change to our English Language Arts instructional program, our middle school ELA guiding team recognized a greater need for transparent and open communication with families.

This team, what we call our "ELA curriculum cabinet," included a district literacy coach, a school principal, and a representative teacher from each of our building's three grade levels. The team developed a new program called AMS Parent Connection.

BACKGROUND

At Algonquin Middle School, our ELA teachers spent the better part of last school year studying various curriculum models to select a comprehensive program to begin implementing this year.

After many teacher discussions, the team piloted some aspects of the program and utilized a variety of professional development support. Based on this experience, we recognized that there would be a significant change in the way we provide ELA instruction. These changes included new texts, a change in format for writing assignments and projects, and an instructional approach that would lead to student learning in a different way. As with all change initiatives, we knew that communication and feedback from all stakeholders, and particularly parents, would be critical to this program's success.

TWO-WAY STREET

We then offered a morning breakfast discussion around our new ELA curriculum followed by a weekly series of emails focused on what and how students were learning in their ELA classes.

We felt that connecting with parents in person and having an open dialogue with interested stakeholders in this type of a venue would help us be transparent in sharing the changes that we made. And just as importantly, this format allowed us to receive feedback and build support for the direction we were heading in.

Initially 20 parents attended the morning kick-off session. The hope was that these parents would serve as turnkey ambassadors and engage other families in their discussions. They listened to a brief presentation from our three representative teachers and then engaged in helpful feedback on their experiences and perceptions of the curriculum. We also asked for feedback on a sample email that the curriculum cabinet was considering for future communication.

We followed up with a survey of these parents to ensure we accurately captured their comments and perceptions. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

Participants responded that this meeting was helpful and informative. Parents also commented that the timing was good for their schedules and that they would attend another session if one were offered.

After receiving feedback from parents on their views of the curriculum and our approach to instruction, we went to work to develop a series of weekly curriculum-focused emails using MailChimp, a free emailing tool.

COMMUNICATING BROADLY

Our goal was to produce email messages with a professional look that included graphics, images of our students and teachers engaged in their work, embedded videos that we creat-ed, and articles written by our teacher members. MailChimp helped us.

Our ELA teachers developed the content of these messages which allowed us to focus on specific skills and standards. As a result we were able to tailor the messages to address questions, concerns, and the interests of families in our community. This effort also allowed us to spotlight how incredibly talented and professional our teachers are.

After they were sent each week, the email messages were posted on our building's website and promoted through our school district's Facebook and Twitter accounts. We monitored the level of parent engagement and found that the majority of our families were viewing the messages. Additionally we shared these messages with all staff in the building.

Finally, we checked in with families to solicit their thoughts on our communication efforts via an online survey. The response was very positive as well, with over 82 percent of respondents saying that this initiative helped them gain a better understanding of the ELA program their child is experiencing.

THE CONNECTION

With changing expectations for our students and new instructional approaches, we need to engage today's mobile and busy parents in discovering how their children are learning.

Through this process, we were able to share our common philosophy, demonstrate a commitment to transparent and open communication with families, and engage them in conversations about the work we hope to achieve with their children.

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Go Paperless: Reduce Costs, Improve Collaboration and Efficiency, and
Help Save the Planet

By Sunshine Miller

Did you know the White House released its first paperless budget this year? This green move is being heralded by tree huggers everywhere, as the e-budget is expected to save taxpayers millions of dollars. If the White House can do it, why can't we? **Education is known for its mountains and mountains of paperwork** from student registration forms and weekly newsletters to computer usage agreements, lesson plans, and student projects.

I first became interested in paperless processes while teaching music in a small rural school district in central New York. I found myself printing programs for multiple concerts throughout the school year. Trouble was, most of these were being scooped up from the auditorium floor post performance. I decided to create a paperless program for my parents and was astounded by the fact that not one parent complained or asked for a copy. I did provide a link to a digital program that parents could access and many thanked me for being a steward of the environment.

After going paperless for my concerts I caught a kind of fever. I began to look at my usage of paper and ink and started to move toward paperless for other things in my classroom. I converted my announcements to texts (I used Class Pager) and Facebook posts. This too was an advantageous undertaking. I completely eliminated paperwork going home in backpacks and was able to analyze hits and mine data from my Facebook website. In addition, I had perfect attendance for the first time in 17 years at all of my elected chorus group performances.

I recently left the classroom and now serve as the coordinator of cooperative enrichment at TST BOCES. When I landed in my new position, I saw the amount of paperwork that scheduling a field trip through the Arts in Education COSER required and I began to construct ways to make my new office a paperless one. Going paperless was greatly aided by the fact that the administrative team is very progressive and environmentally minded. Here are a few other things that helped paved the way to implementation of our paperless system.

WHAT IS A PAPERLESS SYSTEM?

First, let's define what *paperless* truly means. Many think that paperless equals a total elimination of paper use. This is not entirely true. Many institutions must retain some hard copy practices, so greatly reducing usage also qualifies as paperless.

Merriam-Webster defines *paperless* as using computers instead of paper to record or exchange information[1] while Wikipedia states, "A paperless office is a work environment in which the use of paper is eliminated or greatly reduced. This is done by converting documents and other papers into digital form."[2] There are a myriad of benefits in becoming paperless whether you are eliminating paper completely or greatly reducing your paper consumption.

BUSINESS COSTS AND EFFICIENCY LOSS

Now for a few tidbits on costs. According to epa.gov, paper consumption has tripled since 1960. The advent of the home printer and the ease of downloading information from the Internet and printing it has caused paper usage to skyrocket. The EPA estimates that the average U.S. office worker prints 10,000 pages per year. Ten thousand pages may not seem too bad, but realize that this is for the average worker. Also, consider this, 2,500 trees die for every 1,000 workers consuming 10,000 pages per year. The cost to refine the tree into paper in terms of oil is equal to 56,000 gallons. Ten million pages fill 450 cubic yards of a landfill and use more than half a million kilowatts of energy.[3]

Tracking down paper in offices in an organization often equals time lost. Alphabetizing, categorizing, and organizing paper copies can in no way match the efficiency of searching a database or spreadsheet for information. Furthermore, database systems and spreadsheets, especially those in the Google platform, are free to use for educational institutions and offer access to data and statistics that paper systems just can't match.

## STREAMLINED ACCESS, INFORMATION IN SECONDS, INCREASED COLLABORATION, AND DATA MINING

It is abundantly clear that moving to a paperless office is a great decision based on cost savings. Moving to paperless also offers up the opportunity for workers to collaborate and share ideas through the sharing of documents, spreadsheets, and data. The paperless process for my office will provide school districts with "just in time" information and data regarding the services we provide through the sharing of a Google Sheet that is populated when teachers fill out a Google Form. This information is readily available for all stakeholders and will greatly increase transparency. Relaying information to parties throughout our nine component districts in three counties can now be done with the click of a mouse or by simply opening a shared folder or document. There is an add-on called "simply send" that creates a PDF of the information and documents that have been submitted giving the individuals filling out paperwork and the institution the ability to print contracts and documents if they are needed.

When it comes to concerns regarding e-signatures, school districts and businesses can reference the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN, 2000)[4] and the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA, 1999)[5] to increase their understanding and ease their worries regarding e-signatures. Schools and businesses can also utilize a number of digital products that allow you to e-sign and fax from a Google Doc (Hello Fax) and e-sign and collaborate on documents using PandaDoc (which means organizations can say goodbye to expensive fax machines, too!).

Another great benefit of a paperless system is the ability to data mine. Districts can now track and analyze data including usage, fund balances, Common Core Learning Standard connections and percentages comparisons, and so much more.

It is easy being green.

The examples I mentioned above
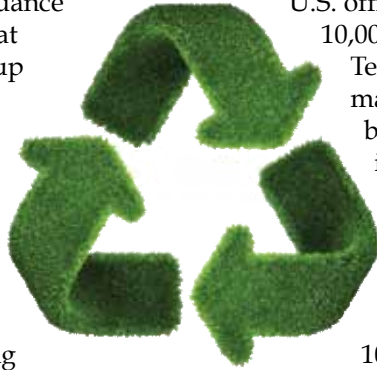
are just a few ways that schools can greatly reduce their paper usage. The current digital tools that schools have access to that help to reduce paper usage are endless and many are free.

Here are a few more ideas that are easy to build and implement.

- Keep track of where your students are and increase safety protocols using a Google Form and the add-on CheckItOut.
- Document usage of district assets including team uniforms, teacher PD materials, band uniforms, instruments, sheet music, etc. using a Google Form and CheckItOut.
- Collect parent contact data, field trip information, etc. through a Google Form. Access this information easily via a populated Google Sheet while on a field trip or when you leave the school building. Teachers can also hyperlink parent emails and email or call from their device if needed.
- Create teacher evaluation documents and share with staff using Google Docs and Doctopus. Include rubrics in each educator's evaluation document using Goobric. Access this information in one tidy Google Sheet.
- Collaborate on team notes, committee notes, intervention strategies, etc. using Google Docs and Drive.
- Create digital progress reports and grade or report card systems for parents and students.
- Set up a classroom calendar for parents to see what is happening when in your class. You can also utilize this calendar to set up parent-teacher conferences, etc.

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Group Mentor Coaching
You Are Not in It Alone

By Terry Dewey,
     Trini Hernandez,
     and Brian Mazza

Preface: Since 2012, SAANYS has offered a ten-month-long mentor coach program for new and experienced administrators. Feedback from mentees has been positive, with many asking if there is a year, two, or three follow-up service. Through the support of a LIFT NY SED grant, SAANYS piloted a group mentor coach service with the idea of testing out different professional development modes to determine which might help fill the request from the field.

In groups of three to six administrators, mentor coaching was provided in face-to-face, on-line virtual conferencing, and phone modalities, with the hope that over time these groups would coalesce around the modality that worked best for them as they grew into a self-sustaining mentor coach group.

Anyone who has been involved with a powerful mentoring program would most likely agree that there is a feeling of empowering support, which evaporates after the yearlong process. At GASD, we were fortunate with a human resource director who not only requested mentoring for the new administrative team members, but who agreed to assist in a "next step" model of mentoring. With assistance from our SAANYS mentor, Dr. Bonnie Tryon, we were able to not only establish a process to continue the mentor paradigm, but experiment with different modes of communication with the hopes of determining what may work best for others. This is our story:

KEY COMPONENTS

To begin the process, we established basic ground rules. First, we needed to trust each other when unwrapping our concerns. This may appear easy. However, the three of us came up with three different "titles." One person was a member of a building-level team. The second person was in charge of a district-level K-12 program. The third person was viewed as a "downtown" administrator. Each title came with a different circle of influences that challenged us to work through our culture, while using three different sets of lenses. Another variable we needed to consider was the tenure status of our triad. Two were non-tenured with early administrative career experience and one was heading toward the end of her career. These potential barriers were managed with the

assistance of our mentor leading us through guiding questions at our first session. Through open, honest discussion of all of our concerns, we establish three basic ground rules:
1. Trust and confidentiality were a must.
2. We would wait ten minutes to start each session, so we were not waiting for a member to arrive and respected that an emergency may happen during our scheduled time.
3. Our focus for the hour session was on each other.

Once these were established, we agreed upon two topics that posed significant concerns in each of our roles: safety and communication. After two sessions, we were ready to experiment.

STEPS IN OUR EXPERIMENT

Our process started with learning how to ask each other guiding questions to better define our concerns. We bounced ideas off each other, heard each other out, and discussed next steps. This was a time-consuming process as we each had different needs with regard to the topics and were used to our own one-to-one time with the mentor. We agreed to break the topics into three categories for future sessions: define the problem, discuss past district practices, and create an action plan. A timekeeper was assigned to keep us focus on the task at hand. After trying out our plan and negotiating next steps, we were then asked to attempt the same technique using online conferencing and telephone conferencing. Online conferencing was used to give us up-to-date research on leadership practices to guide the hour session. For this session, Dr. Tryon presented research through a PowerPoint. We reviewed the information and discussed it over

our individual office phones. The benefit was being in our offices. Our struggles with this technique consisted of managing the conversation process. We caught ourselves interrupting each other, referring to our old agendas and not easily keeping the overarching action plan in mind. The information provided gave us excellent background knowledge, but our conversation took longer and was laborious at times. Telephone conferencing was a tool used to test out if it was possible to replicate the face-to-face network we had established. Since this is typically how we communicate with each other, we anticipated this would be second nature. However, we discovered that we still needed the nonverbal cues to pull the conversation forward. We discussed this being a second possibility, but not as effective as face-to-face discussion. We agreed that the one-on-one hourlong sessions were the most powerful for us as individuals, but the group mentor was a strong contender for a year two mentor process.

CONCLUSION

When we started phase two of our mentor journey, we knew very little about each other's roles in the district. We assumed that we were alone in our journey in learning how to manage various aspects of our new roles. We quickly learned that we shared many of the same consternations. We were able to help each other break down our perceived barriers, navigate the

district processes and procedures to answer systematic questions, divide the task using our individual strengths, and creatively use our three different perspectives to develop a plan.

The most powerful tool to move us forward was the Mentor Coach Conversation Path. We practiced as dyads using the six-step process while problem solving with a colleague. The third person was used to evaluate how we worked through and among the six phases that include: agenda/awareness (red zone), choice/commitment (yellow zone), action/accountability (green zone). Using a frustration topic, we practiced using mentoring guide questions to guide a partner through a solution/alternative to the problem. The idea is to assist the partner in using his/her own thinking process to establish the plan. The evaluator recorded how

we maneuvered through the different zones. It was noted that we fluently went in and out of each zone as the "mentor" helped us drill down to the specifics of the problem and decide on an action that would best suit the situation.

Finally, we all agreed that we would attempt to maintain our mentoring relationship without our mentor, Dr. Tryon. Through a quick Friday text, we check in to see if there is a need for a quick meeting to assist one of us in developing a plan to work through a roadblock, a difficult confrontation or develop a compliance plan. The process has helped each of us realize that the stresses can be managed when learning a new position and our expectations can be managed through different lenses. Our goal remains the same – to become the best for the students we serve by remaining true to our standards and

learning how to manage our personal values within our district culture. We now realize that we aren't in it alone. A trusting colleague is not only a text away, but is willing to meet to help us work through whatever new struggles arise.

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Safety, Schools, and
Social Media Monitoring

By Mike Richez

It seems like almost every day the media reports incidents of school lockdowns and violence that threaten young people. None of us can forget the horrific tragedy that befell the elementary school in Newtown, CT, in 2012 that resulted in the deaths of 20 children and 6 school personnel.

Violence in our education system is, of course, of great concern among parents and school administrators. However, there are other incidents and events that are also important and occur much more frequently in schools. These include bullying, drug use, harassment, and children who are driven to suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control, suicide is the second highest cause of death among children between the ages of 12 and 18 and there are 5,400 attempted suicides by children between the seventh and twelfth grades in the U.S. every day. Drug use also remains a big problem: according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, 27.2 percent of teenagers used illicit drugs in 2014.

Another important fact is that social media is the way young people largely interact with each other. According to a report by the Pew Research Center in 2015, 92 percent of teens say they are online daily and 24 percent say they are logged in "almost constantly."

With so many new and emerging challenges for communities and school districts, solutions are needed to address them. Technology, including social media in some cases, has exacerbated these problems. However, the social media technology and the sites themselves offer part of the solution.

With each incidence of school violence, police hold press conferences and often say their investigations will focus on social media. The damage has been done and the lesson of the day is "look first." If school shootings and other violent acts have become the new normal, then the mission is clear – stop it from being the norm. Social media monitoring is an emerging part of the solution and it is already making an impact.

Online bullying is also a very big issue facing parents and educators. According to the Cyberbullying Research Center, in studies conducted from 2007 to 2015, an average of 26.3 percent of young people reported they were victims of bullying via social media.

Social media is a permanent feature of life and for children who have grown up entirely in the digital world. They live their lives online and share many of their thoughts, concerns, struggles and troubles. Those impacted by loneliness, depression, taunts from bullies or troubled by sociopathic thoughts are posting online. All too often, news media report that troubled youth or adult members of communities who pose a threat take to social media before they act.

One way schools can prevent harm to their students is through a new area of security – social media monitoring. It is critical for school districts to understand their communities and students. Social media opens a public window that was previously unavailable. Until a few years ago, the impact and value of social media were focused more on marketing and understanding "consumer" behaviors. Marketers and the social media sites themselves (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and others) have looked for ways to better understand users. They needed to develop strategies to make these platforms profitable and attractive to advertisers. The ability to focus messages and attract attention is critical for success in the new media landscape. We also must remember that for most social media users these sites are at the center of their social and personal lives. The ability to share and interact has made them popular and has also opened up these platforms for individuals to make disturbing and potentially dangerous posts.

In 2016 we are at a crossroads. Freely shared public social media posts may contain warning signs and information that cannot and should not be ignored. It is this access to social media information that many school administrators as well as law enforcement are interested in as well as concerned about.

In response to the growing need and desire for social media monitoring, several companies are offering platforms and software that allow for specific geographic areas to be monitored. The amount of data is huge, so it is necessary to collect information from specific and relatively small geographic areas. Geofencing of areas allows for a more refined method of monitoring and searching for specific phrases and keywords. Using sophisticated filters and software, those who monitor specific areas can set up alerts and notifications that can assist in the protection of students and property. Filters are tailored specifically to school districts that want to combat violence, cyberbullying, suicidal thoughts and other threats to their students' well-being.

According to National School Safety and Security Services, violent threats increased 158 percent in the first half of 2014 over the previous year and almost 40 percent of them were made via social media. In all, 812 threats were tracked from August 1 through Dec. 31, 2014, and the threats were identified in 46 states.

Here is an example of how geo-fenced data can be collected and reviewed: On Twitter, every tweet that is sent through a mobile device or computer is mapped to a specific location. This is the case with all social media unless privacy settings have been turned on. In the case of a school interested in social media, activity in a specific ten-square-mile perimeter is searched. Filters are set up to review posts that contain words or text related to drugs, violence, or suicidal thoughts. Reports and alerts are then generated based on the user's criteria. The ability to archive this data is also

proving helpful with investigations and for forensic analysis of incidents.

Twitter's technology is different from that of Facebook and Instagram. In the case of Facebook and Instagram, public information must be filtered and reviewed using different methodologies tied to Facebook time lines and Instagram likes or shares. The point here is that school districts and communities have the ability to proactively keep an eye out for potentially harmful or destructive behavior. This is a powerful tool that can reduce violence, prevent bullying and, in the case of suicide, even save lives.

In terms of suicide, one incident stands out: recently a student in a district being monitored was found making concerning posts relating to suicide. The school district was notified and they contacted the parents. The parents quickly addressed the issue with the middle school student. Unaware of the problem, the parents were very appreciative of the school district's proactivity.

The other side of what is happening in this space is the review of social media in smaller geographic areas to understand the larger picture and community sentiment. Similar to traditional market research, social media content is reviewed to determine community views, interests and concerns. School districts and the law enforcement community are aided by having a greater understanding of their communities. This will allow for more attention to be paid to issues and potentially more resources allocated to address concerns.

Privacy is a concern among parents, students, and school officials. However, social media by its nature takes place largely in a public domain. Social media posts are like standing on a corner and yelling to someone across the street where everyone can hear you. In terms of social media, the "street" is the entire Internet. It is clear that privacy protections must be put in place. For schools and communities, strict rules and policies must be established to ensure that this technology is used properly and for its intended purpose of protecting students,

schools and communities. Individuals must also recognize that social media by its nature and design is not private. Once an individual steps into the social media world they are stepping out in public for all to see. The current state of social media monitoring does not allow for social media sites that are set up as private to be included in searches.

The fact is that we live in a new digital reality. Monitoring of social media is here and is still in its infancy. Education sector professionals must recognize this and strike a balance as well as determine how monitoring will be implemented and used to ensure the safety of students, staff and communities.

In addition to the example

provided earlier, it is clear that digital reviews and alerts work. Look at the example of Georgia's Dekalb County. The school scanned social media sites using filters for words like "guns" and "explosives." This alerted them to a University of Georgia student who was later arrested for threatening to show up at a school with an AK-47. Georgia is a state that has good reason to worry; there have been nine school shootings since January 2013.

It is clear that our culture has embraced social media. Many of us and many students live their lives in both the digital and real worlds. Unfortunately, threats are real and no school district is immune. Maintaining privacy is important; however, it is vital to listen and observe and not to ignore. Social media monitoring is another tool that must be recognized for its value and its positive impact on lives and communities.

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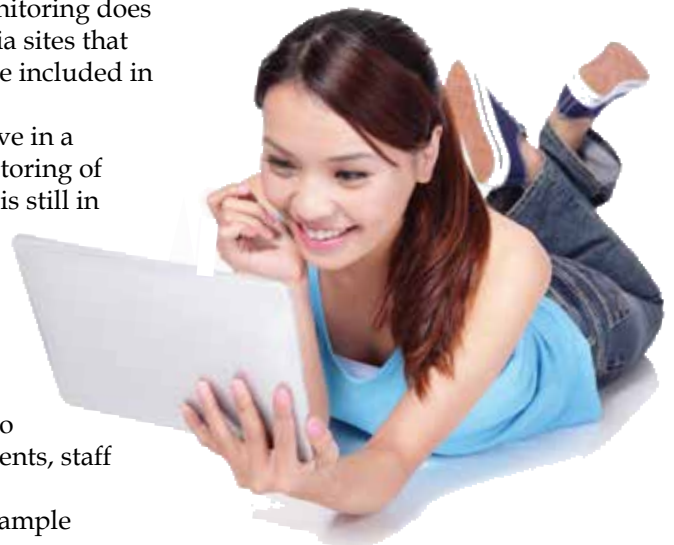
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HERO is a revolutionary digital learning environment: coupled with a full curriculum that is project-based, cross-discipline, competency and standards-based, and AdvancEd accredited. HERO includes a global content repository and authorizing environment – allowing educators to create, collaborate, and share new content.

CURRICULUM ASSOCIATES
Don Masters
800-225-0248
dmasters@cainc.com
curriculumassociates.com

Curriculum Associates publishes research-based, affordable programs to help make classrooms better places for students and teachers. Our newest programs – i-Ready Diagnostic & Instruction and Ready New York CCLS – are widely used throughout New York to help grow student achievement.

EDUCATIONAL VISTAS, INC.
Scott B. Crowder
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scrowder@edvistas.com
edvistas.com

The NYS leader in integrated web-based educational management systems, EVI currently provides hundreds of districts with powerful products and services. In areas such as APPR, VADIR, DASA, AIS/RTI, Assessment/Data, ZIS, and Curriculum Management (CD), EdVistas' software solutions help schools meet mandates and realize data-driven decision making!

IMAGINE LEARNING
Beth Ann Walck
585-872-0481
beth.walck@imaginelearning.com
imaginelearning.com

Imagine Learning is an award-winning language and literacy software program that features interactive activities, videos, and games. It's research-based, instructionally differentiated, and incredibly fun to use.

LIBERTY MUTUAL INSURANCE
Matt Brisk
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MCGRAW-HILL EDUCATION
LaVonne Patane
585-441-4192
Lavonne.patane@mheducation.com
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McGraw-Hill Education is a learning science company. We help educators and students drive results by delivering technology that harness an understanding of how the mind works to make each learning moment more engaging, efficient and effective. We bring a unique combination of high-quality content and personalized technology that's been proven effective – woven together with an understanding of the science of learning.

OSC WORLD
Mike Richez
516-247-5321
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oscworld.com

Digital fly monitors social media (Twitter, Instagram) in real time to alert schools when potential harmful content is made. Using GeoLocation (latitude/longitude mapping) and filtered terms/acronyms, data is tracked, analyzed, and ranked for potential threats (bullying, fights, weapons, self-harm) assisting in keeping students and staff safe.

THE READING SOLUTION
Elliott Reinert
781-259-1803
Elliott@thereadingsolution.com
thereadingsolution.com

The Reading Solution experience represents the highest quality of blended teacher training and reading content and reading software available today. Research – peer review – published and outcome proven effective in enhancing the reading ability of all of your students, pre-K through college. NY state representatives of Lexia Reading and Reading Plus.

RENAISSANCE LEARNING
Pam Marklow
800-338-4204
answers@renlearn.com
renlearn.com

Renaissance Learning is the world's leading provider of computer-based assessment technology for PreK-12 schools. Adopted by more than 70,000 North American schools, Renaissance Learning's software provides daily formative assessment and periodic progress monitoring technology for reading, math, and writing.

SMART TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
Randy Welch
603-680-4353
randywelch@smarttech.com
smarttech.com

SMART Technologies Inc. is a leading provider of technology solutions that enable inspired collaboration in the classroom. SMART products create more engaged learners, and help them develop essential skills and prepare for the future.

THE BREAKTHROUGH COACH
Jill Pancoast
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jpancoast@the-breakthrough-coach.com
the-breakthrough-coach.com

The Breakthrough Coach consulting team works with education leaders to adopt proven business management techniques to the educational environment at both the building and district levels.

ZANER-BLOSER AND THE SUPERKIDS READING PROGRAM
Tracy DiDio
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Christian Standerwick
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zaner-bloser.com

SuperKids reading program is a core reading program designed for kindergarten through second grade that looks like no other and works like no other, with a cast of characters that children love. Happily Ever After is a motivating, literature-based reading readiness program.

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OCT 23-24 2016

Session 1:

Assets Get Active: Utilizing the Forty Developmental Assets Within a High School Curriculum
Susan Solar, Clarkstown
See how the Assets Leadership Program at Clarkstown uses the 40 Developmental Assets to help every student grow academically, emotionally, and socially, and work together to help improve their school and community.

Bringing the Future to a Small Rural School Through STEAM and Maker Faire
Mariah Kramer, Tony Fountain, Wellsville
So what is a Maker Faire, really, and how can you organize one in your school or district? Come and see how a small rural school held its first Maker Faire this year, and how it is building up STEAM in their district!

Disrupting Education Through Pathways in Technology Early College High School (PTECH)
Mike Dardaris, HFM BOCES
The HFM Pathways in Technology Early College High School (PTECH) is an award-winning model that includes college-level credit bearing courses and allows students to choose their own "pathways" to high-skill jobs. Come and learn about this innovative program!

Organizing Time, Space, and Technology to Support 21st Century Learning
Robert Rhodes, Jim Skoog, Chappaqua
Move beyond lecture to creative, collaborative inquiry by focusing on flexible learning spaces that offer technology, large and small group settings, visual displays, and communication tools to support all aspects of the curriculum at every level.

Strengthening Middle School Education Through the STW Continuous Improvement Process
Bill Aube, Michael Laster, Guilderland;
Brian Sherman, Dr. David Payton, NYSED/NYSMSA
Learn about the only research based, New York State focused school improvement program that is specifically developed for the middle grades.

Thriving Through Efficient Data Management
Kathleen Affigne, Millbrook;
Cindy Gallagher, Bill Bouchard, Educational Vistas, Inc.
Districts are seeking a systems approach to provide analytics across groups and prior year assessments. Learn how a business-district partnership using Data-Mate has enabled educators to focus and differentiate instruction in Millbrook schools.

Transitioning to Standards-based Grading
Michelle Cardwell, Jessica Turner, Wappingers
Understand the philosophy behind standards-based grading and explore the strategies the presenters used to implement it across ten elementary schools in their district.

Session 2:

Implementing Consistent Grading Practices at the Secondary Level
Shannon Whitcomb, Alexander
Research affirms the importance of consistency in grading practices but where to start? Best practices related to grading, strategies for implementation, and short and long term planning will be shared during this session.

The Millennials are Taking Over! How Leaders Can Leverage Culture with a New Work Force
Larry Dake, Union Endicott
Those born between 1981 and 1996 will become the majority of school staff over the next decade. Unpack the Millennial Generation's very different core values and see how they will shift the way we define leadership in our schools.

Teacher Engagement: A Model That Works
Linda Mancz, Nassau BOCES
Student success is often linked to the level of teacher engagement. This workshop will consider how to use one model to identify strategies that could be used to enhance teacher engagement in the workplace.

Striving to Thrive Using Instructional Rounds
Dr. Linda Rae Markert, SUNY Oswego
Carol Burch, Justin Enright, Mary Hesler, Hannibal HS
An interdisciplinary team of teachers and school leaders will share the findings of an innovative pilot study of instructional rounds over the course of the 2015-2016 school year. Their voluntary participation in this inquiry-focused study aimed to initiate a thriving culture of collaboration and revitalize their own teaching strategies.

Transforming from Good to Great Through Effective Instruction
Claudia Petersen, Janie Feinberg, JP Associates
Today's schools have ever-expanding roles that can make it easy to lose focus on the primary goal: excellent instruction. Explore transformative instructional strategies that help leaders promote growth and ownership of learning while keeping the focus on effective instruction.

Transforming Your Learning Environment So Students and Teachers Can Thrive
Jim Conway and Colleagues, Lake George
See how Lake George Elementary School focused on building-wide goals to transform their learning environment through digital citizenship, inquiry, and STEM.

AXA Retirement Workshop

SAANYS16
EdCamp

This year's program will include an EdCamp "unconference" professional development experience from 1:45 pm-4:45 pm on Sunday as part of the conference program.

Featuring:

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A Q&A with MARYELLEN ELIA
New York State Commissioner of Education
Monday, October 24

As the New York State Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York, MaryEllen Elia oversees the work of more than 700 school districts with 3.2 million students; 7,000 libraries; 900 museums; and 52 professions encompassing more than 850,000 licenses. A native New Yorker, Ms. Elia has 45 years of experience as an educator. Prior to her appointment in New York, she served as superintendent of schools in Hillsborough County, FL, for ten years. In Hillsborough, the nation's eighth largest school district, she successfully implemented higher learning standards, partnered with teachers to develop a comprehensive evaluation system, and earned national recognition for gains in student achievement. After some brief remarks, Commissioner Elia will answer questions from the audience.

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SUE SZACHOWICZ
Senior Fellow, International Center for Leadership in Education; Retired Principal, Brockton High School, Brockton, MA
Sunday, October 23

Author of *Transforming Brockton High School: High Standards, High Expectations, No Excuses*

What if you came on as principal only to see your school described as a "cesspool" on the front page of the *Boston Globe*? That's what happened to Sue Szachowicz when she began as principal of Brockton High School. What happened next is a powerful story of school transformation and collaborative leadership in the truest sense of the word. Regardless of the size or demographics of your school and district, this powerful keynote promises to leave you with ideas that both inspire and stick.

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