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In keeping with our tradition of looking at education through another lens, I draw your attention to Susan Vreeland’s remarkable work. You may know her as author of *Girl in Hyacinth Blue* which she wrote while battling cancer, an artistic effort in her struggle to live. You may have read *Passions of Artemisia*, a tribute to the first female permitted into Florence’s Accademia dell’Arte del Disegno. There is also *The Forest Lover*, an insightful examination of North West totem art. All are worthy and enlightening reads. They are also insights into the reading and thinking of former teacher Susan Vreeland, passionately studying art, music, history, and literature.

Luncheon of the Boating Party reminds me how important it is for us to educate ourselves and our students more broadly for vigorous participation in the global community. That participation requires increased expectations for students. It also requires the rest of us to recognize the levels of our own literacy and to share with each other our beliefs about literacy in every content area so that we can make meaningful inroads for our young people. This global work ethic must find a place for deeper study and use of history, the arts, and literature.

Now, how does *Luncheon of the Boating Party* speak to this global community and the business of literacy? Well, for one thing the book itself is of course focused on Renoir’s wonderful defense of Impressionism as a worthy and viable approach to artistic pursuit. Renoir was driven to create this work, now hanging at the Phillips Collection, in response to Emil Zola’s disparagement of Impressionists as failures. All of this exciting exchange was happening right there in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century. Vreeland through her impeccable research transports the reader to the cultural milieu in which the penurious Renoir dared to defy the Salons and stage and capture a masterpiece. What we have in *Luncheon of the Boating Party* is a former English teacher using her research, her passions, and her literacy skills to create yet another masterpiece. In so doing, she brings to each of us joy in the creative enterprise of reading and thinking about end of nineteenth century France. She has helped me wonder how regular folks in the United States were responding to the Impressionist movement. She has fueled my interest in research and additional reading.

So why look to a well-researched story about a period in art history as a place to gain insights into what we need to do with students to prepare them for a global work ethic? It is so that they too can join in the joy that comes from the creative spirit that kept Renoir persevering and propelled Vreeland into masterful work. We must understand that studying the arts is not an extra, something to do if we have time, something that is only for talented students. Rather, study of the arts is essential to developing an educated, well-rounded and creative student.

And so we open with the ever reflective Phyllis Milne and her urging us to educate all students for the critical thinking that will be needed in their future. Kid Pan Alley and Minds in Motion are specific projects that
nurture the creativity in all students. As we expand our views on the essentials for supporting and teaching for creativity, Robert Lynn Canady’s interview with Ruby Payne reminds us of the special needs of children of poverty. The Virtual Governor’s School illustrates another dimension of just how creative we can be.

The most recent VASCD funded research project offers insight into co-teaching as a means to improve services for our students. Murphree and Wilder challenge us to rethink gender assumptions. McCracken and Flora suggest some alternatives to licensure for school leaders. Critchfield and Tlockowski’s experiences with the use of Thinking Maps is another example of research-based practice.

The section in which we feature success stories from across the Commonwealth has grown into detailed highlights from many of the eight Superintendent’s Regions. You will be fascinated with the Region 1 Consortium, Stafford’s Kindercamp, the founding of the Appalachian Writing Project, successful integration of technology in a Fairfax middle school, the remarkable story of Lee County Public Schools professional development plan that met the needs of the teachers and improved student achievement, Sterrett’s work in math achievement, and Lemons’ illustration of the impact of strong leaders.

It is with pleasure in the selections we offer and in anticipation of those you will be inspired to share in upcoming volumes, that we welcome you to great opportunities to grow in VASCD Educational Leadership.

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**Dear Reba,**

I am honored that you selected me and my work as your literary jumping off point for your next yearly issue of VASCD Educational Leadership. It’s gratifying to know that my work might influence a leader in education somewhere to give more and continuing attention to the arts. Such a mention in your journal keeps me, at least one foot of me, in the field of education.

Currently, as I’m casting about for my next subject, I realize that it must have the power to stimulate the imagination of the reader and provide a window to other times, places, and lives in what I called (when I was teaching) Huckleberry moments. You’ll remember that Huckleberry Finn marveled when the slave, Jim, confessed to hitting his daughter and feeling sharp grief for it. Huck was struck by this and said, “I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks do for their’n. It don’t seem natural but I reckon it’s so.” Huck’s imagination was activated, and as a result he became a deeper individual. Such a sudden awakening I call a Huckleberry moment, a startling revelation that launches one beyond one’s own experience.

Each time we enter imaginatively into the life of another, it’s a small step upwards in the elevation of the human race. When there is no imagination of others’ lives, there is no human connection, and therefore no compassion. Without compassion, then community, commitment, lovingkindness, human understanding, peace all shrivel. Individuals become isolated, the isolated can turn cruel, and the tragic hovers. Art and literature are antidotes to that.

To my mind, you are certainly on the right track!

Cordially,
Susan
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As teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents, how would we like to describe the child who exits our public schools upon high school graduation? Well versed in knowledge across content areas and able to demonstrate mastery of skills and processes? Healthy and committed to taking care of his or her physical being? Emotionally stable with interpersonal skills that promote comfortable conversation with peers, adults, and workplace colleagues? Driven internally to set goals and proceed with the next stages of one’s life? Able to function successfully in the twenty-first century as a post-high school student, a colleague, a parent, and a member of society? Competent in filing tax returns, writing business letters, and speaking in public? Appreciative of the fine and performing arts?

Strikingly, this vision of the child who leaves public education prepared for post-secondary life is much richer than one of a child well versed in math, science, and reading, yet the portrait of this child is one painted collectively by a diverse group of educators, parents, community members, mentors, healthcare providers, and others.

In an effort to address preK-12 education more holistically, ASCD proposes a broader definition of achievement and accountability that promotes the development of The Whole Child, asking educators, parents, policymakers, and communities to ensure that each student:

- Enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle
- Learns in an intellectually challenging environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults
- Is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community
- Has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults
- Is challenged by a well-balanced curriculum and is prepared for success in college or further study and for employment in a global environment

These five descriptors—healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged—summarize the picture of the child we hope walks across the high school graduation stage. For a whole child reality, we may need to rethink aspects of preK-12 schooling, enhancing those structures that support a whole child approach to teaching and learning and transforming those that do not. More importantly, we need to learn from colleagues who have developed ways of meeting the whole child challenge by working differently rather than by working more.

On ASCD’s Whole Child web site, http://www.wholechildeducation.org, educators have the opportunity to share what’s working in schools committed to the development of the whole child. An educator from Port Orchard, WA writes: “Our district and building goals address the whole child - not just academic goals driven by...
standardized test score results. Our efforts at reaching and teaching the whole child are driven by our efforts to walk the talk of our vision - ‘Nurture Growth, Inspire Achievement, and Build Community.’”

This school has partnered with the local Boys & Girls Club, healthcare professionals, parents, and other community members and has used the Whole Child web site to provide an overview of their work and share what’s working and what continues to challenge them. You can do the same.

At the heart of this collective, broader approach is the belief that children who are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged will possess the competencies needed to succeed in the twenty-first century. In fact, this notion of how thinking and learning will change within the first quarter of the new century permeates what educators are reading and talking about. The “Did You Know?” video being played for faculties across the country points out that we’re preparing students to solve problems and work in professions that do not currently exist. In the introduction to A Whole New Mind, Daniel Pink names this different form of thinking “high touch” and writes:

High touch involves the capacity to detect patterns and opportunities, to create artistic and emotional beauty, to craft a satisfying narrative, and to combine seemingly unrelated ideas into something new. High touch involves the ability to empathize with others, to understand the subtleties of human interaction, to find joy in one’s self and to elicit it in others, and to stretch beyond the quotidian in pursuit of purpose and meaning (Pink, 2005).

A whole child approach is necessary because our current and future realities require it, and this balanced approach will prevent us from suggesting to children that an A in physics is somehow superior to an exemplary musical performance or that attention to specific content is possible when a child feels unsafe or hungry. Join the ASCD community in promoting the development of children who are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

References
Provide Flexibility, Resources, and an Accountability System which Support Innovative High School Reform

VASCD supports high school redesign that includes rich and rigorous curriculum, meaningful and relevant learning experiences, relationships with caring adults who know students well, and an accountability system based upon multiple measures of assessment.

VASCD calls upon the General Assembly and Virginia Board of Education to support research-based approaches that engage high school youth and improve educational outcomes. These outcomes will reflect the preparation of high school graduates who become productive, successful adults, prepared for economic self-sufficiency and positive participation in society. VASCD supports reforms that align P–16 initiatives and efforts to this end.

VASCD calls upon the General Assembly and the Virginia Board of Education to encourage the U.S. Congress to become a partner in high school reform activities by providing flexibility, autonomy, and resources to states and local school districts that engage in innovative high school reform and to align other resources, laws, and policies accordingly.

VASCD supports innovative high school reform efforts that move towards customizing the high school experience and which promote multiple, yet equally rigorous, pathways for the completion of high school.

VASCD supports increased efforts to embed aspects of the high school experience into the larger community including internships, apprenticeships, and other community-based activities. VASCD opposes school choice programs that do not provide equal access for all students.

VASCD believes that the mastery of rigorous standards can be demonstrated in many different ways and therefore supports state and federal accountability systems that are based upon the use of multiple assessment measures. VASCD opposes policies that evaluate schools and students according to a narrowly constructed testing system.

Full Funding of the Standards of Quality

Virginia ASCD acknowledges the burden that unfunded mandates place on local funding portions of school division budgets throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and supports full funding of current and future Standards of Quality. To that end, VASCD supports funding of the most recent recommendations of the Board that were approved but not yet funded by the General Assembly. These recommendations for positions to provide necessary services to students in order to meet the required educational goals of the Standards of Quality and Standards of Accreditation include:

- Reading specialists at 1 per 1000
- One principal in every school
- Assistant principals at 400 to 1
- Speech-Language Pathologist caseloads of not more than 60 to 1

Additionally, VASCD supports funding of future recommendations for positions to provide necessary services to students in order to meet the required educational goals of the SOQ and the SOA. Specifically, VASCD supports the anticipated recommendation for math specialists for school divisions at 1 per 1000.

High Quality Professional Development

Virginia ASCD supports comprehensive professional development that is research-based, data-driven, contextual, and focused on student learning. High-quality professional development provides time and opportunities for focused reflective discussion and collaborative planning to refine and implement effective instruction.
Students are better served when local school divisions are given ample resources and flexibility for professional development to build instructional and leadership capacity. Increased resources must extend to all professional development efforts and educators at all career stages. Local school divisions must be allowed the flexibility to use such resources to meet the specific needs of their professional and student populations.

Virginia ASCD recommends that the Department of Education work in partnership with state associations and local school divisions in an effort to make available innovative and necessary professional development services and calls upon the General Assembly and Virginia Department of Education to provide the resources and flexibility to support high quality professional development that is:

- Responsive to the diverse needs of educators across the Commonwealth
- Focused on best practices in instruction, assessment, and leadership
- Designed to foster student learning that meets and goes beyond the standards
- Concentrated on identified skills, content, and processes
- Focused on achievement for all students
- Supportive of collaborative structures within schools
- Designed, when appropriate, to support the specific needs of novice teachers and administrators

**Instruction and Assessment Focused on Students as Learners**

Virginia ASCD supports approaches to instruction and assessment that encourage a shift from teachers covering content to students mastering concepts. A focus on how a learner demonstrates knowledge through self-assessment, reciprocal teaching, student-led conferences, portfolios, and other student-centered approaches should replace the selected-response format assessments and didactic (teacher doing most of the talking) instruction.

Virginia ASCD believes that the goal of leaving no child behind can only be met if all learners are engaged in the learning experience. We recognize that research on the brain and learning indicates that an engaged student has increased recall and retention of content.

Virginia ASCD recommends that policies, procedures and guidelines for professional practice and professional development include acknowledgement of best practice focused on the learner mastering concepts, rather than teachers covering content.

**Accountability Through Multiple Measures of Assessment**

Virginia ASCD supports valid and reliable information based upon multiple data sources. The use of multiple and/or formative assessments provide appropriate evidence of student learning and growth to ensure accountability for students and the community.

VASC supports the use of multiple measures in assessment systems that are fair, balanced, and grounded in the art and science of learning and teaching. Appropriate assessment systems must be reflective of curricular and developmental goals aligned with content that students have had an opportunity to learn. These assessments should be used to inform and improve instruction and designed to accommodate students with limited English proficiencies. Additionally, VASC supports assessment systems that acknowledge student growth over time as a measure of success.

VASC calls upon the Virginia Assembly and the State Board of Education to allow the use of multiple assessments for evaluating student growth and performance. Using a single test as the determinant for student, individual school, and school division performance does not present an accurate assessment and will result in inappropriately and inaccurately labeled students, schools, and school divisions.

VASC is opposed to federal or state sanctions that are determined by performance on a single assessment.
is the international organization with which VASCD is affiliated. ASCD has a membership of over 160,000 around the world, including many Virginia ASCD members. As a member of VASCD, consider enrolling in ASCD’s joint membership opportunity.

ASCD publications are well known and widely read by all educators. *Educational Leadership* is the flagship publication. It is so widely known that we used it as a model to develop our *Virginia Educational Leadership*.

If you decide to join ASCD you can take advantage of the joint dues service when you renew your ASCD membership. All you have to do is check the “Affiliate” box and add $40 to your check. ASCD will inform us and extend your membership from your VASCD anniversary date.

Get the best value from both educational organizations and become a joint member of ASCD and VASCD by logging onto www.ascd.org.

Be An Advocate for Public Education in Virginia

Sign up for legislative alerts and voice your opinion to legislators in Richmond. Go to: http://capwiz.com/ascd/va/ and follow the directions to join Virginia ASCD Advocates. You will receive email alerts and opportunities for direct and simple contact with your representatives. Together we can make a difference!

Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

www.vaascd.org
Dear Reba,

I want to thank you for the invitation to write a few words of greeting for the Virginia ASCD journal. One of the wonderful byproducts of being ASCD president this year has been the opportunity to reconnect with my Virginia colleagues.

As ASCD president, I have the chance to speak and write about topics that are of concern to me. Given my background as an art teacher and my belief that all children need broad and balanced curriculum opportunities, it has been very easy to focus on the ASCD Whole Child initiative in my work. ASCD’s efforts to change the conversation about education to place the needs of the child at the center and to bring the entire community into the conversation about how to meet those needs comes at a good time. It reinforces what many have felt especially during the past few years when our time was so consumed with concerns about No Child Left Behind that skills in reading and math are absolutely critical but not sufficient to a child’s success in life. The past few years have also brought into clearer focus the fact that educating a whole child requires the efforts of many—in fact a community. Schools cannot do the job alone.

This year, ASCD has continued to develop programs to lead in advocacy and influence and to assist affiliates and others interested in providing policy makers with information on research based best practice. Virginia ASCD has long been a leader in this area and should take some pride in the development of this ASCD program.

Given ASCD’s growing international membership, I have appointed a task force to look at the role of influence and advocacy in non North American venues. Since influence and advocacy have become so important for our US and Canadian members, it seems important to set some parameters for this work across a broader constituency. Research based best practice should be helpful to all, and good practice can be found around the world. I hope that over time, ASCD can be a catalyst to bring educators together from around the world so that we can all benefit from best practice, no matter where it is developed.

I know that this VASCDD journal will be excellent, and I am grateful to be a small part of it. Congratulations and best wishes. Please accept my thanks to you and VASCDD for your leadership and support.

Nancy DeFord
ASCD President, 2008
In March 2006, ASCD sent an email to all ASCD members who resided in West Virginia to see if there was interest in forming an affiliate in that State. There had been a group some years ago, but it had ceased to be active. The timing of that email coincided with the move of a member of Virginia’s Board from Virginia to West Virginia. During the next few months that member, Peggy McMaster, became a liaison between the Virginia and West Virginia ASCD affiliates. Virginia ASCD made the financial commitment to fund Peggy’s travel expenses as she assumes the position of Executive Director of West Virginia ASCD (WV ASCD) on a volunteer basis.

The small group of West Virginia educators has developed into an affiliate that is recognized by ASCD and growing in numbers. The West Virginia group participated in the ASCD On The Hill legislative day in 2006 and 2007. In 2006, Congressional assistants asked the WV ASCD representatives how NCLB was affecting West Virginia schools. WV ASCD surveyed educators in the state through the regional representatives on the Board and at the first state conference. Results of the surveys were sent to the Congressional offices in 2006 and conversation about NCLB continued in person in 2007. Legislative assistants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to discuss concerns of educators in West Virginia.

Recently, the West Virginia State Board of Education invited WV ASCD to the table for an informational meeting regarding West Virginia’s participation in the Learning First Alliance. All indications are that West Virginia will join the Learning First Alliance and that WV ASCD will play a key role in that state organization. The composition of the group of educators who met at the State Capitol closely mirrors the participants of the Virginia Education Coalition. With the model of Virginia as a guide and with their continued financial support, the WV ASCD president and executive director are on the path to becoming key players in the formation of the West Virginia affiliate of the Learning First Alliance.

Plans for the coming year include a Day On the Hill in Charleston and face-to-face meetings with educators at the West Virginia Department of Education; these are activities that would be difficult for a small group to manage without the guidance of an active mentor group like VASCĐ. The partnership between Virginia and West Virginia educators illustrates how seriously we in Virginia ASCD view the respon-
sibility of sharing and developing leadership potential with other states. Through the support provided for West Virginia ASCD, a strong new state organization is developing at a faster pace than would be predicted.

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Peggy McMaster is the Parliamentarian/Historian of Virginia ASCD and the Executive Director of West Virginia ASCD.

Tom Tull is the Director of Middle Childhood Education for Putnam County Schools.

Professional Development Institutes

Strategies to Increase Achievement of Virginia’s Learners in All Content Areas with Dan Mulligan - December 13, 2007, Fair Oaks, VA at the Waterford at Fair Oaks
Design a responsive learning program for English language learners in mainstream classrooms grounded in research-based strategies. This interactive workshop will provide participants with practical strategies that classroom and second language specialists can employ to work collaboratively to support language acquisition and academic standards across grade levels and content areas. Target Audience: K-12 ELL specialists, administrators, and regular classroom teachers working with ESOL students.

Leadership That Works with Dan Mulligan and Laurie McCullough
January 8, 2008, Virginia Beach at the Virginia Beach Resort Hotel and Conference Center
This session will provide school administrators, central office staff, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders with strategies designed to focus a staff on a mission of sustained improvement in the achievement of each student. Dan Mulligan and co-presenter Laurie McCullough will draw from both research and experience to enhance leadership, instruction, professional growth, and student achievement. Target Audience: K-12 administrators and teacher leaders.

Getting Results: Breaking the Barriers to Test Success with Paula Brown - February 4, 2007, Radford University - West Campus
This PDI will address specific strategies for breaking down the intrinsic testing barriers that cause students to underperform on SOL tests. Information will be presented in a multi-media format, and participants will be ready to conquer any assessment challenge as a result of attending this session. Target Audience: K-12 classroom teachers, testing coordinators, specialists, and administrators. This event is co-sponsored by the Western Virginia Public Education Consortium and the Radford College of Education’s Professional Development Center.

Visit us Online to Register Now! www.vaascd.org
bound students are adequately prepared for college, only 31% of college graduates can read a complex book and extrapolate from it, and only 24% of college graduates write at the proficient level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). In 2006, employers rated 55% of Virginia’s high school graduates prepared for work, and college instructors rated 58% of Virginia’s high school graduates prepared for college (Cannaday, 2007). Employers and instructors found gaps in oral communication, in writing, reading, science, and mathematics skills, and in conducting research. Mike Schmoker, (June 26, 2007) states that high school graduates have difficulty:

- drawing inferences and conclusions;
- analyzing conflicting source documents;
- supporting arguments with evidence;
- solving complex problems with no obvious answer; and,
- writing multiple three to five page data-based position papers.

In a decade when high school and even college graduates are living at home with their parents, the weak skills of high school graduates are not our only concern. The United States Department of Education estimates that every day 5000 students drop out of school before graduation, and Education Testing Service (ETS) reports that dropouts comprise “nearly half of the heads of households on welfare, and a similar percentage of the prison population” (Barton, 2005). The costs of dropping out have increased as work opportunities have all but disappeared for less skilled workers. During their lifetimes, high school dropouts will earn $200,000 less than high school graduates and $1,100,000 less than college graduates (Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2007).

More than one-third of our students are dropping out of school and, from 1997 to 2007, the graduation rates
declined in most states (Barton, 2005). The National Center on Education Statistics (2004) estimated that one in two Hispanic students and one in four African American students leave school without a diploma. Students who attend school in large cities are twice as likely as non-urban students to leave school without graduating. In spite of state and national accountability, “the United States ranks 10th in the world in high school completion rates” (Barton, 2005).

With the stakes so high, what causes our students to leave school without a diploma? Students who leave school report both inadequate academic preparation and lack of interest. The top five reasons students gave for leaving school were boredom (47%), attendance problems (43%), peer group (42%), lack of rules and directions at home (38%), and repeated failures/re-tentions (35%) (Azzarn, 2007). Approximately 71% of the students who left school without graduating became disinterested in school in 9th or 10th grade (Bridgeland, DiJulio, & Morison, 2006). A majority of students said they would have worked harder had their teachers demanded more. “Seventy percent believed that they could have graduated if they had tried” (Azzarn, 2007). As early as 1962, Lichter, Rapien, Siebert, & Sklansky stated, “High school dropouts and underachievers represent a tragic waste of the resources of our young people at a time when our country needs their fullest productivity.” In 2007, the loss of human potential is an even greater concern.

What can educators do to prevent dropouts? Students in the Gates Foundation Study (Bridgeland, DiJulio, & Morison, 2006) reported that real-world experiential learning, better teachers, smaller classes, individualized instruction, additional time for difficult subjects, safe school climates, and parent support would have improved their chances of staying in school. Only 56% of these students said they had one adult to whom they could talk about school problems, and only 41% of the students had one adult to whom they could talk about personal problems. Williams Saunders (Sanders & Rivers, 1996) writes that the teacher effect makes all other differences pale in comparison. In support of that, Haycock’s more recent study (2005), found five years of effective teaching can completely close the gap between low-income students and other groups.

Reents (2002) reports that ninth grade is the most critical point to intervene and prevent students from losing motivation, failing, and dropping out of school. Virginia school divisions are piloting programs to target the low performing students who may get stuck in ninth grade and choose to walk out rather than stick out another three years of school. For example, Virginia High School’s PRIDE program in Bristol, Virginia is a school within a school for freshman students. English 9 is integrated with Algebra in a daily 110 minute block. Students participate in after school sessions four days per week. In 2005-2006, a mentoring program was added as well as a Reconnecting Youth peer group approach to building life skills. Data reveal a decrease in ninth grade retentions from 76 students in 2002-2003 to 12 students in 2006-2007.

The University of Virginia’s School of Continuing and Professional Studies has offered a dropout prevention and intervention conference each Fall since 2002. At the November 2006, Ninth Grade - Make It or Break It Conference, Dan Mulligan argued that teachers need to explicitly teach higher order thinking skills that not only benefit test takers but also take our students on beyond state tested skills. Teachers must actually model higher order thinking plus build in lesson time for students to practice problem solving, to debate issues, to build models, to test theories, and to reflect and write about content.

Some educators believe low performing students should be taken out of arts, music, drama, physical education, and elective courses to provide more time in English or Algebra. However, Eric Jensen (2001)
cites research that ties the arts and physical activity to improved brain function and memory plus positive attitudes about school. Benefits of arts and physical education programs include fewer dropouts; higher attendance; better team players; an increased love of learning; greater student dignity; enhanced creativity; a more prepared citizen for the workplace of tomorrow; and greater cultural awareness. Students who participate in extra-curricular activities have better school attendance and are three times more likely to be in the top quartile in mathematics and in reading than non-participants (O’Brien & Rollefson, June, 1995). Students who choose to participate in school activities may already be more highly motivated than the students who make fewer connections with staff or with other students. Rather than eliminating the arts and extra-curricular activities, some schools require all students to choose and to participate in a school organization.

Although NCLB has forced us to focus attention on ALL of the students in our schools, achievement testing has not increased our graduation rates or our students’ performance at universities or in businesses. Nancy DeFord, Virginia educator and 2007 president of ASCD, believes it’s time for a “different conversation” – a conversation less about tests and scores and more about how we can provide the rocket fuel that launches our students to success in a flat world. Deford cites evidence that the emphasis on reading and mathematics for underachieving children has the unintended consequence of dividing students: those who receive a well-rounded challenging education and those who focus on tests. Robert J. Sternberg (2006) writes, “The increasingly massive and far reaching use of conventional standardized tests is one of the most effective if unintentional vehicles this country has created for suppressing creativity” (p. 47).

Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (VASCDD) promises to Advance Excellence for Teaching, Learning and Leadership for 21st Century learners. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD) provides suggestions and opportunities for educating the Whole Child. The Whole Child Compact promises that each student has access to personalized learning as well as access to qualified caring adults; in addition, each graduate will be prepared for further study or for employment in a global environment.

In the mythical Diffendoofer School (Prelutsky & Smith, 1998), students and staff feared low test scores would send them to dreary Flobbertown where everyone would do everything the same. Reason prevailed, however, and Mrs. Bonker’s prediction came true. Students easily moved beyond the testing because Diffendoofer’s students had been taught to think. It is time to think beyond the safety of passing scores and to focus instead on providing a well-rounded education for our students who are all a part of the next generation of Spirit and Opportunity.

Notes
1. For more information about the Virginal High School’s PRIDE program (Bristol, VA), contact Judy Young, Coordinator (276)-821-5917.
2. To read more about UVA School of Continuing and Professional Studies Dropout Prevention and Intervention Conferences, visit http://www.scps.virginia.edu/educators/edinfo.htm
3. To learn more about ASCD’s Whole Child Initiative, visit: http://www.wholechildeducation.org
4. To learn more about Virginia ASCD, visit: http://www.vaascd.org/

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Visit the VASCD Website for Professional Development information and to register on-line! http://www.vaascd.org


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Educating All Students

Kid Pan Alley
Anne M. Carley

Charged with sketching a portrait of Kid Pan Alley, an interdisciplinary songwriting residency program for schools, the author conducted extensive telephone interviews with three people: the program’s founder, Paul Reisler (“R,” below); its Education Director, Sally dhruva’ Stephenson, EdD (“S”), and Terri Allard (“A”), an experienced assistant to Reisler in Kid Pan Alley school residencies. Reisler is a well-known songwriter, teacher, and guitarist, leading the groups Trapezoid and A Thousand Questions. Stephenson, Assistant Professor, Department of Education Professions, at Frostburg State University, Frostburg, MD, is a singer-songwriter who has taught songwriting to young children. Allard is a Charlottesville-based singer-songwriter recording artist, songwriting teacher, and community activist, whose son attends the Albemarle schools. Feedback was also sought via email from a young woman (“P”) who was a schoolchild in Reisler’s first songwriting residency in 1999, from a pianist and composer (“D”) now training to become a Kid Pan Alley artist, and from the Assistant Principal (“W”) of an elementary school in Charlottesville where a weeklong residency took place in April of 2007.

A Kid Pan Alley residency typically involves one classroom of students at a time. Two accomplished songwriters, one assisting the other, work with schoolchildren, while their teachers and any guests observe quietly from the back of the room. First the leader elicits ideas for lyrics from the class. After the class votes for its favorite idea, the songwriting begins. Using brainstorming and clustering techniques while instructing the class on song form, rhyme, rhythm, metaphor and language usage, jointly, with classrooms of 15-20 children, the visitors co-write complete songs, with original words and music. Completed songs take on a wide range of styles, from country to classical, from folk and blues to hip-hop. A field recording is made on the spot, and the instructor and assistant document the song immediately after class. Families and school personnel receive a privately manufactured CD of all songs at the end of every residency, recorded in class and/or at the school assembly or evening concert. Schools may also purchase these CD’s in bulk for fundraising.

Under the terms of a legal agreement – each parent must sign a release – the songwriter’s share of a composition’s future royalties, if any, is divided evenly, half to the class as a whole and half to the Kid Pan Alley instructor. The students’ half is earmarked for more arts enrichment programs for children. Schools are cautioned, however, not to expect a windfall for local programs: royalty streams for children’s music tend to be minuscule; alternatively, however, schools can benefit from direct sales of the privately made CD’s. A residency can last one day or a week or more. Typically a song takes 90 minutes to write – in two 45-minute periods or one 90-minute session. Kid Pan Alley instructors can teach as many as three 90-minute classes per day or five or six 45-minute ones. At the end of the residency, an assembly usually shares all the resulting songs with the entire school. Schools can also opt for an evening concert for the community at the conclusion of the residency.

Following is a composite of the three primary interviews, with additional input as noted.

Q: Why the name, Kid Pan Alley?
R: It’s the obvious name, but I must have come up with a hundred different names first. It’s an evocative name even if you don’t know the history of Tin Pan Alley. And after all it was the place for the great songs, for decades in this country. If your job was writing songs, you worked on Tin Pan Alley. You went into the office in the morning and you wrote your songs. For me, I’m going into the office which happens to be a schoolroom and we’re writing our ten songs a week. It gives me a
feeling of what it must have been like for people at Tin Pan Alley. Just look at the great history, the great wealth of songs that came out of there – Irving Berlin – Carole King. What an incredible buildup of creative energy happens in that place – and of course that inspires you - it’s palpable and it affects you. It is continuing the art form, the tradition, of songwriters. In the larger picture it is inspiring people to be creative. Knowing that what’s needed in the world now is creative people, not people that can stuff hamburgers into bags. We’re very much in a creative economy now but the creative aspects of our life are generally not broached in school or encouraged. My job is to encourage people to realize that they can do creative work. They can use their brain and use their imagination to think of things that no one has ever come up with before. Like these songs. And not just any old song – “Oh, well, that’s good for a third grader;” – but these amazing songs that people on Tin Pan Alley would have been proud to have written.

Q: Describe its beginnings.

R: [In 1999] One of our best friends was putting together a residency program in [the Rappahannock County, VA, schools] – three weeks each for three different artistic disciplines – songwriting, visual art, and choreography and dance. Since it was our best friend, and since it was my own community, I agreed to do it. That’s really how it started. I didn’t have this idea, “Oh, I’m going to start songwriting residencies for children” – that was the furthest thing from my mind. What was evident to me was how great the songs were, how much fun it was, and how transformative it was for the children. It took a while to develop the vision of how it would all work. It rattled inside my brain for about six months.

People kept asking me for copies of the songs. I considered making an album but I didn’t want to do it myself. Then I got this idea of getting all the different performing artists from the community – and we have a lot – to do a song each in their own style, and compile them on a CD. That was very appealing both as an opportunity to work with these artists, and to build community. People started hearing about that, and once the CD came out we really had something – a representation of what we’d been doing.

Q: How did you get involved with Kid Pan Alley?

S: Ironically, Kid Pan Alley didn’t exist when I was looking for research subjects. I was working on my doctorate and during that time met Paul and started attending his [songwriting] workshops. I had been trying to find a research topic that I was interested enough in to make it my dissertation. Being a songwriter myself, and an educator, and believing in the arts and education myself, I thought, “Why don’t I do a project on songwriting in education?” but I had to find it. So one of my first steps was to announce at one of Paul’s workshops that I was trying to find some people doing songwriting in the classroom. Nobody was doing it. Paul wasn’t doing it. Then afterwards he told me he’d been asked to go into the local [Rappahannock] schools, and I asked to come observe him. So the sessions that are documented in my dissertation are from the very first residency and some of those songs are on that Rappahannock County album. I recorded and took notes and made two different trips there, and observed 15 or so classes. Eventually, little by little it grew and took off and it’s a pretty big thing at this point in time.
A: I’ve known Paul for a very long time, through musicians we both know. I got involved in Kid Pan Alley when he was teaching a residency out at Tye River Elementary school in Nelson County a couple of years ago. He called me one night. His assistant came down with laryngitis and so he was looking for an assistant songwriter and singer. I really had never had an opportunity to see what he did with Kid Pan Alley, although I heard about it a lot, and read about it, and was intrigued. So I thought, sure, this could be great fun. It was a whole new world for me. I just fell in love with the program immediately. Then he called again one day the next year, and he happened to be at Tye River again. His assistant had had a death in the family and had to leave for the whole week. I had such a good time working with him the first time that I rearranged my schedule so that I could work the whole week with him. It was a great school and a great group of kids, so I was excited to go back and do it start to finish.

The kids remembered Paul, they remembered me, they remembered the beautiful song they wrote about Virginia. I run into children all the time we’ve worked with. That’s the thing I love about this program and having an opportunity to be a part of it. When you’re in the middle of it you know you’re making a difference. There is no doubt in my mind what this is doing for the children. And then that’s icing on the cake when you run into them at the grocery store.

Q: What does Kid Pan Alley hope to accomplish?  
R: To teach children to become creators, not consumers. Perhaps writing a song makes them realize they can create worthwhile stuff, and they become a visual artist, or a book writer or they may become a composer. It’s inspiring them to look deep in their imaginations and see what they can express, what they can do, and realize that what they can do is a lot more than they ever thought. And just think, if you’re an eight-year-old, and what you wrote gets recorded by Amy Grant. It changes the way you value your own creative output in a way that is unfathomable. I can’t even imagine for myself how different my life would have been had I had that kind of success early on instead of much later as I did.

Long-term I’d really like to see things like Kid Pan Alley reinvigorate creativity as a core value in American education.

A: My favorite part is the sense of ownership that the children gain, which I think is one of the most important things that you can learn – a sense of self: “I did this. I can do this.” If somebody has that, they can do those math problems, and they can write that essay that seemed so hard before. And that’s also something you need in the big world. Elementary school and middle school and school in general can’t just be about figures, can’t just be about test scores; it also has to be about how you learn to function in the real world. As far as the subjects go, we deal with English, science, math, we deal with social studies, definitely with history, health – there really is not a subject that hasn’t come up in a Kid Pan Alley song.

P: [Reisler] taught us new ways to brainstorm details and to choose a theme for our song based on those. I remember him having us name things that were funny to us and things that we wanted to write a song about. Then we voted on one, and started to choose details. He taught us that words didn’t have to sound exactly the same to rhyme. He taught us how to write lyrics that went together with others. He taught us how to form an effective chorus and how to form verses. He told us that a chorus is what we wanted everyone to remember out of our song.
A: I think it’s a songwriting class in disguise. It has so many layers. They do learn about songwriting, the importance of the chorus and the verse, why the first line of the song is so important. They do learn to come up with their own melodies – all of that is true. And even though we are singing and performing, it teaches children about diversity. They may also learn about metamorphosis. They may also learn about Alzheimer’s. They definitely learn about compassion. They learn to work together as a group. There are so many things that it helps children to learn. You can say, “Today we learned about science, because we talked about this, this, this, and this in a Kid Pan Alley song. We sang it to a melody, which means it stuck in our head.” It’s a great way to remember something. I think it covers every subject that you could possibly learn in school.

They are so involved in this. And what’s really wonderful is there usually is a child in each class that tends to be the leader – someone who maybe is artistic and creative anyway, or just a leader - casual and comfortable with people, or a couple that are pretty verbal. In that first class, they tend to make the most suggestions, even though we go to everybody. But the next day when we come back and they finish their songs, it’s the quiet child in the class that is the leader. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve watched that happen. It’s a natural progression. The leader steps back. There’s no conflict. It’s as if the leader gave the quieter one the courage to move forward, and the quieter one had time to adjust and get comfortable with the whole thing and mull over what he or she had to say. It happens over and over. I think it’s fantastic.

Q: So the classroom children provide the lyrics and some melodic ideas while the songwriter writes and arranges the music?
S: Yes. I’d say the kids’ contribution is 80 or more % lyrics – they may contribute some melodic ideas but basically the songwriter writes the music.

A: I love the back and forth with them. One of my jobs is to make sure to sing their melody. I love that one-on-one contact that I have with the child singing. They sing it, and then I say, “OK, now, let me sing it back to you and you tell me if this is right,” and they correct me if it’s wrong. I love that because they’re teaching me something and I think that’s so important.

Q: One song from the Johnson Elementary School demo CD was ‘I’d rather have a whole lot of friends than a whole lot of money.’ Where did that melody come from?
A: Ephraim – it came from Ephraim - he just stood up. He gets up, and stands up, and his hips are in it too. . . . We just had such an incredible leader. That was completely his melody.

Q: Do you feel Kid Pan Alley made a difference to how you understood songwriting and creative writing in general?
P: I do. [Reisler] showed us all that it was worth learning more about. He showed us how much fun writing could actually be.

Q: Are there quantitative data demonstrating that Kid Pan Alley engenders lasting benefits to children?
R: Our Education Director, Dhruva Stephenson, developed an instrument that we’ll be passing out at the schools for the teachers to fill out. The schools and the teachers [tell us] the kids came back to class and they were so much more creative than they have ever been and they have new ideas, are really excited about learning - so [we have] observational data.

A: It’s not a study, but another way I know it’s working is that the schools always have Kid Pan Alley back. Teachers, principal, and parents feels that it is working – they feel that it’s a good thing - and they feel that it’s worth their money and time. To me, though there isn’t a study, boy, that says a lot.

Q: If one can’t because of the nature of the program make meaningful in-depth quantitative studies, would anecdotes help an elementary school principal or a superintendent wanting to promote Kid Pan Alley kinds of direct experience for schoolchildren?
S: Oh, I think so. Anecdotal data is of a qualitative nature. Just because they all think that quantitative data drives the machine right now, to me that doesn’t invali-
date some qualitative data. My dissertation was a specific type of qualitative research called portraiture. In one section I describe the process, then I reflect on it later, and in the last section I draw some conclusions as to what I felt these children were getting out of it: Authentic learning experiences. Cooperation, collaboration, and an opportunity to be heard. Those are all really important, significant things.

I think it’s important that we don’t throw everything in this one box and let everything else that we know about education go. I feel really strongly we want to be able to demonstrate that our children can do well on tests, but that’s not all there is to teaching and learning. If you talk to most educators, on most levels, I think you would hear a lot of voices speaking up saying, “Sure, we don’t want to lose sight of everything else we’ve learned about education over the years we’ve been doing it.” Just because it can’t be quantified doesn’t mean it’s not important.

Q: Why would a school want a Kid Pan Alley residency?
A: It’s a wonderful program, especially with everything that’s going on with testing in the schools. It means a lot to be able to be a part of that. What the schools are doing, and their music programs, are fabulous – it supplements what’s already there and good, and comes from another angle.

W: The students were so happy! This was a new experience for them. Self-esteem improved, creativity was harnessed. [The parents and teachers] loved it! [Reisler and Allard] managed the classes so well that we did not experience one single discipline issue. They immediately brought out the creativity and genius that our kids have inside.

Q: How does one communicate the strengths of outside enrichment programs like Kid Pan Alley to a skeptical world looking at quantitative survey data?
A: Basically all I have to do is sing the songs that the children wrote. . . I describe this program and the residency from start to finish, and include examples of the songs and how they came about – it’s very easy to transfer that to other people. The children’s energy – the enthusiasm behind the songs – the fact that the children remember the process - how even people who are shy are called upon, and you try to get something from them on their own terms.

When Paul was in Nashville working, there was a child who had his hand up and when they got to him he couldn’t remember. He said, “I can’t remember. I forgot.” It became the song about Alzheimer’s [on the Nashville CD]. So one of the main things that child and the entire class were able to learn from that experience was that you can take the teeniest little thing in your head and you can turn it into something big. Anything. This child really thought he had nothing to say…when it turns out he had everything to say, and it’s what everybody wrote about.

Not only are they able to see this type of possibility, but they’re actually having a lesson because . . . on the board we cluster everything they have to say. We ask, “what do you have to say about ‘can’t remember I forgot’? What does that make you think of?” Someone is saying, “Well, my grandfather, he can’t remember at all. He has Alzheimer’s.” Then the children are learning about health and science, they are learning about the brain, they are learning about compassion, they are learning about people and changes – on the board before you’ve even written your song is an entire lesson. No matter what you’re writing about, there is a lesson before you’re even half an hour into the day.

Q: Can schools prepare students before a residency? This child really thought he had nothing to say…when it turns out he had everything to say, and it’s what everybody wrote about.
R: Teachers receive a Kid Pan Alley Study Guide in
advance. Suggested preparation includes listening to recordings of a variety of styles of music, including songs from the Kid Pan Alley Nashville CD; warming up the students’ voices with songs they know and enjoy; reading poetry to the class and exploring the poem’s rhythm and rhyme, and other possible rhymes; using clustering, the non-linear idea-collection method, so students are comfortable with free-form creativity.

Q: How can classroom teachers build on Kid Pan Alley initiatives after the residency?
R: We have a 60-page curriculum guide that gives them ideas for ways to continue the process. These include: writing extra verses for pre-existing songs, writing new words for songs they know, creating melodies for lyrical phrases and much more. This guide includes a CD of backing tracks so that the classroom teacher can lead the students on writing their own lyrics and melody to the backing tracks. These tracks are from the first Kid Pan Alley album.

After the residency, the teachers also receive the CD of the demos recorded by the students at the end of the songwriting session. If a concert or CD project is part of the residency, they receive those performances on CD as well. Listening to their CD, students can draw illustrations of their song. Or they can each write their own song lyrics and read them aloud to a beat, in the style of hip-hop or spoken-word performances. Perhaps a teacher or musician from the community will volunteer to provide music for the new lyrics.

Q: What about SOLs? Can an outside arts enrichment program like Kid Pan Alley have an effect?
W: Kid Pan Alley addresses a lot of SOLs because the students write songs about them. Last year the songs/processes covered a lot of English SOLs grades 2-4. Math, history, and science also found their ways into the process. You should check out the titles of our songs that the kids came up with - Example: “You Blew my Cerebral Cortex” (Science).

Q: During the 2007-8 school year, you’ll be doing six more residencies in the Charlottesville and Albemarle schools. Any special plans for them?

W: The students will bring in a mix of styles and genres. The students will work together and with the teachers on the residencies. This will be a wonderful opportunity for us all to collaborate on a film that is delightful for all ages. With the Charlottesville kids we will substitute new songs that they write for the places in the film that seem most appropriate for songs. Many films of the period incorporated songs, although this is seldom done today . . . .The students will watch selected scenes from the movie during their workshop, and under Paul’s, and possibly my guidance, create new songs that fit the mood and action of the scene, as well as the amount of screen time.

Q: Any last words?
S: So far we still do have the arts in the school curriculum. Even though they are under-emphasized, they haven’t been thrown out. And I think that because they are less emphasized, it’s all the more important to bring in special programs. Because schools’ time is being constricted . . . how all the more important it is to bring in professional artists in all the domains, not only music, and involve them. If every school did what it should be doing in music and the arts, we wouldn’t need Kid Pan Alley.
D: I think that one of the most valuable things a child can learn in school is that his/her creativity is unbounded, that ideas for songs (or art or dance or stories) are inside and all around them, and that they can learn to draw from their own experience in life and share it with others, and in the process be validated as artists and humans. Kids see the world in a fresher, different way than many jaded grownups do, and if we are going to bequeath it to them, we need to learn to respect their ideas, teach them how to shape them into art, and give them a place to stand so that they can move the earth into a new bright future that belongs to them.

P: I absolutely loved it [the experience in our class]. I was really sad when it was over because we all enjoyed it so much. For one thing, it was like NOTHING we had ever done in school before, so it was a nice change. [Reisler] was so nice and patient with us. He explained everything in a level of language that we could understand. Kid Pan Alley was my first taste of what I love to do now. Songwriting is my passion. I use it to express my emotions and to make my feelings known. And I’ll always have Paul to thank for showing me how great it is.

All in all, it was a great experience, and I think it’s a great thing for every school to consider doing for their kids. I know I’ll never forget it.

References

Anne M. Carley speaks and writes for online and print publication on topics at the intersections of the arts, technology, education, intellectual property, and public policy. She earned a J.D. from the New York University School of Law, where she was a recipient of the ASCAP Nathan Burkan Memorial Prize; and a B.A. with Distinction in history from Indiana University. A songwriter, she is currently recording a CD of recent work, tentatively titled Portraits and Landscapes. She has attended two songwriting workshops led by Paul Reisler.

visit us online at: www.vaascd.org
When Ruby Payne first articulated “the hidden rules of class” in the 90’s, she was culling from her experiences as a classroom teacher, principal, and wife as she tried to understand the patterns she was seeing. In the classroom, she saw first hand the struggles of many students from poverty; then, as principal of an affluent Illinois school, she came to view the world through the lens of wealth and privilege. Reflecting on her experiences in contrasting settings, Ruby began to understand the impact of economic class on students.

Her book, A Framework for Understanding Poverty, resulted from conversations that she had with other educators, and over one million copies of the book have been sold. The continuing demand for the book attests to the impact that it has had for teachers, social service and health care providers, law enforcement officials, community agencies, and business managers.

Ruby Payne has led hundreds of workshops and has worked with several thousand teachers and administrators, both nationally and internationally. She founded aha! Process, Inc. (formerly RFT Publishing Co.) in 1996 and serves as its president. In that position she continues to consult and write. In this interview with Robert Lynn Canady, Payne talks about the many facets involved in understanding and addressing issues of economic class discussed in her book.

Canady: Dr. Payne, it is clear from your research that education allows individuals from poverty to have more choices available to them. What can be done to maximize time spent in school and increase achievement for these students?

Payne: Many students, especially those from poverty, need a bridge from the concrete to the abstract because much of life in poverty is concrete and achievement in school requires abstract thinking. To translate the concrete to the abstract, the mind needs to hold the information in a mental model. A mental model is a two-dimensional visual representation, a story or metaphor, or an analogy that presents the patterns or structure of information. It accomplishes two important things: (1) it helps the learner understand the underlying meaning of the information; and (2) it helps the learner remember the information. It is like a graphic organizer but greater emphasis is placed on developing an understanding of the content.

In addition to using mental models, educators need to use strategies for teaching a student how to learn. We have found three processes that provide academic pay-off. Those processes are (1) planning and labeling, (2) sorting, and (3) question making. Planning and labeling activities provide students with a systematic approach, plan, and procedures for completing all portions of each academic task. Sorting activities enable students to differentiate the important from the unimportant by using patterns.

Finally, we use activities that build cognitive capacity for formulating questions in the minds of students. The point is that we can assist learners in transitioning from concrete to abstract and in building cognitive and conceptual frameworks that allow the student to take advantage of educational opportunities available in our schools.
When mental models are taught directly, abstract information can be learned much more quickly because the mind has a way to contain and hold the information. For example, when I talk about providing support for a student in school, I can say that appropriate support is what girders are to a bridge. Thus, I have created a mental image and conveyed information.

Canady: In your book you tie student success to the knowledge of hidden rules of class. You say that for our students to be successful, “We must understand their hidden rules and teach them the rules that make them successful at school and at work.” What do you mean when you talk about “hidden rules”?

Payne: Environments create mindsets or patterned ways of responding in certain situations. Virtually all environments throughout the world have hidden rules—unspoken cueing mechanisms that tell you whether or not you belong. There are hidden rules by race, by religion, by regions of the country, and by class. For example, food in poverty marks the line between being destitute and poor, so the issue for food in poverty is quantity: Are you full? Did you have enough? In middle class the issue is quality: Did you like it? Was it good? In wealth, it’s about presentation: Was the meal artistically presented? Did it have aesthetic appeal? Did it go with the theme?

People in the group with the most money, power, and numbers think their hidden rules are the best. We even sometimes equate those rules with intelligence. We have hidden rules about money. In middle class, things are the primary possession; middle-class folks like to brag about their things. The rule about money in middle class is: I don’t ask you for money, and you don’t ask me. The thinking is that money is to be managed.

But if you have been in poverty two generations or more, you live in the tyranny of the moment, and you don’t have material security. The driving forces of your life center on three things: survival, relationships, and entertainment. People become your primary possession. And the rule about money is this: If you ask me for money, and I have some, I must share it with you. The thinking about money is that it must be spent, and often a priority is entertainment because entertainment numbs the pain, and poverty is painful.

Canady: What do you mean when you say that schools and businesses operate from middle-class norms and use the hidden rules of middle class? Can you give us some examples of those hidden rules, and do school personnel have agreement on such rules?

Payne: There are hidden rules about almost everything. One that affects school is around physical fighting. It is important in poverty to appear physically strong; survival can depend on a person’s ability to defend oneself. However, at school physical fighting gets a student in trouble. School personnel need to explain that fighting is not acceptable in school without insisting that there is never a place for being physically strong. All educators agree that fighting is not acceptable at school, but often we haven’t realized how critical school success depends upon having the knowledge and understanding of the hidden rules of middle class; therefore, students left on their own must gain this information through trial and error.

Canady: In your book you state, “To live in generational poverty (two generations or more) means an individual must be a problem solver—a problem solver in a sensory, non-verbal, reactive environment. But to survive in school and work (middle-class environments), one must be a problem solver in a verbal, paper world that requires planning. The two worlds are diametrically opposed.” What do you mean by “paper world”?

Payne: People who grow up in middle class take for granted the sheet of paper that represents a concrete object...
such as a bank statement representing money or a deed representing property. These pieces of paper are not present in poverty. For example, in my 32-year case study of generational poverty in a low-income white neighborhood, one of the women got a checking account and started writing checks. They were bouncing everywhere.

She said to me, “They gave me these checks, so I’m using them.” She didn’t understand that checks represent money but are not cash. Education teaches one how to live in the paper world.

Another young lady who grew up in poverty and married a man from middle class told the following story. When her husband asked her to make his truck payment, he said, “You can sign the check.” After receiving a call from the loan company that they had received a blank signed check, he questioned his wife and she responded, “You said just to sign the check.” You see her mother never had a checking account. She learned how to make out a check, but she didn’t understand the risk of signing a blank check. She hadn’t understood the hidden rules that help a person safely negotiate the paper world of money.

Canady: This business of hidden rules has no end to its application. So how does one make the transition out of generational poverty?

Payne: First of all, the resource base of the individual must be strengthened in order to provide the time to devote to learning. And learning takes time. The two key factors that move one out of poverty are relationships and education. Money is important in that it can provide the necessities so that time can be devoted to learning, and money stabilizes the environment. However, if only money is provided, and nothing is expected in return (like learning or service), then transition does not occur. That is why 80 to 90 percent of individuals in America who win the lottery are in worse financial shape five years later. That also is why some professional athletes make millions of dollars but have nothing left soon after their sports career ends.

Canady: Strengthening the resource base as you put it might explain my personal history. During my early years my family would have been considered poor, but I do not think the condition consumed us. Almost all the families in my small community were similar. It is difficult for me to see my family in your descriptions. How do you respond to some who say that human beings, even in similar economic groups, behave very differently and are not as predictable as you seem to suggest?

Payne: I have found that at least the following eight resources are needed for success in the world of school and work: financial, emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, plus having support systems, key relationships or mentors, and a knowledge of the hidden rules and expectations of class. Money is only one of those eight resources. Moreover, it is helpful to view social classes on a continuum rather than as distinct divisions between groups. You have undoubtedly moved about on this continuum as do many people in their lifetime. In fact, the very act of naming groups involves an oversimplification and seems offensive to some, but we need a way to articulate the impact of life within a certain environment on the school or work behaviors of students.
The characteristic behaviors of families in poverty, middle class and wealth are survival behaviors that tend to develop over years of interaction in particular environments. These are patterns of behavior, and there are exceptions. The resource that makes the most difference in lifelong learning is relationships or role models. In fact, it is the only resource money cannot buy. Would you say that you had a significant relationship with a mentor?

Canady: Yes, I had three high school teachers, especially one, who were significant in my life. During the close of my senior year in high school one teacher in particular did not accept the fact that I was not planning on attending college. I remember on a Saturday morning in April, 1950, she placed an order from the drug store where I worked and asked that her order be delivered by me. When I arrived at her house, she shared various plans with me on how I could finance my first year of college, and most importantly, she showed me how I could “get into college.” My high school in those days did not have guidance counselors, and no one in my family had ever gone to college; therefore, I did not understand either the value or the process for attending college. Many students today share similar issues and needs. Fifty-six plus years later, I still remember what that most important teacher in my life ordered: a pint of pineapple sherbet and a package of headache powder!

I also had uncles and aunts who lived nearby in a large city. They had cars and bathrooms, and they lived on a higher socio-economic level. For example, I recall as a small child being intrigued with the commodes in their homes. I would be disciplined for wanting to flush them repeatedly. It was fascinating to me to see and hear that water “swishing away.” Until I entered high school we did not have such contraptions in our house!

Payne: Lynn, you have described well what I mean by significant relationships. It is one of the ways schools can assist all students, and it is especially important for students from poverty. The key to moving out of poverty is relationships with people different from you. According to Dr. James Comer, “No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.” And when you know people different from you (Robert Putnam calls it “bridging capital”), then you have someone who can teach you the hidden rules—if you desire to learn them. That knowledge, coupled with education, can help a person make the transition out of poverty. The bottom line is that we can’t put achievement first with students of poverty because we won’t “get to” achievement if we don’t first establish a significant relationship.

A significant relationship can be summed up in three words: insistence, expectations, and support. Traditionally schools provided insistence, and since the mid-1970s, high expectations have been added; however, if students from poverty are to be successful in school, systematic school and community support must be provided. The supports these students need are cognitive strategies, supportive relationships, coping strategies, goal-setting opportunities, and appropriate instruction both in content and discipline.

Clearly your extended family and teachers played that support role for you. The resource that makes the most difference in lifelong stability is emotional resource, the ability to be alone when times are bad and not be destructive to self or others. It is clear that you developed emotional resources through the models of people in your church and family.

Canady: Yes, looking back, I can see that I did have support beyond my immediate family that expanded my resource base. In my small community almost everyone went to church on a regular basis, and in my case, my family attended a church that offered very fundamental teachings on personal behavior. This conversation reminds me of a comment in your book. Would you like to expand on the following: “Resources
of students and adults should be analyzed before dispensing advice or seeking solutions to situations. What may seem to be very workable suggestions from a middle-class point of view may be virtually impossible given the limited resources available to those in poverty.”

Payne: What happened in New Orleans when Katrina occurred offers a prime example of what happens when middle class people make plans that involve people in poverty without input from those people. Part of the issue during and after Katrina was the lack of execution of plans by large numbers of low-income people in New Orleans. The widespread failure by federal, state and local officials to execute plans is by now well-documented, but another issue is the difficulty of most people in poverty to do the same in their personal lives. People were encouraged to evacuate but they didn’t have the resources to do it. When individuals who are to execute a plan do not make the plan or understand the plan, then their response will be reactive, based on data from a sensory environment. Furthermore, many of the New Orleans plans were written on paper in “formal language.” The world of poverty is simply not a paper world or one of formal register. This is true throughout the world.

On a school level, educators need to understand the family before making recommendations. We recommend that educators consider the eight resources when selecting interventions. Schools can exercise some influence over many of the in school by establishing support with as-hidden rules of middle

When teachers available for a student, provide that resource, schools to suggest that a lar basis. For the parent read, that request cannot could set up a time for to the child at school. Similarly, rather than send home written communications to family members who do not read, educators could send the information on a video cassette. There probably will be a TV/VCR in the home because of the importance attached to entertainment. The parent is interested in how the child is doing in school and will likely view the tape.

Canady: So teachers can better understand and manage the behaviors of students if they acknowledge and respect the hidden rules of class, and teachers can embed strategies in their lessons to build cognitive capacity for students of poverty. Is that enough? In your book you say, “The deficit model is at work when a community focuses its anti-poverty strategies on the behaviors of the individual.” Aren’t we focusing on the behavior of individuals in poverty?

Payne: Yes, we are focusing on the behavior of individuals in poverty in relation to the behavior associated with success in middle class. If that were all we advocated, then we would be guilty of just what I teach against. That’s why it is important for us as educators to reach beyond this much needed assistance to individual students.

Educators can play a role in changing the view of persons in poverty from “not having” to “having” by acknowledging the talents and skills of persons in poverty. For example, when persons of poverty are placed in an environment that is governed by middle class rules, such as formal language on a test, it is important for educators to teach those rules; however, that teaching must be done with sensitivity.
If we’re going to create economic prosperity for everyone and build sustainable communities, we must learn to understand each other, which includes an understanding of the root causes of poverty. Without that understanding, our policies swing back and forth with the political winds. We need a comprehensive set of strategies that include all the causes of poverty. Focusing on the behaviors of the individual is important but it is only one of four areas that should be addressed. A community needs also to address human and social capital within the community, exploitation of people in poverty, and political/economic structures.

Canady: Is that what you mean when you say, “It is only by applying an additive model that we will understand and address both poverty and the underlying factors that have perpetuated it?”

Payne: Yes, an additive model recognizes that persons of poverty have contributions to make in addressing issues of poverty. If persons from poverty had been at the table when emergency plans were written in New Orleans, they may have written a workable disaster plan. We simply must look to the people who understand life in poverty for appropriate solutions.

Currently many community organizations focus on changing the thinking and behaviors of the individuals in poverty. Additionally, local, state, and federal officials focus on the quality and effectiveness of education, social services, corrections, and health care; however, these groups cannot do it all. Greater attention needs to be focused on the exploitation of people in poverty. Political and economic structures need to recognize the correlation between poverty and de-industrialization, economic disparity, the decline of the middle class, and corporate influence on legislators.

Canady: We talked about the importance of relationships in working with parents in poverty. From your book I gather that it is equally important that we build relationships with students. Explain what you mean when you say: “To move from poverty to middle class or middle class to wealth, an individual must give up relationships for achievement, at least for some period of time.”

Payne: The dilemma is about time; learning takes time. There is a period when a person does not have time for concentrating both on studies and being with friends. Frequently the student thinks that it is an all or nothing situation and does not see how there can be time for both achievement and friends or that friendships could be renewed later. A dialog with the student can help the student understand the choices that are available.

There is also the issue of the young person who is ridiculed by his/her peers for getting good grades. Educators need to be sensitive to the student’s wish to retain status among friends. For example, praise in private is more effective than public praise. This is true for all students, but it is critical for students from poverty.

Canady: Expand upon the following: “The key to achievement for students from poverty is in creating relationships with them. Because poverty is about relationships as well as entertainment, the most significant motivator for these students is relationships.”

Payne: You have to build relationships. There is a saying that rules without relationships create rebellion. There is no learning without mutual respect. When one person is always the giver and the other is always the taker, eventually both sides hate each other because there’s no respect. The message the taker understands is this: You give something to me because you believe I have nothing of value to offer in return. So you should ask for something in return – like time or services or learning (in the classroom). I think of one of my students who failed my class because he wouldn’t do the work. He thought I would pass him anyway but I said, “No, this is a two-way street. I don’t know that you’re learning if you don’t give me anything back.” After failing my class the first year,
he came back a second year and did everything. He was so proud of himself, and he learned so much. There was a relationship; we had mutual respect.

**Canady:** Dr. Payne, what are the key factors from your years of studying poverty that educators need to understand in order to be more successful in educating students from lower-socio-economic backgrounds?

**Payne:** The following beliefs guide me in my quest to make a positive impact on the education and lives of individuals in poverty:

- Academic strategies can provide a bridge from the concrete world of poverty to the more abstract world of school and the work place,
- A successful learning environment is built on an understanding and respect for hidden rules of class,
- Education only occurs where there are key relationships of mutual respect operating in the presence of high standards and support, including focused feedback, with opportunities to redo work until it is acceptable,
- Educators and politicians must bring persons from poverty to the table when making decisions: and they must recognize that people from poverty are skilled and creative individuals with firsthand knowledge of life in poverty and possible solutions.
- The true discrimination that comes out of poverty is the lack of cognitive strategies, which handicaps individuals throughout life. It is a void for which not only the individuals involved but also members of society pay an enormous price.

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*Peggy McMaster is the Parliamentarian/Historian of Virginia ASCD and the Executive Director of West Virginia ASCD.*
The A. Linwood Holton Governor’s School (HGS) opened in the Fall of 1998. It is part of a network of twenty academic year programs offered to Gifted and Talented High School Students all across Virginia. HGS presently serves approximately 350 students, mostly high school juniors and seniors, from the fifteen school systems comprising the southwestern part of the state, an area covering over 4,000 square miles and including 39 high schools. Students in Virginia’s First Virtual Governor’s School remain in their home schools yet participate in our classes via the internet, using sophisticated distance learning software and equipment. However, HGS students soon learn that their educational experience involves much more than the material contained in the thick textbooks and CD’s they are given at orientation. From the beginning they are challenged by and soon engrossed in interesting activities and projects they often have not previously experienced.

In Anatomy & Physiology students work hard to solve a crime by isolating DNA in several suspects and creating a fingerprint in an interactive website. They also conduct research into a variety of current medical conditions, such as determining the dietary requirements of a baby with Phenylketonuria, a terrible disease caused by the overproduction of an amino acid called phenylalanine as a result of the absence of the enzyme that can break it down. If a proper diet is maintained in which phenylalanine is absent, the mental retardation that results from this disease can be avoided. On their exciting class field-trip to Eastern Virginia Medical School, the anatomy and physiology students use their content knowledge to work in small groups with medical students on human cadavers and learn about medical diagnostic practices.

In Methods of Research, students learn to analyze research papers for quality, validity, and reliability. Using research skills such as surveying, observing, interviewing, etc., students learn to use traditional and modern digital resources to plan a research project of their own, to investigate their topic in detail, to collect necessary data, and to complete and publish their own research paper.

In Engineering, students enter the NASA International Aeronautics Competition, build a geodesic dome made of newspapers and test it for strength, complete a virtual bridge design activity, create a design for a new lunar rover using CAD software, and design a lunar growth chamber for green plants.

In Robotics, students investigate real-world applications of robots, build stick-like robots (Stiquito), and more sophisticated VEX Robots which involve the students in learning the limits of remote control, determination of gear ratios, and the relationship of wheel size and speed.

In Astronomy, students participate in the Quiet Skies Project, which involves measuring radio frequency interference in their community and then comparing their data with others to speculate about why differences occur. They participate in Harvard’s Micro-Observatory Project where they actually remotely control telescopes and take beautiful pictures of various planets, stars, or galaxies. They conduct important scientific work for the NASA Star Count Project, and they build their own telescope. On their exciting annual field-trip, they, along with Physics, Engineering, and Robotics students, visit the Green Bank National Observatory in West Virginia and use the multi-billion dollar radio tel-
Physics students learn about and apply physics concepts by building a racecar using a mousetrap for power and then competing to see whose is the fastest; by constructing electric motors; by building and flying a model aircraft; by assembling and using a telescope, and also by participating in the Quiet Skies Project.

Appalachian History students learn about the history of the Appalachian Region, but also such skills as historical research, use of primary documents, conducting oral history interviews, historical archival work, and historical preservation. They then put all these skills to work investigating interesting historical topics, researching local history sites, conducting their own oral histories, and contributing their work to their class’ website. Their class field-trip to The Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia, enables students to step back into time to experience life as it was lived on the frontier by a variety of pioneer groups.

In Western Civilization, students study the past 5,000 years of human history, with an emphasis on the history of the Western Hemisphere. Through investigating primary and secondary source material, students are exposed to both the original documents and the most recent interpretations of Western history. Research skills, analytical thinking, and written work all combine to stimulate and broaden the intellectual capabilities of these students. Field trips to local historic sites, such as Old Salem at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, remind these regional students of their larger cultural heritage.

In World Civilization, students study the course of human history over the last 10,000 years at the global level. Readings, written assignments and group projects all combine to introduce students to the concept of global citizenship. Analytical and creative writing skills are emphasized. Field trips to local historic sites, such as Old Salem at Winston-Salem, NC, encourage students to understand their personal and national identity in a global context through such themes as immigration and exploration.

In Probability and Statistics, students learn statistical analysis tools as well as methods of technical research. They use these skills to investigate the use of statistics in areas such as the federal government’s determination of the unemployment and inflation rates, pharmaceutical companies’ development of new drugs, and engineering design of United States spacecraft. They then put statistics to work through their own statistical analysis of many varied, real world topics such as: The Economic Impact of the Bristol, Tennessee NASCAR Races on Southwest Virginia; Race Week Gas Prices: Do They Really Change?; The Effect of the Changing Demographics of Southwest Virginia on Development; and Red Light Traffic Cameras: Do They Reduce Accidents?.

*Additional information may be found at our website which is located at http://www.hgs.k12.va.us/

Danny Dixon is presently the Director of the A. Linwood Holton Governor’s School, Virginia’s first virtual Academic Year Governor’s School, serving 16 School Systems in Southwestern Virginia (an area of over 4000 sq. miles and 42 high schools).
Minds in Motion
Carol Blauvelt with Lauren Curran

A program originally developed for inner city children by former New York City Ballet principal dancer Jacques d’Amboise has found its way into the heart of Virginia. From urban schools in Richmond to southwestern Martinsville to suburban Woodbridge, fourth grade children are learning to work in coordination with other children, to demand excellence of themselves and, to quote d’Amboise, “to experience what it is like to be an artist, seeking excellence in an art form.” Using his model for inspiration, Richmond Ballet began an educational outreach program in 1993 called Minds In Motion that is now extended to more than 19 elementary schools in the Richmond area as well as to numerous schools throughout the state.

The program in the Richmond schools is a year-long program that teaches discipline, self-awareness, physical coordination through choreographic movements, elements of rhythm, concentration skills, and teamwork. Students meet for 45 minutes once a week with an artist from the Ballet and with a pianist to practice dance movements, often just “everyday” movements, set to choreography. Each year, using a theme to establish the structure, the children work on their performances for a final presentation before parents and friends at the Arthur Ashe Athletic Center. The theme last year, Jamestown, was tied to the Jamestown 400th anniversary. The weekly class also integrates Standard of Learning curriculum studies, and in the past the program has worked with such institutions as the Virginia Historical Society, the Federal Reserve Bank, the U. S. Postal service, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

Under the exuberant and skillful leadership of Brett Bonda, Minds In Motion has grown from one “pilot” school to a thriving program that reaches thousands of students each year. A dancer himself, he cajoles, encourages, models, videos, critiques, and laughs the children into reaching depths in themselves they didn’t know they possess. Student learning and growth are constantly assessed by Bonda. He compliments students when they do well, and he critiques them when they can do better. He rotates students in their lines from front to back or back to front depending on their enthusiasm and performance. He gets students to perform solo in front of their classes. A real life example of how the arts and academics can complement each other, he helps students learn in an engaging and physical way.

In the Richmond area professional company members can also be “adopted” by classrooms as another dimension to the program. They visit the classrooms, often correspond with students while the artists are on tour, and generally provide a closer look at what a professional artist’s life is like.

Another variation is the residency program offered by the ballet company. For example, a two-week residency is an annual feature at Penn Elementary in Woodbridge, Virginia. Lauren Curren, physical education teacher at the school, had participated in a workshop with Brett Bonda at a Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance convention several years ago. She left so excited about the program that she just had to bring it to her school. Because she personally lacked the expertise in dance, this was an introduction that she could not provide her students in physical education class. Her enthusiasm drove her to apply for a grant that brought Bonda to Penn for an intensive two-week workout with students that ended with both a school and public performance for parents, family and friends; and now for three years,
she has managed to get the program to return. The whole school looks forward to the event, and teachers are enthusiastic about what they see, even with a shortened time-frame. As fourth grade teacher Melody Walczuk put it, “I saw that all of my students were capable of being focused and disciplined.” That is a powerful lesson for both students and teachers in September.

The name Minds In Motion was created because of the long-term effects on children’s brains, a large benefit of the dance-based program. Dance movements have been documented to develop balance, gains in attention and in reading, and improvements in regulating emotions. Children who participate in the “movement arts” learn they have control over their bodies and their emotions. Involvement in highly complex movements such as found in choreography causes engagement of almost all of the brain, producing dopamine and endorphins, chemicals necessary for mental health and stability. As one student told Curran, she “loved” Minds In Motion because if she “came to school in a bad mood, Minds In Motion makes [her] feel better.”

Teachers and their classroom strategies are also affected by this program. For example, they learn to “re-energize” their students by using segments of the dance sequences as a means of regaining focus. After a class session of academic learning, standing and executing a few dance movements floods the brain with much-needed oxygen-rich blood to reactivate high level mental functioning. Suggestions for writing, grammar, mathematical sequencing, and memorizing connections are part of the Minds In Motion teacher’s guide. One teacher, Sally Miller, noted that a benefit for her students is that even those who have struggled with academic learning can experience “the concept that learning is a process, step-by-step” (Information Packet).

Watching the children practice, anyone can see the smiles and hear the laughter, feel the electricity of the intense concentration during a dance step execution. Anyone can see Minds In Motion is a perfect marriage of academics, the arts, and the physical.

References

Carol Blauvelt has been a classroom teacher of high school English for over 36 years in Prince William County. Currently Carol is part of the Instructional Support Team in PWCS, working as a curriculum and staff developer. In addition, she is an adjunct professor for George Mason University.

Lauren Curran is a physical education specialist in Prince William County. She currently teaches at Penn Elementary School in Woodbridge, VA.
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Abstract

The Teachers Teach Together (T3) Project involved the implementation of comprehensive planning and best practices in co-teaching and professional development at the district, building, and classroom levels. The project included: 1) high quality, focused, and sustained professional development for teachers; 2) use of a structured format for collaborative planning; 3) systematic implementation of co-teaching models; 4) development of “co-teaching look fors” to be used during classroom observations; 5) peer observation and feedback; and 6) ongoing reflection and collection of data regarding developing co-teaching partnerships. Preliminary results provide a series of lessons learned and recommendations for continuing the T3 Project into year two.

Teachers Teach Together: A Co-Teaching Journey

Imagine looking into a classroom and seeing two teachers and a group of students with diverse learning needs. At first glance this might not be an uncommon sight but let’s pause to ask some important questions about this scenario. Did these teachers choose to work together? What support are they receiving? Are the teachers planning collaboratively? What does instruction in this class look like and what role does each teacher assume? Are the learning needs of all students being met? How will the teachers be evaluated? The answers to these and other questions so critical to the effectiveness of co-teaching in general education classrooms are thus the rationale for the VASCD Research Grant, Teachers Teach Together (T3). The T3 Project proposal was collaboratively developed by a university professor of teacher education and a school division director of special education to enhance the learning outcomes for students by increasing active co-planning and effective co-teaching by general and special education teachers in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms.

Traditionally, educators have worked alone in their classrooms but inclusive education using a co-teaching model is increasingly prevalent in many schools today. Co-teaching has been described as collaboration and communication among all members of a team to ensure that the needs of all students are met (Dieker, 2001). Cook and Friend (1998) describe co-teaching as “two or more professionals delivering substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single space.” (p.454). Depending on the lesson goals and student needs, teachers’ roles vary (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2000).

Dieker (2001) summarizes literature which highlights benefits and challenges of co-teaching. Benefits include increased understanding of students’ needs, increased exchange of teaching strategies, increased peer acceptance of classmates with disabilities, and enhanced educational programs. Challenges involve communication, planning, consensus of teaching philosophies, and delivery of rigorous content.

It is clear that co-teaching teams need to develop specific skills; however, a common complaint involves lack of staff development opportunities to develop collaborative skills and adjust to new roles (Walther-Thomas, 1997).
Keefe and Moore (2004) discuss the importance of communication in the early stages of the co-teaching relationship, and this communication ultimately becomes an important determinant in how successful the teachers view co-teaching and the likelihood of continuing to co-teach with their partner. Time to co-plan is essential, but this time must be a priority for both teachers; and the time must be used effectively. Too often, special educators serve in a paraprofessional role, jeopardizing their position as professionals and equal partners (Weiss & Lloyd, 1993). Research has found a non-systematic implementation of co-teaching models, over-extended teachers, and lack of clear expectations. When co-teaching is implemented haphazardly due to a variety of contextual factors and lack of systematic support, it becomes difficult for administrators to evaluate the implementation or its effectiveness, and it also poses a challenge for IEP teams who make placement decisions. Therefore, district, school, and classroom personnel must establish quality guidelines for implementation of co-teaching. In addition, it has been noted that special education is not being provided to students despite the fact that two teachers are in the classroom (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Special education teachers must provide specially designed instruction to meet students’ unique needs, and they need to determine how to do this in co-taught classrooms. According to Dieker (2001), “The spirit of special education (Individualized Education Plans) must be protected” (p.15).

It is imperative that administrators provide training and support to both general and special education teachers (Weiss & Lloyd, 2003). Unfortunately, however, professional development often consists of stand-alone workshops on topics selected by schools and school divisions and lacks the focus, intensity, and continuity needed to change classroom practices (Little, 1993). Rather, professional development should be an opportunity to restructure teachers’ work so they can learn together and work collaboratively to effect changes in teaching practice and student learning (Corcoran, 1995; Gilford, 1996; Little, 1993).

To address issues related to inclusive teaching, collaborative planning, meeting students’ needs, and professional development, The Teachers Teach Together (T3) Project was designed to implement comprehensive planning at the district, building, and classroom levels related to co-teaching. In addition, the project included the following specific components: 1) high quality, focused, and sustained professional development for teachers; 2) use of a structured format for collaborative planning; 3) systematic implementation of co-teaching models; 4) development of “co-teaching look fors” to be used during classroom observations; 5) peer observation and feedback; and 6) ongoing reflection and collection of data regarding the developing co-teaching partnerships.

**Context and Rationale**

Staunton City Schools is a small school division with a student population of approximately 2,700 students K-12. Students with disabilities account for 16.4% of the K-12 population. In addition, Staunton is home to a wide variety of social service agencies bringing unique challenges to teachers and administrators in designing and providing appropriate educational support to learners with diverse needs.

The school division has established and maintained a vigorous professional development menu to assist staff in gaining the skills and confidence to meet the needs of all students in the school system. Included in that menu of activities have been several one-day workshops on co-teaching and instructional strategies for working with learners with diverse needs. While these sessions were well received, encouraging application of the information and sustaining momentum throughout the school year posed a constant challenge. The desire for collaboration was evident, but the level of professional development and support was insufficient. Based on conversations with administrators, a review of literature related to co-teaching, and an appraisal of current practices in the school division, the following issues were identified and translated into targets for the 2006-2007 academic year (see Table 1).
Table 1
School Division Needs and Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEEDS</th>
<th>TARGET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Achievement of students with mild to moderate disabilities continues to lag significantly behind same-age peers without disabilities.</td>
<td>• Increase achievement of students with and without disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional development for co-teachers lacks intensity, continuity, and a structured opportunity to reflect on practice.</td>
<td>• Increase and enhance levels of understanding of the purpose and rationale for inclusive teaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School staff has varying levels of understanding of the purpose and rationale for inclusive teaching.</td>
<td>• Provide timely, intensive, and continuous professional development to support teachers’ application of co-teaching skills including the systematic use of co-teaching models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School staff possesses varying levels of understanding or skills related to co-teaching.</td>
<td>• Implement a common, consistent planning time to allow for effective instructional planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special educators and general educators do not systematically plan or implement research-based co-teaching models.</td>
<td>• Increase co-planning activities of general and special educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Master schedules are not created and maintained to foster co-teaching and teachers do not have a common, consistent time to co-plan effective instruction.</td>
<td>• Increase awareness of building administrators that master schedules need to be created and maintained with co-teaching in mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The unique skills of both professionals are often not utilized effectively during instruction.</td>
<td>• Utilize the complementary expertise of both the special and general educator in providing instruction for students with diverse needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building level administrators do not have a guide for evaluating teaching in co-taught classrooms.</td>
<td>• Create and pilot an evaluation instrument to assess implementation of and the effectiveness of co-teaching.</td>
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</table>

Project Description

The T3 project included providing adequate resources, facilitating effective communication, and providing ongoing support for co-teachers. District planning helped to ensure that potential needs and consequences were considered before the program was implemented. The complexity of building level issues was an important contextual variable, especially in relation to scheduling students and teachers. Building level leaders were critical in supporting the rationale and purpose of co-teaching, and they were involved early on as well as briefed at both midpoint and near the end of the first year.

Involvement of teachers was voluntary although several were encouraged to participate based on co-teaching roles they had assumed. Some co-teaching teams already knew each other while others did not. In two cases, co-teachers did not meet each other until the first professional development session.
One day of intensive professional development was provided in the summer prior to implementation. In addition to this initial work, ongoing professional development occurred throughout the school year during a combination of teacher workdays, early dismissal days, and afternoon release time with the assistance of substitute teachers. Although the professional development schedule for the T3 project had been planned during the previous spring, conflicts and other school division priorities made it necessary to alter the schedule. At times this caused confusion and also raised the question of division commitment and priorities. All sessions had a topical focus based on developmental needs of co-teachers, but time was also provided for co-teachers to solve problems and plan for ongoing classroom instruction. In an effort to recognize the effort and time of the individual teachers who attended the year-long professional development and implemented co-teaching, a $500 stipend was provided.

Eighteen teachers formed nine teams composed of a general educator and a special educator, with the exception of one elementary team comprised of an ESL teacher and a general education teacher. The teams were equally distributed in three schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Students were scheduled into co-taught classrooms with the goal of less than one-fourth of the students having mild or moderate learning needs. Administrators agreed early on to make efforts to consider co-planning time for teaching partners although this posed a significant challenge at the elementary level.

Development of Co-Teaching Knowledge and Skills

Professional development sessions began with a full-day in July and then were held approximately once per month during the year with the goal of gradually exploring a range of co-teaching topics and skills. These included the following:

1. Purpose and definition of co-teaching: Participants explored a definition of co-teaching with emphasis on each member of the team contributing equally. From the beginning, it was stressed that, rather than acting as paraprofessionals, special educators needed to take a meaningful shared role in classroom planning and providing instruction.

2. Team building and communicating about specific classroom and instructional issues: It was vital that co-teachers begin to know and understand their teaching partner. Included in these activities were structured dialogues about teaching philosophies and various aspects of instruction. Another important goal was to form a bond among all members of this learning community so that participants felt comfortable being open and honest about a range of issues.

3. Models of co-teaching: The Power of 2 video (Friend, 2005) provided descriptions and examples of six ways two teachers might work together and discussion highlighted the strengths and drawbacks of each. Teachers were encouraged to try the various approaches and share results of implementation.

4. Co-planning format and guidelines: The Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Book (Dieker, 2006) was provided to all participants with teachers expected to use it or adapt their own planning system to create a match between learning goals, co-teaching model(s), and responsibilities of each teacher. The objective was to avoid undue struggling with teacher roles but instead provide concrete models to select from and implement. Completed lesson plans and accompanying instructional materials were shared among the group. Co-planning time was built into several of the sessions to help elementary teams who did not have common planning time and to provide opportunities for uninterrupted long-range planning for middle and high school teachers.
5. Learner needs and instructional strategies: With the ultimate objective of providing high quality instruction for students in the co-taught classroom, the diverse needs of learners were considered. Several evidence-based instructional strategies were shared with encouragement to incorporate these techniques into instruction. Teachers then brought examples such as graphic organizers or mnemonics to share with the group.

6. Evaluation of co-teaching: A variety of activities helped teachers to explore critical aspects of co-teaching and to develop collaboratively an observation “Look For” instrument to supplement the school division classroom observation tool which did not seem to provide adequate information about the quality of instruction in a co-taught classroom. The draft instrument (see Table 2) is composed of three sections designed to prompt pre- and post-observation discussion as well as provide evaluators with indicators of effective co-teaching.

7. Peer support and observation: Project participants used the draft observation “Look Fors” to conduct a total of 37 peer observations across grade and school levels and provide substantive feedback to observed teams. Teachers had the unique opportunity to see how others were planning and implementing the co-teaching models with different students, levels, and curriculum. Based on participant feedback, the first draft of the tool (see Table 2) was subsequently revised both in content and format and is currently ready for pilot testing by building administrators.

8. Reflection and sharing: Throughout the project participants were asked to individually and collaboratively reflect on the experience. These reflections provided focus for upcoming professional development. During a spring session, participants presented on co-teaching to their building principals and ended with an open discussion of what went well, what could be improved, and what school level support was needed. The final session with a school system administrator included collaboratively planning the continued implementation of the co-teaching project, both for ongoing as well as new teams. (see Table 2)

Lessons Learned

A wide range of qualitative data was collected throughout the year. These included teachers’ written responses to timely question prompts, ratings of their own participation, evaluations of the ongoing progress and stumbling blocks of their co-teaching relationship, feedback on planning formats, and reactions to classroom observations. In addition, the school division will be able to use student achievement results on 2006-2007 benchmark tests as well as the Standards of Learning tests to look at progress of students with and without disabilities in T3 project classes versus other classes. A preliminary analysis of the data reveals the following conclusions and considerations for the future.

- It became clear that co-teaching was not a special education initiative but needed to be a division-wide practice. The commitment of the school division was critical. Fostering co-teaching needed to be holistically considered within the context of other initiatives so that it did not, as just one more initiative, become derailed and lose momentum.

- The project needed to actively facilitate the development of a community of teacher-learners who had adequate opportunities to build teams, co-plan, work through relationship issues, reflect on practice, and celebrate successes. Teachers recommended enhanced screening of potential co-teachers for both commitment and personality match.

- Teachers perceived the professional development as valuable, interactive, and applicable to their daily work. They were highly invested in the overall success of the project as evidenced by exceptional attendance and completion of activities.
### Table 2

#### Co-Teaching Observation & Conference Instrument (Draft)

Section 1: Pre-Observation Conference Question Prompts (T3 Draft 3-7-07)

**Co-Teaching Plan, Models, and Roles**
- What is the format and level of detail of the written co-teaching plan?
- What was the structure and amount of co-planning time? Was this effective?
- What co-teaching model(s) will be used? What others have been used previously?
- Why was the co-teaching model(s) selected for this lesson?
- How will it look when the co-teaching model is implemented? Will the co-teaching model be adapted and, if so, how?

**Instruction**

*Objectives*
- What are the instructional goals for the lesson and are they appropriate and rigorous (related to SOLs and IEPs)?
- Are there individual academic and/or behavioral goals for specific students?
- How does the selected co-teaching model(s) correspond with achieving the instructional objectives?

*Learner Needs*
- What are the unique learning needs of some students? Do both teachers understand the learning needs of the students?
- How will unique learning needs be accommodated (relate to IEPs and 504 Plans as appropriate)?
- How is this co-taught classroom the least restrictive environment for the student(s)?

**Teacher Roles & Expertise**
- Will teachers share a variety of roles and responsibilities? What specific roles will each teacher assume? Will teachers appear equal to students?
- What is each teacher’s level and type of contribution to the overall lesson?
- Do teachers agree on expectations, instruction, and management? If not, what are differences and how are they being resolved?
- What is the content expertise and instructional expertise of each teacher in relation to the instructional objectives? (It is not assumed that level of expertise is equal). How does each teacher’s content and instructional expertise relate to the selected co-teaching model?

**Assessment**
- What instructional materials will be used? How were they selected, adapted, and/or developed?
- How will learning outcomes be assessed? Is assessment differentiated?

**Learning Environment and Management**
- How will the learning environment provide evidence of co-teacher equality?
- How will the classroom be arranged to facilitate implementation of the co-teaching model?
- How were decisions made about grouping of students for the co-teaching model(s)?
- How will the teachers actively engage the learners throughout the lesson?
- What classroom management procedures are in place and what is the role of each teacher?
- Does one teacher have any specific management role and/or rapport with students?

Are there extenuating circumstances to be discussed (schedules, planning time, students, teacher skills, etc.)?
Table 2
Section 2: Co-Teaching & Inclusion “Look Fors” (T3 Draft 3-7-07)
Classroom Observation Supplement

S=Strength Area
P=Proficient
T=Target for Growth
U=Unsatisfactory

Place an X in the appropriate column if indicator has been observed.
No mark means “not applicable.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Teaching Plan, Models, &amp; Teacher Roles</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are teachers following the written co-teaching plan?</td>
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<td>Are teachers sharing a variety of roles and responsibilities?</td>
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<td>Is there a positive flexible working relationship between teachers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do both teachers have purposeful roles throughout the lesson?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are both teachers in leadership roles at some point and do students perceive teachers as equals?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there smooth transitions between teachers as they assume instructional roles?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does each teacher have the needed expertise to implement role?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the selected co-teaching model(s) achieve intended teaching and learning outcomes?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Instruction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do both teachers help students master instructional objectives?</td>
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<td>Instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are instruction and instructional materials differentiated to meet unique learning needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are both teachers accountable for the learning and behavior of all students?</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<th>U</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are learning outcomes continuously monitored by both teachers?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is assessment differentiated?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Environment and Management</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>P</th>
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<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there evidence of co-teacher equality in the learning environment?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learning environment conducive to the co-teaching model?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do teachers use pronouns “we, us, ours” to highlight collaboration during the lesson?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the composition of student groups vary depending on purpose of instruction and learning needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do students transition to groups effectively?</td>
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<td>Do both teachers facilitate active engagement and attention of all students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do teachers demonstrate consensus in enforcing classroom rules and implementing management procedures?</td>
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</table>
• There was explicit permission to experiment with implementation without negative consequences but also the expectation to reflect on what went well and what could be improved. It was important to balance the need to provide adequate time for professional growth yet still maintain momentum toward increasingly effective co-teaching. Each team was allowed to progress at a pace that was comfortable for the co-teachers yet there were points at which reflection and resolution were needed. A future consideration will be to monitor team progress to identify more precisely when attention may be warranted.

• Emphasis on peer observation rather than administrator evaluation created a safe non-threatening environment in which to try new instructional models. Cross-school and cross-grade level observations provided rich environments in which to see the interaction of co-teaching models, student needs, and curriculum. To develop a community of learners, teachers were encouraged to openly identify issues and develop resolutions through team or group problem-solving. However, co-teaching teams needed more upfront time to develop effective working relationships as a foundation for planning and teaching during the academic year.

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Table 2
Section 3: Post-Observation Conference Question Prompts (T3 Draft 3-7-07)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was this co-taught lesson successful? In what ways? What would you have done differently?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were co-teachers functioning as a team with shared roles and responsibilities? What changes would you make?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were all of the students’ needs met? Were the student groupings appropriate? Do individual students continue to have specific learning difficulties?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What instructional strategies proved to be most effective? What other strategies might be incorporated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What student performance data was collected and were instructional objectives achieved? How does this data inform future instruction? If needed, how will content be re-taught, skill deficiencies remediated, or additional practice provided?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are areas of future improvement and professional growth for the co-teaching team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is observation based on the team or on individual performance, or both?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Virginia Educational Leadership - Enriching The Global Work Ethic - Vol. 5, No. 1, Fall 2007
environments in which to see the interaction of co-teaching models, student needs, and curriculum. To develop a community of learners, teachers were encouraged to openly identify issues and develop resolutions through team or group problem-solving. However, co-teaching teams needed more upfront time to develop effective working relationships as a foundation for planning and teaching during the academic year.

- The project provided additional insight into how critical the building principal was in fostering positive relationships and creating a school atmosphere in which co-teaching was valued and given priority.

- Meaningful dialogue between co-teachers and building principals promoted understanding of issues and collaborative problem solving, both short and long term. Principals wanted information about co-teaching, were interested in its value, and sought strategies to foster co-teaching relationships. In the future, principals will be included more extensively in the professional development experience.

- Careful scheduling of students into classrooms was important in order to avoid over-representation of students with significant learning needs, reinforcing the need to hand schedule some students. In two of the nine classes this goal was not achieved, resulting in over-representation of students with disabilities and thereby creating an even stronger commitment to carefully place students in the future.

- It was evident that additional funding would be required to truly implement effective co-teaching. Realistically, this is not a less expensive way to provide instruction given appropriate percentages of students with special needs and numbers of special educators available to work in inclusive classrooms.

- Ongoing professional development is needed. Teams who were provided with year-long professional development as compared to those who did not receive formal support indicate that the former had a better chance of systematic implementation of co-planning and teaching.

- Special education teachers, despite the complexity of their roles, must commit to arriving promptly and remaining in the classroom for the entire instructional period. Paperwork and parent meetings cannot be an excuse for leaving the classroom, and administrators cannot call on them to substitute in classrooms or proctor exams during their co-teaching or co-planning time.

- A hard lesson was the fall-out of co-teaching teams due to a variety of factors, including grade level, school, and district transfers, as well as self-selection. As shown in Table 3, of the nine original teams, three teams remain intact for the upcoming school year; however, each participant has expressed willingness to continue even if it is with a new teaching partner. In fact, all the teachers, including those leaving the school division, emphasized that they will continue to advocate for this instructional model. Long-range planning and consistent teacher placement, especially important where curriculum content is an issue for the special educator, will be important factors in maintaining future teams.

Teachers and administrators went into the project with the notion that co-teaching would be good for students with disabilities but realized that the learning of all students improved. Results clarified that teachers believe co-teaching is the right thing to do for students even if their particular co-teaching relationship was challenging. These 18 teachers proved that if support is provided, teachers can accomplish great things.

**Next Steps**

Co-teaching is not just a yearlong commitment but a paradigm shift that needs to be fostered over mul-
Multiple years. The journey for co-teaching teams is ongoing with teachers in their second year continuing to need support but also able to contribute to the professional development of new teams. This school division remains committed to co-teaching and providing professional development support to develop a cadre of experienced co-teacher leaders in each building.

Even in instances when the team relationship did not progress as teachers would have liked, all teachers remained committed to both the project and the concept of co-teaching. In preparing for the coming school year, project leaders have met with additional principals who, along with their teachers, have expressed potential interest in joining the project during the second year. Brief presentations at faculty meetings, along with dissemination of an article on co-teaching, provided information to enable teachers to make more informed decisions about participation. As the project enters a subsequent year, there are now three levels of teams as shown in Table 3. The first involves three intact teams who will continue to co-teach together. Next is the possibility of six teams in which one teacher, who has already participated in the project, will work with a new teaching partner. The final group consists of approximately seven new teams. It will be vital to differentiate professional development to meet the needs of the teams at each of the three levels and to involve experienced co-teachers in modeling for and mentoring others.

Once again look into a classroom with two teachers and a group of students with diverse learning needs. In Staunton City Schools, this is now a more frequent sight with knowledgeable and skilled teachers committed to making learning a high quality experience for students as well as themselves.

**Acknowledgements:** The authors express sincere appreciation and deep respect for the 18 teachers who participated in this project. Their voices were invaluable in understanding the complexities of co-planning and co-teaching. They have made a significant contribution to the development of the next level of division-wide
implementation. We acknowledge the Staunton City School administrators for their flexibility and support. Finally, we thank VASCD for believing in the T3 Project and supporting it with funding.

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Dieker, L. A. (2001). What are the characteristics of “effective” middle and high school co-taught teams for students with disabilities? Preventing School Failure, 46(1), 14-23.

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Jelisa Wolfe, Ph.D, is the Director of Special Education for Staunton City Schools.

Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
$10,000 Research Grant

Introduction: Achievement for all students is the goal of educators. To effectively meet this goal, the degree to which educational practices are effective must be determined. Focused research can assist in this endeavor. Whether it is to validate new practice, corroborate the effects of existing practice, or challenge the assertions of existing policy and practice, it is incumbent upon educators to “ask the question.”

The VASCD Board of Directors has established a $10,000 research grant for the purpose of expanding insight and knowledge through research on proposed topics in education. Although specific research topics are not required, projects that are consistent with the position statements of VASCD will be viewed favorably. These position statements are available on the VASCD website: http://virginia.ascd.org.

Proposal Timeline:
The Research proposals must be received by Friday, June 6, 2008. The final determination of grant awardees will be made by July 18, 2008. The grant recipient will be notified by July 31, 2008. Individuals submitting proposals, but not accepted will receive notification during the first week of August 2008.

Submit proposals to: Robert McCracken, Asst. Professor, Radford University, PO Box 6959, Radford, Va 24142
For more information email: rmccracke@radford.edu
Telephone: 540-831-5682
Is One Gender Being Left Behind?
Pat Murphree and Dan Wilder

Overview/Introduction

Over the last three decades a plethora of ideas has been advanced regarding academic gender gaps between the sexes. Female students are making gains in the areas of science and math; however, gaps appear to have widened in literacy within the male population. Impoverished males post lower test scores in areas of reading and language than their female peers although some discrepancies can even be found between the scores of more financially secure males and females.

In the 1980’s the underachievement of females was a focused topic. There were a number of feminist groups that funded studies drawing attention to the significant gender gap. However, although the gap is beginning to close now in the 21st century, the discussion is more prevalent than ever. Many scientific studies are attempting to identify the differences between the sexes so that educators can develop more effective teaching strategies that will benefit each.

Observers of societal norms see it as being a man’s world because men make more money and are taught early in life that they can be anything they choose. Unfortunately, men seem to be faced with stereotypical myths that can be confining rather than liberating (Slocumb, 2004). There is a growing theory that their social and emotional needs have been neglected to the point that male personal and professional lives are being adversely affected.

Teachers attempt to address gender equity in the classroom by differentiating curriculum materials and class activities. Gender diversity in classroom settings remains an important issue in teacher training and professional development. The conundrum of differences challenges the teaching professional to develop an understanding of the academic, physiological, and cerebral characteristics of each sex.

Academic, Biological, and Psychological Differences

Academic: Maher and Ward (2002) assert that boys garner more of the teacher’s attention, both positive and negative and that female students from every background and age are deficient in their education as compared to their male peers. They seem to be losing their self-confidence at an earlier age and easily succumb to peer pressure. Content analysis of literature shows a bias in textbooks, storybooks, and other reading materials that often feature male activities and the male as the hero.

Nevertheless, in elementary school, girls are more likely to make better grades. Girls tend to be more verbal and to like detail. Males use fewer words per day, and they tend to see the big picture with less detail. Males are more apt to redirect thoughts to solve the problem at hand, while girls express more negative self-talk. Noddings (1992) reported that girls are less competitive and more attuned to relationships, with a preference of working in cooperative groups. Boys perform better in an interactive classroom where they are engaged in learning and moving around in the classroom.

Most coeducational schools report higher numbers of males with learning disabilities and special educational placement (Maher and Ward, 2002, Pollack, 1998). Business Week (May 26, 2003) reported that of those diagnosed with learning disabilities, 73% are boys and that 76% of the emotionally disturbed population are boys. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is diagnosed four times more frequently in boys.
From 2003 writing tests, boys scored over 20 points lower than girls (NAEP, July 2003). In comparing the average male and female at the fourth-grade level the males are about two years behind the females developmentally for reading and writing. All of these factors contribute to higher numbers for males in class retention and in school dropouts.

Although boys more frequently take advanced-placement classes in high school, females outnumber males in the acquisition of a college degree in every racial and ethnic group. According to Business Week (May 26, 2003) the ratio is 133 females to 100 males. The gap is predicted to widen by 2010 with a ratio of 142 female for every 100 males earning a college degree. Lesley Stahl (60 Minutes, The Gender Gap: Boys Lagging, May 25, 2003) raised a concern that the country is moving toward having more women in white-collar jobs, while there will be more men in blue-collar jobs.

*Biological:* Gurian (2004) asserts that boys develop more slowly than girls, and gender makes a difference between the needs of the brains of male and female students. [Omit: not connected here - Traditionally, schools have functionally and structurally failed to meet the needs of females and males.] Recent medical technology demonstrates a better understanding of the male and female brain. Positive Emission Tomography (PET) and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) have demonstrated that there is a genuine difference in brain structure that affects learning. The employment of these brain imaging technologies has taught us that genetically-templated brain patterning by gender plays a far greater role than was anticipated.

Gender research has much to teach us about how learning differs by gender and how we can optimize learning environments for both sexes. For example, research notes that males use only half the brain space, on average, that their female counterparts use for verbal-emotive functioning. However, boys’ brains have more cortical areas which provide guidance in spatial-mechanical functioning. Because younger boys are exceptional spatial thinkers and view things easily in the third dimension, they prefer action-packed play (Conlin, 2003). The cortical trend toward spatial-mechanical functioning causes many male students to prefer moving objects through space, like balls and model airplanes. According to Gurian (2004), the male brain processes concrete objects, diagrams, symbols, and spatial movement more easily than words.

Experts believe that boys have less serotonin than girls and possess less oxytocin, which are bonding chemicals in the brain. As a result, boys are more likely to be impulsive physically and less likely to sit and converse with a friend (Gurian, 2004). Boys’ brains are able to compartmentalize learning, and their brains operate with less blood flow than girls. Even as young children, the nerves on a boy’s finger develop later than girls, which leads to difficulty for boys to hold a pencil (Conlin, 2003).

It appears that a significant factor in the research dealing with biological gender differences has to do with a rest state required more frequently and for longer periods of time by boys. Neurologists refer to a rest state as a time when the brain renews, recharges, and reorients itself. Boys who fidget and/or drift off to sleep in class before completing an assignment may be entering their rest state. The more words a teacher uses, the more likely boys are to enter a rest state. When teachers use a hands-on approach for teaching, boys are more likely to sustain attention. Because girls do not require as much rest state, they are able to sit through a lesson longer than boys. Also, girls are more able to stay awake, take notes, and answer questions throughout a lesson (Baron-Cohen, 2003).

Girls’ corpus callosum, the connecting bundle of tissues between the brain’s hemispheres is, on average, larger than boys’ (Gurian, 2004). At adolescence, girls’ corpus callosum can be as much as 25 percent larger than boys’. Because the corpus callosum has to do with connections, this difference allows girls more ability to make connections between hemispheres. This creates stronger connections in their temporal lobes and enables girls...
to store more detailed memory, possess good listening skills, make better distinctions between voice tones, and incorporate more details in writing.

Another memory storage, which is superior in girls, is the hippocampus. This has been cited as the reason girls perform better in language arts. With more cortical areas devoted to verbal functioning, sensual memory, sitting still, tonality, and mental cross talk, the complexities of reading and writing become easier for the female brain.

Cheryl Butler (WCYB-TV News, January 19, 2007) reported that environmental factors are important to learning. Girls excel in a classroom set at 75 degrees, but boys perform better when the classroom temperature is 69 degrees. It is paramount that educators understand the diverging educational needs of both boys and girls.

**Psychological:** Even though the difference between a boy’s brain and girl’s brain does exist, other factors play heavily into the gender gap issue. Environmental concerns, stereotyping, educational materials, and traditional teaching approaches have contributed to the differences in academic performance between sexes. Psychological issues also contribute to the problem of educating boys.

One stereotypical situation cited by Thompson in Newsweek’s “The Boy Crisis” (2006) was that schools are generally designed for the teaching of girls. Further, he asserts that “often boys are treated like defective girls” (p. 49). Many females prefer collaborative conversation in which people build on each other’s ideas, rather than debate and argument. Because most curricula are built around the verbal-collaborative strategy, they lead toward the female influence. The lecture methodology does not compliment the male brain, which desires debate and action. Boys must quickly learn to adapt to the female-oriented type of instruction if they want to post good scores and be recognized for good behavior.

One other psychological factor in educating boys is whether there was an older male’s influence in their lives. According to Tyre in Newsweek (2006), “One of the most reliable predictors of whether a boy will succeed or fail in school rests on a single question: does he have a man in his life to look up to?” (p. 50). Across the socio-economic spectrum, 40% of boys are being raised without their biological fathers. Psychologists say that other male relatives can assist with boys, but they emphasize that “an adolescent boy without a father figure is like an explorer without a map” (p. 51). In recognizing the importance of a mentor, Tyre in Newsweek (2006, p. 54) observed that “an older man reminds a boy in a million different ways that school is crucial to their mission in life”.

There is a critical need for positive male role models in the educational setting. Male-sponsored extracurricular activities can offer boys opportunities for an older male’s influence through debate teams, class officers, or yearbook editors if boys elect to participate. However, most male participation in extracurricular activities is directed toward athletics. A survey by Business Week (2003, May 26) reported that 12th grade girls outnumber boys in student government (27% girls / 19% boys), music and performing arts (46% girls / 35% boys), yearbook and newspaper (26% girls / 21% boys), as well as academic clubs (36% girls / 28% boys). Boys posted 63% participation in athletics while girls had 49%. The same survey report listed 76% of secondary students in special education as males and only 24% as girls.

Jensen (2000) reported that ADD impacts five times as many boys as girls. Boys are three times more likely to be treated with prescription medication. Because boys consume 80% of the prescribed drug, Ritalin, for ADD and/or ADHD, extra-curricular activities
may be a challenge for the male gender. Jensen asserted that stimulant drug therapy without behavioral therapy can negatively impact the academic, social and emotional well-being of an individual. ADD sufferers engage in less task-oriented activities and have a tendency to feel they have less control over their lives. These factors can discourage males from participating in academic extra-curricular activities.

**School Interaction**

Traditionally, schools have functionally and structurally failed to meet the differing needs of females and males. Psychologist Michael Thompson asserts that boys do not find a good reception at school because of visual and spatial skills, gross motor skills and exuberance; those areas at which boys excel are not nurtured in a typical classroom program. Boys tend to be more sloppy and disorganized with classroom assignments and homework. Dr. James Dobson (2001,) observed that the male’s disorganization is “a product of his laidback temperament and elements of immaturity” (p.185). Yet an underachieving child is seldom reformed by punishing, threatening, nagging, or pushing.

A contributing factor to school success is developing the ability to read. Movement activity gets the blood flowing and breaks up the inactivity of seatwork, often used to teach reading strategies. Increased oxygen to the brain and body releases stress and promotes creativity. Because boys tend to be highly kinesthetic-tactile and want to touch, handle or experience new material, embedding reading strategies that engage the whole brain promotes reading success for both sexes.

Boys and girls also have different tastes in reading genre. Mike Archer (1999) suggested that boys want action in reading material, while girls prefer character development; therefore, boys choose sports and adventure reading materials and girls are more likely to select fiction (sec. B, p.1). The brain connects more easily with age-appropriate and appealing reading materials.

An educational trend that is gaining in popularity is single gender learning environments. Dr. Mel Levine, a professor of Pediatrics at the University of North Carolina Medical School, suggests the organization of all-male classes around experiential learning. Since girls are stronger in verbal and linguistic skills, they tend to thrive in expressive language process classrooms (Levine, September 2006). However, data continues to be collected on the learning outcomes success of single gender classrooms (Houston Chronicle, 1/25/07, p. 4).

To maintain parity, the U. S Department of Education in November 2006 drafted new rules for single gender classes. Any time schools believe that student achievement will be improved, diversity of courses may be expanded to meet students’ individual needs. Enrollment must be voluntary and an equal co-educational class in the same subject must be available.

Many states are beginning to consider single gender classes in an effort to promote academic achievement. A large school in Maryland, Harford Heights Elementary, attempted to increase male academic performance by creating same gendered-classes taught by male teachers. The school encouraged natural competitiveness and awarded many prizes for achievement. Classrooms were highly structured with students being taught phonics, grammar, and diction. Materials were boy-friendly and focused on sports and non-fiction. Character education was taught through sportsmanship. Results have been promising as many methods were attempted in single-gender classes that would not be as successful with boys in mixed settings. Class activities were more competition-based with opportunities for debate and qualifying arguments without fear of jeopardizing their masculinity. Constructivism was implemented to make appropriate connections to content materials. Also, interests and participation were more easily expanded without deflating egos. (Sommers, 2000).

**Effects of Title IX**

Thirty years ago it was the girls who were lagging behind the boys in academics. The 1972 federal law, Title IX, forced public schools to provide equal opportunities for girls in academics as well as athletics. In 1992, the American Association of UniversityWomen reported that the work of Title IX was not complete.
Girls were still behind in mathematics and science. Yet by the mid-1990’s girls had reduced that difference and were actually registering for high-school-level biology and chemistry at a higher rate than were boys (Newsweek, 2006).

According to Newsweek (2006), “misguided feminism is what’s hurting boys” (p. 46). In the 1990’s, girls were making strong, steady progress toward parity in schools, but feminist educators portrayed them as disadvantaged and lavished them with support and attention. While this good fortune was afforded girls, the boys’ achievement began to falter, and as a result the discrepancy problem increased (Newsweek, 2006, p. 46).

**Positive Interventions**

Several research-based strategies have been explored and introduced to enhance male student academic performance. Use of beadwork and other manipulatives to promote fine motor development, use of male mentors and role models (fathers, grandfathers, or male volunteers), and use of extended, sequential, step-by-step verbal instructions have been introduced as methods to deal with the problem (Gurian, 2004).

Studies have suggested more teacher awareness training for the problem. Other strategies being offered are allowing gender stereotypes in educational materials, providing more competition in the classroom, and increasing the number of adventure books with male heroes (Sommers, 2004).

Many researchers have concluded that boys are disadvantaged in mastering the school curriculum with the emphasis placed on left-brain cognitive skills of reading, writing, and speaking. To assist boys in their learning, the following have been recommended: tap into visual spatial strengths, allow time for movement, use hands-on materials, incorporate technology, provide male role models, allow opportunities for competition, choose books that appeal to boys, and above all create a supportive classroom environment (Connell, 2004).

Other strategies for the classroom include organizing tasks step-by-step and offering more discussion, role play, story writing, and opportunities for group work. Active involvement seems to always help male academic performance. Often overlooked is the vital part that parents play in a child’s learning. Parents, both male and female, need to be actively involved in literacy activities which support school-based literacy (Grubb, 2001).

**Conclusion**

While some research is underway in providing insight into best practices for closing the male gender gap, the problem needs much more attention. Studies continue to support such activities as single-gender classroom instruction, smaller pupil/teacher ratio, mentoring, splitting up boys in class, more male teachers, and different teaching techniques. These and additional strategies are all being explored as avenues to improve male academic performance and engagement in school activities (Grubb, 2001). Nevertheless, both Jensen (2000) and Gurian (2004) purport that educators must be practical and provide instruction that supports learning for all children. The aim of education is to assist each child in becoming a productive, life-long learner.

A key concept is to help boys and girls become responsible and emotionally engaged adults who are connected to their families, neighborhoods, and communities (Slocumb, 2004). When students know that teachers care about them, they are more motivated to learn. Closing significant gaps in socio-economic status and race has a significant achievement impact. Using effective, research-based teaching strategies improves learning for both genders. A strong commitment should be made to providing the best education to both boys and girls.

**References**


public schools dividing boys, girls.
Houston Chronicle.

Dr. Patricia Murphree, retired Director of Elementary Education of Lee County Schools, currently is Professor of Graduate Education at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee.

Dr. Dan Wilder, retired Superintendent of Lee County Schools, currently is Associate Professor of Graduate Education at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee.

Congratulations to the 2007 Research Grant Winners!

Topic: “Technology Resource Teachers’ (TRT) Role in Teacher Professional Development”

Pat Wiedel, Sup. of Professional Development, Stafford County Schools
Lisa Rollins, Sup. of Instructional & Assistive Technology, Stafford County Schools

Teresa Coffman, Asst. Professor of Education, Mary Washington College
VASCD’S RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GOAL

Goal: Adopt a long-range financial plan and annual reporting process.
Objectives:
• Engage the services of a financial planner to provide advice about budgeting and investment (December, 2007).
• Adopt a financial plan that supports the organization’s mission (May, 2008).
• Produce an annual financial report for member consumption (September, 2008).

VASCD’S MEMBERSHIP GOAL

Goal: Increase member engagement and diversity
Objectives:
• Distribute leadership by directly involving non-Board of Directors members on task forces, committees, and in other leadership roles (ongoing).
• Establish a two-year rotating appointment to the Board for a Key Communicator who works in a school-based role (January, 2008).
• Establish a secure link on the website where Board members can access information from the membership database (July, 2008).
• Establish online networks accessed through the VASCD website (October, 2008).
• Conduct a membership needs assessment (January, 2009).

VASCD’S INFLUENCE GOAL

Goal: Advocate effectively for policies and practices that promote success for every learner.
Objectives:
• Increase the number of Key Communicators and other members engaged in influence work as representatives of VASCD (August, 2008).
• Increase the frequency of personal contacts between VASCD representatives and legislators/staffers at both the state and federal levels (August, 2008).
• Collect and distribute data (including anecdotal) that supports VASCD positions (July, 2009).
• Forge additional relationships with other educational associations (October, 2007).

VASCD’S PROGRAMS AND SERVICES GOAL

Goal: Design and deliver programs and services aligned to the needs of 21st century learners.
Objectives:
• Utilize current technology to provide professional development in alternative formats desired by members (July, 2009).
• Increase levels of participation in VASCD events in targeted school divisions and regions (ongoing).
• Provide communication and services that align with ASCD’s “whole child” campaign (ongoing).
• Pilot a webinar or a MySpace service on the VASCD website for practitioners to share what works and post questions (August, 2008).
Alternative licensure for school leaders in Virginia is not new; however, what is new is a process creating alternative licensure routes for school leaders in Virginia. Virginia’s most recent efforts in this arena began when the 2002 General Assembly agreed to House Joint Resolution (HJR) 20 and Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 58 to establish a twenty-one member Commission to Review, Study, and Reform Educational Leadership. In January 2002, Virginia was one of only fifteen grant recipients in the National State Action for Education Leadership Project (SAELP) from the Wallace Reader’s Digest Funds addressing school leadership. (DeMary, 2004) This action resulted in a Request for Proposals (RFP) that would make collaborative grants for educational leadership training available from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). The grants had to be collaborative with local public school divisions and institutes of higher education. In other words, the VDOE and school divisions, with other business partners, have engaged in planning and implementing alternative programs for school leader licensure.

The history of school leadership shows that many individuals who gain advanced degrees in school leadership and are awarded licenses do not always become school leaders. Possible explanations include the difficulty and challenges of school leader responsibilities as well as the pursuit of the advanced degree for salary increases only. Additionally, school leadership degree programs have recently come under criticism. Most notably, Arthur Levine’s 2005 article, Educating School Leaders, was critical of school leadership and the awarding of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree.

Despite theories and criticisms, the field of educational leadership has experienced some very positive changes recently. This includes the development of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which created a set of six standards in 1997. By 2002 these standards were adopted by both ISLLC and the National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA) and other agencies. A seventh standard focusing on internship or field experiences in administrative settings was provided as a guide for establishing expectations for those placements. The standards have become known as the ISLLC Standards and should form the foundation of educational leadership training programs. Additionally, Educational Testing Service (ETS) created the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA). This test is an assessment of perspective school leaders’ knowledge, understanding, and application of the standards. The case study structure of the SLLA focuses heavily on a school leaders’ ability to implement these standards into everyday scenarios.

Radford University embraced this new concept of alternative licensure program development. To date, Radford University has been a leader in Virginia with four successful consortia grant applications. Two of the grants have been fully implemented and two are currently in progress. In spite of early attrition in each grant cycle, all grant program completers to date have successfully met the requirements for the K-12 Supervision endorsement in Virginia. This included receiving a passing score on the SLLA examination. It should be noted that Virginia requires one of the highest minimum pass scores in the nation.
In an effort to encourage development of educational leadership training programs that did not look like traditional, classroom-based programs, the VDOE encouraged those submitting grants to think “outside-the-box.” The VDOE also indicated that funded grant programs would be considered accredited by the state, thus relieving grant developers from the current frameworks required by accreditation guidelines. Radford University embraced the challenge for creativity in the emerging field of alternative training models. The result was a new model focused on instructional modules directly aligned with each of the ISLLC standards and with components of mastery learning built into student expectations. There were no grades and no traditional three-hour graduate classes. Program completion was based on the demonstration of knowledge, understanding, and application of ISLLC standards. Grant instructors included higher education personnel, superintendents, and principals from participating school divisions. Grant participants interacted with instructors in online real time settings as well as working through individual assignments on line and meeting face-to-face in seminar settings. There was also an internship or field placement component which ran throughout the entire grant program. Each grant participant was required to have earned a prior master’s degree and hold a current teaching license in Virginia.

A brief description of each module follows:

**Module 1** was built around ISLLC standard one: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning supported by the school community. (NPBEA, 2002)

Module 1 involved having grant participants work with topics and activities including but not limited to the following: The development of a personal vision of educational leadership, development of a school vision; case study work pertaining to vision development, implementation, and stewardship; research projects which utilized actual school data for analysis and development of improvements; group projects focusing on student learning and its relationship to vision.

**Module 2** was built around ISLLC standard two: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program, applying best practice to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff. (NPBEA, 2002)

Module 2 involved having grant participants work with topics and activities including but not limited to the following: Supervision and instruction as it pertains to student learning and program improvement; effective instructional strategies; case work on program planning, program development, and program evaluation; enhancing school climate for instructional improvement and increased student learning.

**Module 3** was built around ISLLC standard three: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by managing the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. (NPBEA, 2002)

Module 3 involved having grant participants work with topics and activities including but not limited to the following: Managing personnel issues from hiring, intervening and dismissal; case work on program planning, development, evaluation from a perspective of safe and orderly operations to ensure student learning; working with students, staff, and parents when student behavior is problematic; schedule development, design, and change; financial issues and fiscal policy issues.

**Module 4** was built around ISLLC standard four: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by collaborating with families and other community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. (NPBEA, 2002)

Module 4 involved having grant participants work
with topics and activities including but not limited to the following: Developing school, community, and business partnerships; cases on school relations issues and understanding diversity in public relations; working with press and other media outlets; developing strategic planning for enhancing school and community relations with a focus on student learning for all students.

**Module 5** was built around ISLLC standard five: *Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairly, and in an ethical manner.* (NPBEA, 2002)

Module 5 involved having grant participants work with topics and activities including but not limited to the following: personal administrative ethics; case work relating to a wide variety of legal issues; legal history and tort precedence in education; development of policy analysis and recommendations.

**Module 6** was built around ISLLC standard six: *Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.* (NPBEA, 2002)

Module 6 involved having grant participants work with topics and activities including but not limited to the following: Developing self awareness and personal leadership style utilizing a variety of self assessments; case study work relating to interactions among multiple constituent groups within and outside school communities; written reflections on leadership activities impacting student achievement and greater community development; focused work on administrative responsibilities in working with exceptional students.

**Module 7** was built around ISLLC standard seven: The internship provides significant opportunities for candidates to synthesize and apply the knowledge and practice and develop the skills identified in Standards 1-6 through substantial, sustained, standards-based work in real settings, planned and guided cooperatively by the institution and school district personnel for graduate credit. (NPBEA, 2002)

Module 7 involved having grant participants work with topics and activities including but not limited to the following: 400 hours of directed field placement work in schools with children and in the division administrative offices; portfolio development of module work from modules 1-7; case study work reinforcing each individual module; facility reports and quarterly site-supervisor reports.

While Arthur Levine spoke of the need for balance between practice and philosophy, the alternative licensure program developed by Radford University as described above places great emphasis on the practical application and implementation of the ISLLC standards. Since grant participants held a high level of prior training, grant developers and instructors felt confident in focusing more on application and less on theory. This is not to say theory was ignored; it was simply not the top priority of the program. Participants were, however, provided with many opportunities to react to situational learning cases, discuss their actions in groups, and develop school improvement and instructional plans. They also spent time developing appropriate ISLLC rubrics to score their own and their peers’ responses to case scenarios. In developing the rubrics, participants could put themselves in the role of an educational leader and an evaluator of the performance of other educational leaders. Central to the program was the development of personal and professional beliefs aligned with the ISLLC standards rather than with past beliefs or traditional practices.

As a component of each of the Alternative Grants, Radford University tracked participants’ prog-
ress through the program and back into the work force. This tracking occurred from the beginning of the grant process through the completion of the grant. Grant completers have responded in anecdotal formats that they are easily moving into administrative positions. At the writing of this article, there are still more partici
pants communicating with grant instructors about successfully obtaining administrative positions.

Leadership is about change. Accountability in classroom instruction cannot be the only change that must occur. School leaders and those training school leaders must change as well. Philosophy and pedagogy certainly occupy an important place in the total education scheme of leadership programs in the Commonwealth. However, the practical application of applying uniform standards of behavior and expectations must be equally important. Failure to apply the ISLLC standards in today’s leadership programs equates to classroom teachers ignoring Virginia’s Standards of Learning. Both practices are unfair to students. In Virginia, if a graduate student in school leadership does not learn, understand, and articulate the ISSLC standards, he or she will likely fail to pass the SLLA examination, will be denied a license to be a school leader, and will not fully understand educational leadership in the 21st century.

References

Robert McCracken is currently an assistant adjunct professor of education leadership in College of Education and Human Development (VA) and directs the college’s Professional Development Center. Dr. McCracken has been Superintendent of Schools in Giles County (VA), central office administrator in Stafford County (VA), elementary and secondary principal, central office administrator and teacher in Prince William County (VA).

William Flora is currently an assistant professor of educational leadership in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership at Radford University (VA). Dr. Flora has been a public school teacher; public school administrator, and central office administrator. He has worked in both large suburban school districts as well as small rural districts.

VASCD’s Mission:
Advancing Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

VASCD’s

Southwest Regional Conference

September 25, 2008
Abingdon, Virginia
Southwest Higher Education Center

DETAILS TO FOLLOW SOON at: www.vaascd.org

Call for Journal Articles!

The 2008 Virginia Educational Leadership Journal supports our November 2008 VASCD Conference theme, “Educating The Whole Child.” For our success stories section, we seek articles about how teachers, administrators, or supervisors are working to improve professional development opportunities for all staff. We urge college educators to submit articles on research underway. Another section features examples of successful collaboration across content areas, grade levels, and school divisions. We welcome updates on success tales from previous journals. Please join in our efforts to celebrate the Commonwealth’s great education work and workers!

The deadline for submission of materials for the next issue is June 30, 2008. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced, with Times New Roman 12 point font. Section titles should be bold and italicized with Times New Roman 12 point font. Tables should be in MS Excel format. References should be in hanging indent format with Times New Roman 9 point font. Please do not use additional fonts or other formatting. Include your professional title, workplace, mailing and e-mail addresses, and a one to three sentence summary. If accepted, we will request a photo to be submitted. All manuscripts, book reviews, or other items should be sent to:

Virginia Educational Leadership

c/o Reba Greer,
VASCD
1622 Baileys Retreat
Charlottesville, VA 22901
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Phone: (434) 296-6804

Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (VASCD)
Outstanding Supervisor/Curriculum Leader of the Year Award

Purpose of Award: Recognition for outstanding contributions to supervision and/or curriculum development.

Qualifications:
*A nominee shall have served for at least two full years in a school division or other educational agency in Virginia with major job responsibilities in the areas of supervision and/or curriculum development.
*A nominee shall have been an active member of the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development for two years, and currently be a member.
*A nominee must be nominated by an individual or group, including teachers, administrators, or school board members.
*The nomination may originate within the school division or educational agency where the nominee currently serves or the nomination may come from outside the division or agency. Self-nominations will be considered.

Selection Criteria: The educator who merits recognition by the VASCD might be expected to display all or several of the following:
*An autobiographical record of service and leadership highlighting notable accomplishments in the field of supervision and/or curriculum development at the local, regional, state and/or national levels over the last five years.
*Three letters of recognition by persons familiar with individual’s contributions to the field.
*Other service to the profession beyond normal job responsibilities. These contributions to the field of supervision and/or curriculum development might include serving on committees or task forces at the local, state, and national levels.

Selection Procedures: A selection committee will be appointed by the Chair of the Awards Committee. No more than two people may be recognized in one year. The award shall be presented at the VASCD Annual Conference. Recognition in the form of a plaque will be presented to the recipient. The recipient of the Outstanding Leader Award will receive a free registration to the Annual Conference.

Selection Calendar:
- Recommendations should be sent to the VASCD office prior to September 1, 2008.
- All materials from prospective candidates for the award must be received by September 1, 2008.
- Selection of the final candidate will be made by the Selection Committee by October 15, 2008.
- Notification of selection for the award will be made by October 31 of each year.
- The Award will be given to the recipient at the Annual Conference.

For additional information or to submit recommendations, contact:
Brenda Hess, Director of Elementary Education
Russell County Public Schools
P.O. Box 8, 1 School Board Drive
Lebanon, VA 24266
(276) 889-6506 or bhess@russell.k12.va.us
Procedures to follow if nominating a candidate for the VASCD “Outstanding Supervisor/Curriculum Leader of the Year Award:”

The Nominee must:
- Have Served two full years in a school division or educational agency in Virginia
- Have Responsibilities in supervision and/or curriculum development
- Have been an active member of VASCD for two years and currently be a member

The person nominating must ensure that all criteria are met (see application form) and write a letter of recommendation

The timeline for submitting the name of a nominee:
The nomination period is between January 1 and September 1 each year
All nominations must be postmarked by September 1.
Notification of the nominee will be made directly to the nominee October 1.
The award will be given to the recipient at the VASCD Annual Conference.

Nominations for Outstanding Supervisor/Curriculum Leader Award should be completed and mailed to:
Ann Etchison, Executive Director, VASCD
1622 Baileys Retreat
Charlottesville, VA 22901
Telephone: (434) 296-6804
Email: annettechison@earthlink.net

Please include the following information about the nominee:
Name of Nominee, Position/Title, School Division/Education Agency, School Office Address,
Name of Person Nominating (Please print), Signature of Person Nominating, Position/Title of Person Submitting Name (if applicable), Address/Telephone Number of Person Submitting Name:

Please submit the following information on separate pages (no more than ten pages total):

Professional Preparation to include: Institution(s), Dates Attended, Degree(s) Earned, Major area of study;
Professional Experience to include: School/ School Division /Educational Agency, Position(s), Dates Position(s) Held; Professional Contributions in Areas of Teaching, Staff Development, and/or Curriculum Development; Letters of Recommendation: Attach three letters of recommendation by persons familiar with your contributions to the field field. For self-nominations only a Personal Statement: A brief personal statement from the nominee (no more than one page, typed, double-space) about “The significant contributions I have made as an educator.
Whether one’s primary learning style is auditory, visual, or kinesthetic, Thinking Maps are important tools for life-long learning. The maps provide a schema to make thinking concrete (see figure 1). They are especially helpful for visual learners or when an individual has little prior knowledge related to the new concept. According to research by Carbo, Dunn, & Dunn, approximately 40 percent of the school-aged population are visual learners. For the English Language Learner, Thinking Maps can be used to effectively communicate the student’s or teacher’s thinking without the necessity to speak or write English. The maps support higher level thinking skills and increase student achievement.

Schools that are using Thinking Maps as a common language for their school report:

- After being taught the maps, the students own them and find them easy to use.
- Maps are not “another new thing” but a “new way to do your thing.”
- Now we “see” the thinking in the content standards.
- Maps are helpful for differentiation, especially with English Language Learners.
- We can use maps in any content area or grade level.
- As a formative or summative assessment tool, maps make it easy to assess student work because they are visual (see Figure 2).
Because Thinking Maps become a common language for a professional learning community, teachers become more collaborative and reflective. When they talk about information, they use a Thinking Map—making their thinking clearer. Schools across the country are sharing Thinking Maps with parents to enhance communication with non-English speaking parents and to help parents support their children with homework. Administrators from Riverview Elementary School in Spotsylvania County use the maps in lieu of agendas for staff meetings, making the staff’s thinking about topics visual. In the same way, when administrators visit the classroom, the maps provide instant visual assessment. Maps reveal the content, the levels of thinking, and the types of differentiation. This varied information can be assessed in a glimpse—just by looking at the students’ maps.

What’s the Difference between Graphic Organizers and Thinking Maps?

Like graphic organizers, Thinking Maps are nonlinguistic representations. However, Thinking Maps are visual representations of thinking. Graphic organizers promote activity whereas Thinking Maps promote thinking (see figure 3). Most graphic organizers represent just eight fundamental thinking processes.

Thinking Maps, developed as a language for learning in 1988 by Dr. David Hyerle, illustrate graphically each of these eight types of thinking in a consistent way (see table 1). When teachers use a consistent visual for a particular type of thinking, that visual becomes powerful for students. This consistency enables the students to see their thinking across content areas and grade levels. By using the same visual to classify genres of literature as to classify types of polygons, students who excel in one subject area can transfer their thinking skills to another subject area.

With today’s onslaught of visual communication, it is imperative for schools to advance the visual skills of their students. Educators must also recognize that visual learners have much to share, though not necessarily in the traditional linguistic manner. Thinking Maps help students process large amounts of information more quickly and identify interrelationships among the information. In this way, they are powerful tools for summarizing and synthesizing. Thinking Maps also help teachers convey information more accurately. For example, a teacher must decide if the information represents a classification (tree map) or a whole to part relationship (brace map).

Figure 3
Table 1

![Thinking Maps Diagram](image)

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Sometimes, both are required as in the example of place value. Students need to understand the parts that make up a number (see figure 4). They must also be able to classify the digit of a number (see figure 5).

What Impact Do Thinking Maps Have on Students?

After participating in a week long Training of Trainers session in October 2006, one of the authors (Amy Tlockowski) returned to her school ready to immerse her students into the world of Thinking Maps. The following first person accounts are her reflections from her first year of implementation:

“I didn’t want to wait for my fellow colleagues to be trained. Somehow, I knew that the maps were my students’ best chance at success. While I’m not an advocate of teaching to the test or measuring student gains through standardized testing, I don’t have the luxury of choosing whether or not my students will take part in Virginia’s compulsory SOL testing. Knowing all of my students would face rigorous testing in spring 2007, I dove head-first into the “My Story” plan for teaching Thinking Maps to all students. “My Story” gives ownership of the maps to all students because the maps are personal in nature to them; rather than creating maps based on a life cycle, a math problem, or a historical battle, students use the maps to tell the story of their lives. Once they own the maps, they can use the maps to learn and understand the classroom content.

“In the beginning of the school year, my grade level cohorts and I looked to the SOL data from last year to focus on weak areas (see table 2). In English, student scores in cause and effect and context clues were low. The introduction of the multi-flow map for cause and effect and the circle map for defining words in context proved successful, especially for those students who had failed the fifth grade Reading and Writing SOL tests. My sixth-grade students gained confidence through the use of Thinking Maps. They constantly referred to the Thinking Maps posters on the walls in our classroom when questions are posed; they knew the maps could help them solve problems as long as they listened for key words and phrases that link to the various uses of the maps.

“My students became quite adept at drawing conclusions about cause and effect in the plots of novels because Thinking Maps are powerful tools for helping
students identify text structures. Students looked for clue words, such as consequences, predict, if...then, and motives that suggest the author may be using the text structure of cause and effect. When taking notes on this text structure, a student used a multi-flow map. In the same way, when students retrieved the information from their maps to write, they reversed the map and incorporated the language of cause and effect as transitions. Not only did the Thinking Maps improve students’ ability to organize information, but students were more competent in analyzing new information and had a deeper understanding of the content. They could visualize the multi-flow map in novels, historic analysis, and behavior management—transferring that thinking skill across the disciplines with a consistent visual.

“Another quality of the maps that I like is their flexibility. For each novel we read, the students defined words in context by creating circle maps with the new vocabulary. The circle maps included the following information: context sentences from novels, synonyms, context definition, and dictionary definition. For example, figure 6 shows a new vocabulary word from the novel A Single Shard where students were asked to define a word three ways: context definition, dictionary definition, and sentence from the novel with the word underlined. These Thinking Maps were revisited throughout the year and proved to be valuable problem-solving tools for students who previously chose to guess at an answer when facing a context clue problem.

“Additionally, Thinking Maps proved successful tools for my higher achievers. For example, John felt disorganized and perplexed when faced with challenging writing assignments even while reading above grade level and using advanced vocabulary for an average sixth grader. A biography project included the expectation that students employ flow maps to organize and to present material. After researching the person of their choice, students were asked to sequence his/her integral life events into a flow map. Using their research and flow maps, students created journal entries based on three main events from their person’s life, using the perspective of the person. John chose the author Gary Paulsen and plunged into his research with relish. He used the flow map to organize Paulsen’s main life-altering events, the bubble map to brainstorm personality characteristics so he could assume Paulsen’s identity as a writer, and three short flow maps to create his journal entries. The finished products (see figure 7) were stellar due to John’s deft use of the maps.

“Thinking Maps helped these students transition from the visual to the verbal and improved the writing performance of all of my students; however, the greatest growth was observed in my lowest achievers. For example, Susan failed both the Reading and Writing tests in the fifth grade. She’s a motivated student who wanted to be successful but was “hitting the wall” when asked to respond to writing prompts. After reading a section in the novel Nightjohn, she and her classmates were asked to write a descriptive essay on one of the main characters. The class discussed which map(s) they should use when planning for this assignment. Many students immediately insisted that the bubble map would be the only map necessary to write a successful descriptive essay. After some discussion, two students who struggle daily and read on a second grade level, added that a flow map would help with the sequence of the essay. Many students nodded in agreement. With a timetable, these students who, in the past, could be described as unmotivated, easily confused, and frustrated, were able to complete bubble maps with adjectives which supported character development in the novel.
Entry Two, the 1970's

I had volunteered as a paramedic to answer emergency calls. I helped victims of farm accidents, poisonings, highway wrecks, and heart attacks. I was the only volunteer in a large area, and I was called to many emergencies.

Many situations involved heart attacks, and I witnessed many deaths. One was unforgettable vivid because the majority of the heart attack victims died before I'd arrived. However, this was not the case on this call.

A woman called about her husband having chest pain. It should have taken 20 minutes to arrive, but it took me only 14 driving like a maniac. I found a fifty-year-old man in the kitchen. His face was gray, and the smell of methane was there. He looked up at me and smiled as if to say he was sorry for the inconvenience. His wife stood by his side and gave me the look as if to say, "Thank God you're here." I reached for him to put him on his back, but he jolted, fell to the floor, and looked directly into my eyes. I hurried to perform CPR. He jolted again and the smell intensified. He was gone. I told his wife to alert the hospital. She did so and gave me the same look pleading to save the man. It was an hour before the chopper whirred in.

I later put this experience into Hatchet as the scene where the pilot dies and looks directly into Brian's eyes just as the man had to me.
### Table 2
Fall 2006 to Spring 2007 Diagnostic Test Results  
Amy Tlockowski — James Madison Middle School — Roanoke City Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOL Objectives showing distinct weaknesses after Fall Diagnostic Administered in September 2006</th>
<th>Gains in percent after Thinking Maps</th>
<th>Objective Passed? (Division pass rate for showing competency of objective(s) at 70% or better.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6.3 The student will read and learn the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases.  
B) Identify analogies and figurative language | +12 | X |
| 6.3 The student will read and learn the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases.  
C) Use context and sentence structure to determine meanings and differentiate among multiple meanings of words | +23 | X |
| 6.3 The student will read and learn the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases.  
D) Use word-reference materials | +22 | X |
| 6.4 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fiction, narrative non-fiction, and poetry.  
E) Describe cause and effect relationships and their impact on plot. | +6 | X |
| 6.4 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fiction, narrative non-fiction, and poetry.  
F) Use information stated explicitly in the text to draw conclusions and make inferences. | +18 | X |
| 6.4 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fiction, narrative non-fiction, and poetry.  
G) Explain how character and plot development are used in a selection to support a central conflict or story line. | +12 | X |
| 6.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of informational selections.  
A) Identify questions to be answered. | +17 | X |
which specific adjectives to use in their sentences, and finally, used flow maps to write an effective descriptive paragraph.”

**What Are Other Uses for Thinking Maps?**

Amy Tlochowski’s experience is not unique. An important component of all the Thinking Maps is the frame of reference, which asks students to include “How do you know what you know?” or “What is influencing the information in your map?” By identifying prior knowledge, specific sources, point of view, or other influences, students are able to show how they reached the conclusions displayed in their maps. Students who create bubble maps to describe characters in a novel must be able to track their thought processes for themselves as well as their teachers. The frame of reference provides this avenue. Students can cite pages from the novel, class discussions, journals, and formal assessments, allowing teachers to trace the steps of student learning. Too often, teachers are stumped when confronted with students whose thought patterns are confusing. However, a map and frame of reference provide a basis for teachers to search out poor thought processes and/or misconceptions on the part of the student. Information found in all the Thinking Maps is based on this foundation of learning—the lens through which the student knows the information.
Consider figure 8 where an AP European History teacher from Hickory High School in Chesapeake Public Schools asked the students to map their thinking to address the task: Identify four specific changes in science and technology, and explain their effects on Western European family and private life between 1918 and 1970.

Using the context of Western Europe 1918-1970 in the frame of reference, the student must classify four changes in science and technology. Then with a frame of reference of family and private life 1918-1970, the student identifies the effects of each change. Now the student is ready to write a response to the task. After introducing Thinking Maps in 1999, students scoring a 3 or better on the AP European History test increased from 79% to 94%.

Students gain responsibility for and independence in their learning by tracing their thinking through the frame of reference. Teachers must be patient when teaching the frame of reference as well as be cognizant when students misuse the frame. Additionally, teachers must understand that not all students will be able to grasp the importance of framing their maps and that skill and independence are involved when framing.

**How do Thinking Maps Help with Assessment and Differentiation?**

Thinking Maps provide students with clear visual images that are meaningful to them because they understand the eight visuals represent the eight fundamental thinking processes. The maps also provide a context for learning a new concept. After studying polygons, a teacher asks her students to organize the information in a way to help them remember it. The teacher observes two students’ maps (see figure 9), noticing that one was more verbal than the other and the differences in how they think about polygons. The power of the Thinking Map is that it allows the student to organize the information in a form that can be shared with others. Additionally, the teacher can determine if there is confusion in understanding the concept or if there is an opportunity to extend a student’s thinking. For the English Language Learner who is beginning to learn English, the tree map may be the end product showing that he learned the content. For other students, the tree map may be incorporated into their writing to summarize what they know about the topic. The maps are used both to assess and to differentiate instruction.

Using maps in combination is an elevated skill all students can attain with continued practice and exposure to Thinking Maps. For instance, figure 10 traces the sequence of events that led to democracy in Athens government and shows causes for the transitions from one form of government to another.

More than graphic organizers, Thinking Maps establish neural networks for in-depth processing of information. The maps take advantage of the brain’s natural ability to detect and construct meaningful patterns, increasing people’s ability to identify essential “chunks” of information and create meaning. As Amy Tlockowski reflects on her first year with Thinking Maps, she realizes the great success with low and high achievers in her 6th grade English class. Is it because forty percent of the school-aged population recalls visually what they see and read? Is it because the students are familiar with these patterns for thinking and are less anxious when working with complex ideas and situations?

After receipt of the SOL scores from the state, Amy Tlockowski concluded, “It is clear that the implementation of Thinking Maps had a definitive positive effect on our students.” She noted both the growth in percentage points and the percent in-
crease within the AYP subgroup of students with disabilities (see table 3). This particular subgroup has been a
target for teachers at James Madison Middle School because of consistent problems with students passing the
test or making general improvement with AYP standards. Whether it was a two percent increase or a 51 percent
increase by their subgroups, Thinking Maps had a positive influence on their SOL scores.

The maps were effectively used at all grade levels, with students of varying abilities and accommodations,
and in all subject areas. The school-wide training the faculty received during second semester provided the neces-
sary expertise required to take a leap toward success for all students in the school. Teachers and students used a
common language to solve problems, think critically, and further comprehension and retention of new skills and
knowledge. Too often, educators and critics speak of “best practices” in obtuse terms that have little to do with
student success and more to do with a flourish of “edu-speak.” Although SOL and AYP data drive the literal charts
and reports concerning student progress and school efficacy, Tlockowski and her fellow faculty members can
speak to the figurative accomplishments of students benefiting from the practice of Thinking Maps: self-reliance, respect, confidence, and determination. Thinking Maps provide students, parents, teachers, and administrators a common language to represent abstract thought processes. Nevertheless, before using Thinking Maps in the classroom, in-depth training approved by Thinking Maps, Inc. is required. Teachers must be judicious with their instruction and modeling of the maps and assist their students in achieving confident ownership of these mental constructs. Even though the visuals look similar (as in the case of the brace map and tree map), the thinking is different. For more information on Thinking Maps and the requisite training, see www.thinkingmaps.com. For more information on the research related to Thinking Maps, see www.thinkingfoundation.org.
### Virginia Standards of Learning Test Results
#### Spring 2007 English and Math Performance
James Madison Middle School—Roanoke City Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Measurable Objective for AYP</th>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Growth in percentage points of students passing from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007 school years</th>
<th>Percent increase in number of students passing from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007 school years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>English Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students Identified as Disadvantaged</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students w/Disabilities (includes IEP and 504 Plans)</td>
<td>15.75</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>10.12</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>24.05</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students Identified as Disadvantaged</td>
<td>17.30</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students w/Disabilities (includes IEP and 504 Plans)</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References

Sandra Edwards Critchfield earned a Ph.D. in Education with a focus on mathematics education from George Mason University and a M. Ed. in Administration and Supervision from the University of Virginia. She received a B.A. in mathematics from Mary Washington College of the University of Virginia. Retired as Director of Program Development and Evaluation from Spotsylvania County Schools, she currently works as the Virginia Representative for Thinking Maps, Inc.

Amy Lombardi Tlockowski earned a B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies from Radford University with a focus on English and History and holds licensure at the middle school level and is highly qualified in English and History. Currently she teaches English to sixth grade students at James Madison Middle School in Roanoke City Public Schools.
Sharing Our Successes

Region I Consortium
Linda E. Hyslop

Since the beginning of Virginia’s testing for the Standards of Learning, Region I testing directors have met on a monthly basis. Knowing the impact of accountability, the testing directors shared ideas and concerns so that they could keep their school division on the cutting edge of the state testing program. When Region I became a site for a Best Practice Center, the group expanded to include staff development directors and key instructional leaders in each division. This group continued to carry on the ideals of the Best Practice Center after it was no longer funded. Monthly, the group shares ideas, staff development opportunities, and information gathered from other resources. Many original members of this group have become key communicators for VASCD.

In the last two years, the special education directors and Title I directors from Region I have also begun meeting on a regular basis. When there is critical information concerning testing and special needs students, the SPED directors meet jointly with the testing directors.

This collaboration and friendship among the three groups has kept Region I at the forefront of accreditation and No Child Left Behind. It has also saved many of the groups from ulcers and heartburn because rumors are dispelled and problems are solved jointly. We know collaboration is best practice for students and teachers; and we have discovered for administrators, too.

Linda E. Hyslop is the current Superintendent of Instruction for Hopewell City Schools. A graduate of Hopewell High School with a BFA in Fine Arts from Tulane University, Linda serves on the Board of Directors of the Virginia Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Virginia ASCD’s 2007 Curriculum Leader of the Year Award Winner

Virginia ASCD congratulates Dr. Gary Mathews, Superintendent of Williamsburg-James City County Schools, as the recipient of the 2007 Virginia ASCD Curriculum Leader of the Year Award. Dr. Mathews has been recognized for his data driven decision making, visibility and interaction with staff and students, emphasis on research-based professional development, and ability to motivate colleagues to strive for excellence. VASCD will honor Dr. Mathews at the 2007 Annual Conference in Williamsburg on November 29, 2007.
Sharing Our Successes

Kindercamp
Nancy Coll

Kindercamp is a summer program implemented to help incoming Stafford County Schools kindergarteners feel more comfortable about coming to school in the fall. It is designed for students who have had no pre-school experience or who speak a language other than English at home. Special letters of invitation, in both English and Spanish, were sent to the children’s homes.

Five elementary schools piloted the program this summer. Each classroom had a teacher and a paraprofessional. Future kindergarten students, approximately 50 students, attended and got a crash course on raising their hands to speak, lining up, listening to stories being read, sharing, and using their “inside voice.” Parents who came to visit or pick up their children agreed that the program was very successful. Several parents commented on how excited their children were to learn about the school and classroom procedures. These parents said they felt a sense of relief knowing that their children would be ready for school on the first day.

For two weeks, during our summer school program, Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, students would come to Kindercamp, on the bus with our summer school students. One of our goals was to get the students used to routines and activities that mimic the regular kindergarten school day. Another goal was getting the children used to spending the day in a classroom away from their parents. After three days of driving his son to Kindercamp, one father told the school, “Just put him on the bus; he has to get used to it sometime. It might as well be now.”

The students participated in academic songs about the alphabet and the days of the week. They listened to stories about colors, animals, people, cities, and friendships. Learning how to sit and listen to a story was a huge accomplishment, especially if they had never done it before. Lining up to go to snack or the restroom was another major accomplishment. Some children had never had to do this before; it was hard for them to learn that they could not always be the first one in line.

Students also participated in small groups where they learned and practiced basic skills such as counting, one-to-one correspondence, patterns and shapes, colors, and the alphabet. They worked on gross and fine motor skills by printing their name, using scissors, paintbrushes, and the playground equipment. The classroom was always a vocabulary-rich environment.

Not only did the students gain much information while in Kindercamp, but the teachers did too. One teacher stated that she gained an appreciation for what these students need. Now she is able to plan for their needs from the first day of school. Teachers felt it was a very successful program and would like to encourage more students to participate next year. One teacher stated that it was nice to have a small group of children, but it would also be good to have more children know the routine and procedures at the beginning of school.

We want these students to know what a wonderful place school can be. Their experiences this past summer can only help make them better prepared for their first days of real kindergarten this fall.

Nancy Coll is the Principal of Anthony Burns Elementary School in Stafford County Virginia.
Central Appalachian Virginia is sprinkled with small towns, relics of the turn-of-the-century coal boom, nestled among rolling, wooded hills whose residents know each other well and value strong family ties and friendships. Ours is a culture with a strong sense of place and roots; we value our history, traditions, and artists. Inspiration abounds here, where superstition, ballads, and stories that are generations old provide a wealth of material for writers, particularly those who teach in our public schools. With much Hope and Grace (the prophetic names of her first co-directors), Amy Clark and a group of southwest Virginia teachers founded the Appalachian Writing Project in 2000, joining the Virginia Writing Project network, which includes five writing projects across the state.

The idea was simple: to create a partnership between a college and local teachers in a professional development effort based on the idea that teacher knowledge should be a starting point for learning. While school districts have historically spent large sums of money on professional development, studies have shown that it is largely unsuccessful when teachers are “passive consumers of prepackaged knowledge” (Lieberman & Wood, 2003, p.3). Furthermore, little is known about how traditional professional development programs impact the classroom, or whether these programs address the common dilemmas teachers face. Following the model created by high school teacher Jim Gray, who founded the National Writing Project in 1974, the Appalachian Writing Project provided professional development opportunities based on the following principles:

- Universities and schools are better able to improve students’ learning if they work in a partnership;
- Teachers are the key to educational reform;
- Teachers are the best teachers of other teachers;
- Writing deserves constant attention from kindergarten to the university;
- Exemplary teachers of writing are themselves writers (“About NWP,” 2007).

The AWP is housed at the University of Virginia’s College at Wise, a four-year liberal arts college founded by the University of Virginia in 1954 to serve the needs of the coalfields. After a year of planning, during which Amy Clark was joined by Hope Cloud and Grace Bradshaw, who would serve as co-directors for the next six years, the AWP held its first Summer Invitational Institute in June, 2001.

The idea was simple; getting it to work was not. We needed funding from a college and public schools that experience budget cuts annually, yet they have willingly extended their support for seven years. We also needed teachers—who generally regard their summers as sacred—to give up five weeks for something that we could only describe in theory. Yet every year since 2001, a group of intrepid far Southwest Virginia teachers have
voluntarily invested their time in the Appalachian Writing Project Summer Institute for a five-week intensive program. They share best practices in the teaching of writing across the curriculum and research common problems encountered in the pedagogy and practice of writing. One commandment that has been handed down from the beginning is that the Summer Institute is not to be called a “class,” even though summer fellows receive graduate credit through a partnership with UVa. Their presence indicates an initiation followed by an ongoing commitment to professional development. On top of that, they at last find the time to do the personal writing that has been percolating on the back burners of their minds, resulting in a published anthology. In the seven years since its inception, the Appalachian Writing Project has become a forum for exploring and sharing ideas.

The operating premise is that we teachers have gained insight from our observations, our frustrations, and our successes in teaching, and we can share our enthusiasms and our triumphs with others.

Learning to appreciate one’s own expertise and communicate it with colleagues is a distinct benefit of being part of a writing project. By christening the Summer Institute “graduates” as Teacher Consultants, the Appalachian Writing Project encourages educational leadership. AWP Teacher Consultants (or TC’s) offer workshops for other teachers, both in schools and at county-wide meetings. TC’s have done their homework. They have researched a topic, derived student models of writing practices across the curriculum, and have incorporated feedback from prior audiences in order to make their presentations topnotch. Knowing the latest research in the field of writing gives TC’s an edge in the classroom and as workshop leaders.

As a result of several successful Summer Institutes, we have grown our network and our ability to offer a variety of professional development programs to far southwest Virginia teachers. Every fall, AWP teacher-leaders host an annual Writing Conference for Educators and Community, where we sponsor a keynote speaker and offer breakout sessions highlighting our newest cohort and their workshops (this year’s keynote author is acclaimed Appalachian author Silas House). We also offer a professional development series in Teaching Writing in the Disciplines at UVA’s College at Wise where teachers—as well as students preparing to teach—can sign up for pedagogical workshops hosted by AWP TC’s. In the spring, the AWP holds an Advanced Institute for its TC’s, bringing them back together to refresh their interest in research and to talk about leadership possibilities. In the summer, AWP TC’s Robin Charles and Rita Justice coordinate and lead the Writing Retreat for Teachers at the Breaks Interstate Park, where participants work with noted Appalachian authors such as George Ella Lyon, Sharyn McCrumb, Jane Hicks, and Ruth White. The AWP has also hosted community programs, such as a se-
ries of workshops in memoir led by author and storyteller Donald Davis. This program, as well as each summer institute, results in a published book of participants’ writing.

After seven years, new leadership is emerging with new ideas for professional development. Coeburn Middle School currently has four AWP teacher consultants, including a past co-director and a current co-director. Former co-director Hope Cloud and new co-director Leah Mullins will coordinate a series of publishing workshops led by TC’s for teachers, reinforcing the “teacher as writer” concept (Lieberman & Wood, 2003). Teachers will publish books of their own works during the school year. In addition, the teachers will apply the workshop material in the classroom by leading their students in publishing their own books. The project will culminate when the books arrive, and the school will host an author’s day for both the teachers and the students.

Responses to our programs are overwhelmingly positive, and both teachers and administrators return again and again to gather new ideas and inspiration for writing. More importantly, teachers have the resources and the support of their schools to emerge as teacher-leaders, researchers, and writers in their districts, developing programs for their colleagues based on best practices that work.

However, becoming part of this growing network means more than just professional development to some of our teachers. The validation of classroom research and expertise that writing projects provide to teachers—along with the precious time and resources they are given to re-discover what it means to be writers—lead them to a new awareness of their roles in their schools and communities. Before the writing project, many teachers could not bring themselves to say, “I am a writer,” even though they expect it of their students. Simply assuming ownership of the identity that “writer,” “researcher,” and “leader” create means re-conceptualizing what it means to be a teacher, which is a powerful transition. In the words of Haysi High School TC Robin Charles, “The AWP hasn’t just changed the way I teach; it has changed the way I live.”

References


Amy Clark, PhD. is an assistant professor of Rhetoric and Applied Linguistics at The University of Virginia’s College at Wise. She is founding Director of the Appalachian Writing Project, a professional development organization for K-12 teachers.

Grace Currie Bradshaw currently teaches English at Powell Valley High School. She was the drama and forensics coach at Powell Valley from 1991-2003. She served as co-director of the Appalachian Writing Project from 2002-2006. She received her B.A. in English from the University of Texas at Austin, and her M.A. in Reading from East Tennessee State University.

Leah Mullins is currently at Coeburn Middle School in Coeburn, Virginia, as the special education collaborative teacher in the seventh grade. She has been teaching special education for five years, and recently completed a master of science degree in special education.
Sharing Our Successes

Using a School Wide Framework and Learning Communities to Enhance Technology Integration in the School and Classroom Patrick Ledesma

My fourth period is working together to make an educational website about genetics! I can’t believe how these seventh graders pick up technology skills so quickly,” Janice shares proudly with her colleagues at a grade level meeting. “They’re really learning how to use technology to demonstrate what they learned!”

“Seventh graders making web pages?” Tom remarks and wonders, “All I know how to do is get my students to use Powerpoint. Is that bad?”

“That’s great, Janice.” Tanya adds. “You’re really good with that fancy tech stuff. Too bad our subjects don’t lend themselves to those kinds of tech projects. Plus you have the good kids who can do that kind of stuff. Making brochures in Publisher is the most my students can do.”

“My special education students can’t do that.” John comments. “Who has the time to teach the students those extra technology skills when we’re trying to pass the standardized tests? We have to stick to content!”

In our roles as teachers, we may have felt like Janice- trying to share and promote a good idea among colleagues. Or, maybe we’ve felt like Tanya, who may be willing to try a new idea, but may struggle with finding the time and opportunity. Perhaps we’ve had our “John” years, when we have had students with serious learning issues, and we have struggled to help them learn the basics while trying more creative activities. Or we may have felt like Tom, who feels technologically behind his peers and wonders if what he is doing is instructionally appropriate.

Integrating technology in the classroom can be a challenge for a variety of reasons. New technologies are constantly being introduced, whether hardware, such as interactive whiteboards or wireless pads; response systems, such panel displays or new software; or Web 2.0 tools, such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, and online assessments. Then, there’s the current software, such as Microsoft Office; various graphic organizer programs; or image editing software, that can also be utilized by students.

For teachers, the challenges are enormous: teach the curriculum, prepare students to pass the standardized tests, do all other duties that come with managing a classroom and being part of a school community; then, understand how to utilize current technologies, and learn how to use the new emerging technologies. With all these technologies, teachers can easily be confused where to start or understand which technology to pursue. Do they do what’s familiar and readily available? Or, do they pursue a new “hot” technology? And there’s always the difficult question, “What is technology integration?”

In The Principal as Technology Leader, Creighton (2003) describes three reasons why technology initiatives fail in a school:

1) Inappropriate leadership- too little or too much
2) Moving too fast, without sufficient and supportive staff development
3) Failure to get the right people on board

This article examines how to establish a school-wide foundation and structure for integrating technology that encompasses a range of teacher technology competencies and ensures that all students benefit from the integration. Although this article emphasizes the International Baccalaureate – Middle
Years Program (IB MYP) model, these strategies benefit all schools, and one does not have to be an IB MYP school to utilize these concepts.

**Step 1: Define a School Wide Vision and Framework for Technology Integration**

What is effective technology integration and how does it look in a classroom? Administrators and teachers may have a different understanding about how technology should be implemented in the classroom. Some may believe that simple use of hardware such as a projector or displaying a PowerPoint presentation on the TV is integrating technology. Others may believe that technology integration is doing research on the Internet instead of the library. Others may think that the “fancy” student projects that incorporate multimedia are automatically considered effective technology integration. However, a variety of interpretations hinder the integration of technology since a common understanding cannot be established. As a result, further discussions cannot develop about best practices.

Therefore, just as a school may set instructional goals in a school improvement plan, a school must define what it considers effective technology integration. A school benefits from having clear expectations to define minimum expectations. These expectations should include:

1) The instructional needs of the classroom and student population.
2) Best instructional practices.
3) Available school resources for sustainable implementation.
4) Opportunities for all teachers to succeed.

**Defining Effective Technology Integration**

There are many existing models for effective technology integration. At Holmes Middle School, our definition of technology integration incorporates the Design Cycle from the IB MYP. For the purposes of this article, one does not have to be an IB MYP school to understand how having a school wide model facilitates technology integration to advance student learning, nor is this an in-depth analysis of IB MYP Technology. It is also important to note that IB MYP has a broader definition of technology beyond using computers. Rather, the focus of this article is how to successfully promote technology integration school-wide with an instructional focus that uses a common framework.

**The IB MYP Technology Integration Model**

What separates the IB MYP Technology model from other technology integration models is the focus on lesson design and student learning rather than use of specific technologies. The Design Cycle requires students to apply problem solving skills and creativity to investigate, design, plan, create, and evaluate a given task or challenge. Teachers following the IB MYP Technology model design lessons that integrate technology based on that Design Cycle. [Ed note: change in emphasis for meaning.] This philosophy of teaching emphasizes the process of how students learn and approach a task rather than the use of a specific software or hardware as an end result.

In addition, as part of the IB MYP requirements, all students of all ability levels must complete 50 hours of technology per year. To meet this requirement, all teachers must submit a lesson plan that describes their use of technology and how the lesson incorporates the Design Cycle. By providing a lesson design model for technology integration and a requirement for all students to participate, the IB MYP Technology model facilitates a common understanding for school-wide integration of technology.

**The IBMYP Design Cycle**

**Investigate:** During this initial stage, students formulate questions that guide their research and planning. Students identify a problem, collect information and data, organize the data, and interpret it.

**Plan:** Next, students begin the planning phase, during which they experiment with data and
solutions, make predictions, and prioritize the information.

**Create a Product/Solution:** Creation is the next phase, which includes students determining what materials and equipment would be needed to create a solution to the question. Students monitor the quality of their work and decide what techniques can be used to present the information. Remember, it is important for students to use these phases as a fluid guide; not rigid steps.

**Evaluate:** Students evaluate their work and the work of their peers. This means checking if the solution answers the teacher-posed question. Here is where students make suggestions for improvement of their solution/creation through self-assessment measures.

**Personal:** Engagement/Independence (Attitudes in technology) Finally, students reflect on the solution process. The important part here is the process in which the students have gone through to create their solution. They should address how this process has changed them or impacted them in someway. They may even wish to go back and make changes to this project at a later date after time for reflection is allotted.

**Where is the Technology Integration?** Students solving problems using the Design Cycle focus on the process of learning. Technology facilitates the students’ inquiry and creation of their product or solution. Thus, technology can take the form of research on the Internet, creation of documents in Word or Excel, multimedia presentations with PowerPoint or the use of hardware such as digital cameras and video cameras. Technology can also involve interactive communication and discussions to learn additional viewpoints, creation of resources such as websites or class wikis, or the use of any other product that enhances the investigative process and solution.

**Benefits of IB MYP Technology Integration Model**

**Active Student Engagement:** The IB MYP approach to technology integration emphasizes a constructivist approach to education in which the students have the opportunity to explore concepts and use their knowledge and skills to demonstrate what they learned, usually in the form of a final product. The emphasis of this approach is on active student engagement learning content through solving real world application.

**Instructional Focus of Technology:** When students use the Design Cycle to learn content and apply their knowledge, technology becomes a meaningful tool in the process of learning, rather than an end in itself. Too often, well-meaning teachers who want to improve their use of technology may make technology the end result of the lesson. This can often be seen in projects where “students research a topic and create a PowerPoint presentation or brochure to illustrate content.” Without a purpose or audience in these products, students are just transferring information from a book or the Internet to another medium or program.

The good news is that a simple refocusing and rewording in lesson design can transform the instructional impact of these lessons. For example, a seventh grade science teacher tells the class: “Students, today you will research genetic diseases and create a PowerPoint about a specific disease.”

OR the teacher can refocus the lesson by providing a real world application: “Students, the National Institute of Health wants to create a disability awareness website for middle school students. The purpose of the website is to educate middle school students about genetic disabilities, highlight how a disability can affect the life of someone your own age, and how you can help or understand more about the disability.”

“As middle school students, you have been selected to be consultants on this project. Your task is to research a specific disease, select what information is important to know and understand for middle school students, and create a presentation using any program that you think best presents your topic. You will share your product with your colleagues and your product will be graded on content and how effectively you use technology to present your information.”
The purpose of the first example is the creation of the PowerPoint, and in most lessons, students may simply “copy and paste” the information from the Internet to their PowerPoint, in essence, simply transferring information from a program to another program. Even if the students give an in class presentation with their PowerPoint, without a focus or purpose of their presentation, they will often just read what is on the slide. The second example contains a real world application, meaningful purpose, authentic audience, and the opportunity for students to be creative and select which technology to use to display their knowledge.

Technology Integration into the Content Subjects:

Since the “Technology Tools” course in middle schools is an elective, some schools implementing the IB MYP requirement of 50 hours of technology for each student face a challenge of reaching this requirement if a student does not take a technology course. Although this may appear to be a difficulty, this requirement encourages all teachers to analyze how technology can be integrated into their teaching so that all students school-wide have the opportunity to use technology in their learning. Just as all educators understand the value of cross curriculum integration, that reading and math are not limited to those subjects only and have application in science and social studies, so too is technology critical for students in developing 21st century skills. Consequently, it must be integrated in all subjects to provide opportunities for practice.

Common Understanding & Expectations:

The most significant benefit of the IB MYP Technology Integration Model is that it provides a school wide framework and lesson plan format for administrators and teachers. Teachers understand the expectations since the instructional components are clearly defined. Teachers understand that technology integration involves active student learning, collaboration, and application of content to solve real world problems, rather than the simple use of hardware or software. Because the model emphasizes a philosophy in designing lessons rather than specific technologies, teachers have the flexibility to create lessons that are specific to their students, content, resources, and skill sets.

Framework for Professional Learning and Staff Development:

With common understanding comes the opportunity for meaningful school-wide professional development. While school-wide adaptation and requirements are a necessary guideline that must be clear to all staff members, the IB MYP model itself encompasses all levels of technology competencies. The teacher who feels comfortable using only Publisher can create just as meaningful a lesson as the teacher who is having his or her students create a website or multimedia presentation. The students go through the same process. Over time, as more examples become available and both teachers and students are exposed to different applications of technology, their creativity and ability in demonstrating what has been learned improve.

Challenges:

Although a challenge seems to appear in schools where all students are not required to take a Technology Tools class, this actually encourages and requires that teachers integrate technology into the content areas. Teachers who foster classroom environments that encourage problem solving, student discussions, and
collaborative group work usually have little difficulty finding ways to integrate technology to enhance their lessons. However, teachers who rely on a predominantly lecture format in which all instruction and learning is teacher directed are sometimes challenged by a more student centered environment. In these instances, staff development and professional collaboration play an important role in helping teachers learn new strategies and lesson ideas.

Another potential challenge is providing staff development that enhances technology skills regardless of teacher competency level. While the management of more open-ended learning environments requires a minimum level of teacher technology competencies and teachers are often comfortable with entry level software programs such as Microsoft Office, other teachers may choose to use more interactive and multimedia oriented technology. Nevertheless, both levels of teacher competency need professional development and skill extension.

**Step 2: Build a Learning Community and Give Time for Staff Development.**

School-wide adoption of a framework for technology integration requires providing time for staff development where teachers can learn and share strategies and lessons, as well as plan for projects. Understanding of the components of the Design Cycle and the constructivist philosophy of lesson design should be followed by concrete and achievable examples to help teachers implement their understanding.

Both formal and informal staff development and planning times over the school year can facilitate and maintain a school’s framework. During orientation week before the start of school, the broad philosophy and themes are discussed so teachers have a conceptual understanding of why the school is emphasizing the skills of problem solving, student engagement, collaborative skills, and creativity. Once that conceptual understanding is established, specific instructional applications of technologies can be introduced and discussed during monthly faculty meetings. Follow-up sessions during team planning or after school allow for teachers to learn specific technology skills to utilize and integrate the software. These targeted sessions allow for teachers who are having difficulty learn and practice their skills. In addition, these sessions can be used to help teachers with more advanced technology skills learn new software and programs.

Other opportunities for professional development include early dismissals. At Holmes Middle School and other IB MYP schools, students are given an early dismissal twice a year in order to provide teachers with professional development and planning time. It is important to note at these meetings, experienced teachers present and lead meetings. This empowers teachers as stakeholders in the success of the program and allows for specific adaptations and modifications across team levels and subjects. This flexibility is important since the instructional application of technology may look different for each team or grade level depending on the specific team culture and competencies; however, all teachers still hold themselves to the same criteria and expectations.

**Step 3: Highlight Authentic Student Work to Serve as Examples.**

Teachers benefit from seeing student work that exemplifies the school framework and goals. The highly accessible nature of technology lends itself for sharing and demonstration. For example, just as student work can easily be displayed in the hallways, multimedia projects can be accessible through the school server for all to see. When the seventh grade English and science teachers collaborated on a research project about scientists, the all students and
teachers could view the projects on the school server after the technology specialist created a link from the school website. Student privacy was protected since only computers on the school network could access the projects.

Sharing is critical since students benefit from critiquing each other’s work, and teachers learn from what others on different teams and grade levels are doing to integrate technology. This facilitates the sharing of lessons, strategies, and resources during team and department meetings, but more importantly, it demonstrates what can be accomplished.

At the same time, teachers and specialists must be willing to share any challenges and problems that may occur. In highlighting the student work of some classrooms, it is important to avoid “showing off,” which may only discourage and create resentment in teachers who struggle with technology. One important lesson we learned was the challenge of having a technology project in January since snow days cancelled the computer lab time which made it difficult to complete the project on time. The teachers agreed that their next team project would happen either earlier or later in the school year. Another problem we faced was accommodating special education students, so now we enlist the help of the special education specialists in the school when we design team projects. An honest exchange of examples, problems, and ideas ensures that all learn from these opportunities.

**Step 4: Start small.**

Teachers accustomed to integrating technology in their classroom may find the school-wide requirement of one lesson plan that integrates technology per year easy to meet. Other teachers unaccustomed to integrating technology or who never incorporated more open ended constructivist lessons are challenged by the requirement. Successful administrators and technology specialists understand the instructional priorities and professional culture of their school and will set expectations appropriately to ensure sustainable success. What matters most in adopting a school-wide framework for technology integration is to set instructional expectations that ALL teachers can meet, provide the structure for support, and the freedom for the more advanced technology skilled teachers to experiment.

**Step 5: Honor the Effort at all Levels.**

For a school vision to be successful, teachers must be empowered as stakeholders who share in its success. Technology integration is no different, and if the instructional application of technology is what is critical, then the level of technology skill demonstrated is secondary to the instructional design of the lesson. Therefore a school should honor both the teacher implementing an inquiry based lesson that utilizes Publisher, along with the more technically advanced teacher who has integrated more “advanced” multimedia technologies.

**Step 6: Aim for the Next Level.**

Although the benefits of a school-wide framework for technology integration is in the emphasis on instructional application of technology, such a framework facilitates the introduction of new or evolving Web 2.0 technology applications such as blogs, wikis, and podcasts. A school wide framework defines the context of how these technologies can be introduced in the classroom so that instruction, not technology, is the end result of such a lesson.

By focusing on a common understanding for technology integration and by emphasizing lesson design, student learning, and learning communities, rather than specific technology programs, all teachers can be successful with helping their students develop and utilize technology skills in their learning. With a common understanding and language for integrating technology, teachers can focus on the instructional value and learning process, rather than compare which software was used.

In our original scenario, if a school wide framework for technology existed, Janice, Tom, Tan-ya, and John can discuss how students approached their learning task and what was created, and not compare who used the fancier software. With learning communities and time for staff development, all
can improve their technology skills and competencies and understand how to use them in the classroom to enhance student learning.

**References**


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Patrick Ledesma, EdS, NBCT, is a School Based Technology Specialist and National Board Certified Teacher with Fairfax County Public Schools. He has worked as a special education and staff development teacher at the elementary and middle school levels. He is in the PhD program at George Mason University studying teacher education and education leadership.

Thanks to all of those that contributed to the creation of our 2007 Virginia Educational Leadership!!
Lee County Public Schools recently learned that the division is one of seventeen school divisions in the state to have all schools fully accredited according to the Virginia Standards of Learning and to have all of the schools and the division meet the No Child Left Behind mandates for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the second year in a row ---2005-2006 and 2006-2007. Furthermore, the division is one of three divisions in Region VII to have all schools accredited and for all schools and the division to meet the No Child Left Behind mandates of AYP. The success of student achievement in the Lee County School System is a three-year journey from competence to excellence in student achievement.

Shared Vision

Student achievement is a crucial element in the future progress of Lee County since schools walk hand-in-hand with economic growth and job creation. We believe that the Lee County School System offers exceptional learning opportunities for every child to become a successful and productive member of society. The community shares the vision that that the cornerstone of a successful move into a highly skilled, technology-driven, and ever changing global economy is a strong, progressive, and innovative school system.

Background

In 2004, the academic challenges for improving the Lee County Public School System meant that the system had to overcome many demographic and funding issues such as ranking as one of the poorest counties in the State of Virginia, (composite index of .1769 with the free and reduced lunch population at approximately 63%), lack of monies for remedial programs, lack of highly qualified personnel, lack of resources for providing extended learning time, and insufficient funding for staffing.

Therefore, the Lee County Public Schools, electing to be proactive, underwent a voluntary division-level academic review. With the assistance of the Virginia Department of Education’s Office of School Improvement, Lee County developed and implemented a Corrective Action Plan addressing all of the essential actions to raise student achievement deficits that were identified during the academic review.

Action Plan

The Corrective Action Plan included addressing curriculum alignment, data analysis, benchmark assessments, data-driven remediation, professional development for teachers and instructional leaders, and improved communication. This was a large task for a system that was considered a low performing division for meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and accreditation of all schools. Yet, in the 2004-2005 school year, while the division did not make AYP, only one out of thirteen (13) schools in the division did not make AYP; and the middle school remained accredited with warning. On February 22, 2005, the Lee County School Board came before the Board of Education’s Committee on Lowest Performing School Divisions and was able to summarize the progress made in meeting the compliance indicators for the essential actions included in the division’s Corrective Action Plan.
Steps to Success

All of the progress to increase the student achievement meant changing the way that things had been done and changing the attitudes of the school communities. To bring about change, it was essential that training be provided with input from the stakeholders and that it was related to the data available, i.e. test results. The culture of the division had been one of working in isolation, due to geographical distances, and operating on the assumption that the Virginia Standards of Learning was just another educational idea that would go away.

One of the keys to increasing student achievement and meeting the essential actions of the Corrective Action Plan was to align the professional development plan with the essential actions identified during the academic review in 2004. To improve the teaching practices division-wide, the Corrective Action Plan stipulated that all of the teachers and administrators be provided professional development training for curriculum alignment, data analysis, and benchmark assessments. Standards of Learning Resources (SOLAR) provided intensive training for the instructional leaders, teachers, and supervisors for the creation of content pacing guides aligned with the essential knowledge and skills of the Virginia State Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework and with the Virginia SOL Blueprints. The division implemented a mid-term progress report for each nine-week reporting period. By looking at the benchmark assessments each nine-week reporting period, teachers and instructional leaders were able to provide intensive remediation and tutoring services for improving the academic achievement of each student and especially for the subgroups in the student population.

The instructional leadership was given training on how to develop parent involvement. That professional development resulted in the scheduling of regular teacher-parent conferences and parent and community training for the understanding of the No Child Left Behind legislation, Virginia Standards of Learning and the importance of family schedules to provide timely and effective remedial instruction. Communication tools were integrated into the system to provide assistance with the distance and isolation of the schools and to provide more effective collaboration among teachers, instructional leaders, and the Central Office Management Team. Taskstream.com, an online web-based program, was implemented as the division-wide communication program of engagement tools to monitor and align lesson plans to the essential knowledge and skills of the Virginia Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework. This tool to monitor the taught curriculum was one of the most radical changes that was introduced in the division due to the number of schools and their location within the district. However, through continuous training, one-to-one assistance with lesson plans, monitoring and conferences with the instructional leaders, it was and has become the one tool that the division employees would not want to omit from the budget.

Lee County Public Schools developed a lesson plan template that included the essential components for meeting the taught curriculum: assessment, objectives, resources, essential skills to be taught, the pacing for instruction, and the plans for differentiation of instruction. The responses from the teachers and administrators helped to make this a successful tool for uniform division-wide instruction. Taskstream.com provides the administrators and the supervisors with the ability to monitor lesson plans on-line and to check for the teaching and remediation of essential skills daily. Discussion groups have been formed for school learning communities and whole faculty study groups. Templates are available for rubrics and for building WebPages for each class. In addition, SchoolReach.com, a web-
based telephone calling system, was implemented to provide communication to parents about student absences, school events, closings, and other activities with one telephone call via the Internet.

Another focus for the division was for all K-3 schools to implement a 90-minute uninterrupted period for reading instruction. Reading First schools’ leadership attributed the success and increase in third grade reading scores in the three Reading First schools (Ewing Elementary, Rose Hill Elementary, St. Charles Elementary) to the increased time for teaching reading along with the dedication and commitment of a highly trained staff.

Adequate Yearly Progress

In the 2006-2007 school year, all of the schools in Lee County Public Schools were fully accredited and all schools made AYP as a division. In addition, Elk Knob Elementary School was named one of the No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools for 2007 and seven of the nine elementary schools have been named Distinguished Title I Schools during the 2006 and 2007 school years, including Ewing, Elydale, Flatwoods, Rose Hill, Elk Knob, Dryden, and St. Charles.

Continuing Interventions

On November 29, 2006, at the Virginia State Board of Education meeting, Lee County was released from the division-level academic review process. This was a proud moment for the division; however, this act increased the pressure for the division to continue to sustain on its own to monitor the results and move forward to excellence in student academic achievement. The division has moved forward by continually empowering the instructional leaders of the schools to provide professional development activities that are aligned according to disaggregation of the instructional data, both school and division level. The division has added research-based instructional strategies and programs such as Reading First, Teach First, Success for All, Whole Faculty Study Groups, ThinkLink, Study Island, and Accelerated Reading and Math. The district insists that the taught curriculum be monitored, that remediation services have been added for failing students, that both regular and special education teachers are trained for inclusion, and that highly qualified teachers are hired. The district also provides division-wide family literacy programs. Finally, by collaboratively looking at the test results, the school division is able to use the results as a guide for feedback and for making adjustments for continuous improvement for student academic excellence.

A Picture of Success

St. Charles Elementary is an example of data driven instruction success. In 2000, St. Charles, along with another school in division, was placed on warning by the Virginia State Department of Education. St. Charles, located in a mining camp town, borders the northeastern Kentucky state line. Located in a rural, high poverty community, the school had a free and reduced lunch rate of approximately 83%. A survey revealed in 2000 that 65% of the students lived with grandparents or were living in single-family homes. The Virginia Standards of Learning scores were: reading 33.62% and math 26.47%.

The Yale School Development Program, referred to as the Comer Model, was chosen by the division and introduced as the school improvement model for the school learning community at St. Charles Elementary. The Comer Model provided professional development training for child development, collaboration, parent involvement, and data-driven instruction for all teachers, staff, and the Central Office Administrative Team. The parents and community were included on the school collaborative teams and were essential to the success of bringing about change for the school learning community.

With a change of leadership, integration of technology, disaggregation of the data, utilizing collaborative teams, inviting parent involvement, and the 21st Century Learning Community Afterschool Program, St. Charles Elementary, within one year, became an accredited school and met the No Child Left Behind Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). St. Charles Elementary was recognized by the Governor of Virginia and received the Governor’s Award for Most Improved School in 2002, one of four elementary schools in the State to receive
Today, seven years later, St. Charles Elementary continues to be on of the highest performing and achieving elementary schools in the division. St. Charles Elementary attests that the key components for increasing school performance and student achievement are strong leadership, administrative support, along with empowerment, continuous professional development and the use of data driven results.

According to the School Report Card for 2005, St. Charles Elementary served grades pre-K-7 with a population enrollment of 155 students. Approximately 80.7% of the student population was considered to be economically disadvantaged and 8.4% of the student population was considered to have disabilities. The enrollment was represented by 98.1 % white students, and 1.9% was considered to be other. The St. Charles Elementary Virginia School Report Card of 2005 and 2006 noted that the school was fully accredited and had met the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). The 2007-2008 report from the Virginia Department of Education announced that St. Charles was fully accredited and had met the No Child Left Behind Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). On October 5, 2007, St. Charles Elementary received the 21st Century Community Learning Afterschool Grant, a Cohort 6 Award of $110,872.00 for another three years.

Conclusion

The Lee County Public School Division results for 2007-2008 showed that all schools are fully accredited and that all school have met the No Child Left Behind AYP requirements. The notable achievement of being one of the seventeen divisions in the state to have all schools accredited and to meet AYP for two years in a row, speaks for the student achievement, the instructional leadership of the administrators, the commitment of the teachers in making a difference for student learning, the support of the Board of Supervisors and the Board of Education, as well as the outstanding support of the parents and community for increased academic achievement for the students. Lee County Public Schools, together with parent and community stakeholders, seek to continue the journey of success so that each child is given the opportunity to reach his potential.

Lee County Public School System is a success story of an improvement journey from competence to excellence. Continuous professional development is embedded and continues to focus on data driven instructional practices for helping students acquire knowledge and higher-level thinking skills. Most importantly, the Lee County professional development culture has changed from one of isolation to one of division-wide collaborative support for improving test results and student achievement.

To learn more about Lee County Public School System’s division improvement success, go to the Virginia Department of Education web site and click on: http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/SchoolImprovement/casefile_lee/index.html.

References

Wandaleen Adams, Ed. S is the Head Start Director and Reading First LEA, and the Curriculum Specialist for Reading and Social Studies for Lee County Schools.
our fourth grade team begins the second quarter with a focus on rounding to millions, estimating and finding whole numbers sums and differences, etc. But this is usually delineated in “week blocks” or even simply “quarterly” segments- it is hard to distinguish what is done on a day-to-day basis.

Second, we know whether or not students have learned the content based on assessment feedback. We have those “high stakes” end-of-year state assessments, mid-year tests, quarterly tests, and common unit tests. However, the “turn-around” on these tests takes time and it is often hard to gain a snapshot glance of what is actually being learned on a daily basis.

Finally, how we respond is of the utmost importance as we simply cannot wait until receiving results from a critical mid-year test to implement next steps. Our response time has to be much more fluid, flexible, and frequent as we simply do not have time to spare.

We decided we need a weekly reflective look that gives us both a “snapshot” (quick, regular glance) and a “portrait” (deeper understanding) perspective of where our students are in math. Thus, in designing a Math Exit Slip Strategy for our school, Mr. Pete Fiddner, our math specialist, and I emphasized the following important items as we set out to improve collaboration, assessment, and instruction across the grade levels in math.

Using a Weekly Chart- We collect a weekly math exit slip chart (See Table 1) from each teacher which
simply has the student name on the left hand vertical column, and the day’s math strand in the top horizontal column. Teachers simply place a “check” in the column if the students get the answer correct and an “x” if the exit slip is incorrect. They turn these in on Friday (along with a student sample from each day). We initially set the week total goal of four exit slips, but have streamlined this down to “two or three” as the goal as we have found that we are able to gain quality data from a “less is more” approach.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Student Name (Last, first)</th>
<th>Monday Strand: 4.21</th>
<th>Tuesday Strand: 4.5</th>
<th>Wednesday Strand: 4.5</th>
<th>Thursday Strand: 4.5</th>
<th>Friday Strand: 4.7</th>
<th># correct (___/4) (aim for at least 4 per week)</th>
<th>Percent correct (%)</th>
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<td>Amy</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Juwan</td>
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<td>√</td>
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<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
team design and implementation: we have found successful grade-level teams decide in their weekly meetings 1) which strands were going to be taught; 2) what sort of questions would be given; and 3) then generate those questions to provide for a “common voice” approach--- this shared data has helped guide conversation in teaching and learning.

differentiation in assessment: in today’s world of standardized test questions in multiple-choice format, it may seem easy (or necessary) to rely on forced-item formats to get students “test ready.” pete and i have stressed the importance, though, of incorporating problem-solving and open response format items as well. again, the teacher simply uses the “check” or “x” method to relay if a student has “gotten it” or not.

collection and representation of data: we devise a simple spreadsheet and simply “plug in” the teachers’ data (see table 2). the “check” and “x” is then formatted to a simple binary code (“0” as “incorrect,” “1” as “correct”) to be used as categorical data. this provides a holistic perspective of a trend-line data approach that serves to see strengths in weaknesses of a particular student, class, and/or strand.

table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>29-Aug</th>
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<th>12-Sep</th>
<th>6-Sep</th>
<th>4-Sep</th>
<th>10-Sep</th>
<th>5-Sep</th>
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<td>Ms. M</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.15</td>
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<td>1</td>
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Reflection: Each week, Pete and I simply sit down and discuss the work we are seeing from each grade level and check on a couple of items: 1) Pacing---are teams and teachers staying consistent with our curriculum maps?; 2) Grouping---are current collaborative and grouping approaches appropriate?; 3) Success Stories---what examples can we share out in a faculty meeting of exit slip success stories? This reflective approach helps us celebrate what is working and fine-tune what is not.

The Math Exit Slip approach has encouraged dialogue and collaboration in our school and has allowed the principal and math specialist to work in a deliberate, systematic, collaborative approach with the teams. We feel that it is an important first, solid step in a deliberate, collaborative, and reflective approach in teaching and learning about mathematics at the elementary level. These “snapshot portraits” have given us the breadth and depth to better understand how our students are succeeding in math.

References

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Peter Fiddner, a former upper grades teacher, serves as a first-year Mathematics Specialist for Albemarle County, working closely with two schools. Peter Fiddner earned his undergraduate degree from Alfred University and is currently working towards his math specialist certification and graduate degree.
Student Achievement: It’s About Confidence not Constraints

Lowell T. Lemons

Myths abound such as “Teachers can’t overcome students’ limitations,” or “Poor kids can’t meet standards,” or “Principals don’t really influence instruction.” And then there are the myths that “Teaching to the test limits effective instructional strategies,” or “The state standards are ridiculous,” and “We need more materials and supplies to be successful.” The litany of current myths about student achievement goes on and on. Yet in order to create confidence about student achievement, we must first attack prevailing myths. Once it is understood that these myths are really barriers that undermine confidence, then professional educators are free to be creative, enthusiastic, energetic, and committed in their efforts to improve student learning. The obvious result is that targeted student learning brings success on the prescribed assessments.

Leadership That Works (2005) clearly defines the importance and influence of the leadership of the principal in the success of schools. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty define school success as the pass rate of students on a standard assessment. They use methodology to compare expected pass rates in schools that are identified as effective versus ineffective. The connection is made between effective schools and effective principals. While their meta-analysis of many research studies is important and conclusive, it is also important to take an anecdotal look at leadership in individual schools that have achieved success.

Two schools in Waynesboro, Virginia, will be examined to consider how high poverty schools were able to excel on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessment. The prevailing bias tends to be that schools with high percentages of students eligible for free or reduced lunch will not perform as well on standard assessments as schools with lower eligible rates. However, Wenonah Elementary School and William Perry Elementary School students have often outperformed those in more affluent communities.

Connections and assumptions will be made regarding the role leadership played in the success of these two schools. The impact of the school principals’ behaviors and influence will be considered and presented. The belief that the school principal has a critical impact on school climate, teacher confidence, instructional strategies, and student achievement will be endorsed. With these predispositions in mind, the schools will be described including student performance data, community profiles, and leadership characteristics.

The Schools

Wenonah Elementary School

With a student population of less than 300 students each year, Wenonah Elementary School serves the neighborhoods on the eastern side of Waynesboro, Virginia. There are several public housing units within the school zone along with many small rental houses. The area has a number of low cost apartments that cater to Hispanic families. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch hovers around 70% with a high percentage of single parent families. The families are rather transient. While the student enrollment remains constant, approximately 50% of the students move in or out during each school term.

There are two class sections at each grade level. The school staff includes a principal, guidance counselor, librarian, special education teacher, two reading specialists, one physical education teacher, half time music teacher, half time art teacher, half time instructional coach, four instructional aides, secretary,
and half time nurse. This school also has a Title I funded pre-kindergarten program. The faculty is composed of a blend of teachers ranging from those in their first year to those nearing retirement. The majority of the faculty has been at the school for more than five years. Mrs. Karen Weaver has been the school principal since 1993. She has been a teacher and administrator in Waynesboro Public Schools for over 25 years.

When initial, pre-accountability testing began in the mid 1990’s, Wenonah’s pass rates were well below the state averages. However, this school principal and faculty accepted the responsibility and the challenge to insure that their students achieved at the highest levels. They aligned their curriculum with the SOL, concentrated on every student’s reading and writing skills, carefully analyzed student performance data, and adjusted instruction based on results.

In Figures 1, 2, and 3 the reported achievement levels have far exceeded minimum requirements as well as state averages. The trends have shown continuous progress and in some years the pass rates have been above 90%. Keep in mind that this has been accomplished with a student population that is transient and socio-economically disadvantaged.
William Perry Elementary School

Approximately 600 students attend William Perry Elementary School located in the northeastern part of Waynesboro, Virginia. The facility was completed in 1995 and is modern and well designed. Children from a wide range of backgrounds attend the school and the type of available housing varies greatly. There is a high concentration of public and subsidized housing complexes. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch is always near 65%. There are many blended and single parent families. Approximately one third of the students move in or out of the school during each school year.

William Perry Elementary School has four or five sections in each grade level. There are several special education programs at William Perry Elementary School as well as two classes of Title I funded pre-kindergarten students. The school staff includes two administrators, two secretaries, a school nurse, two instructional coaches, one art teacher, one music teacher, two physical education teachers, a librarian, a guidance counselor, three reading teachers, four special education teachers and eight instructional aides. There has been considerable turn over in the faculty over the past eight years as a result of retirement and relocation. Nevertheless, the faculty is made up of a majority of early to mid career teachers with a solid core of teachers with more than 20 years experience and who have been at the school since it opened in 1995.

Prior to 1999, student performance on the Virginia SOL Test showed minimal improvement and fell below state standards and state averages. Mrs. Vermell Grant became the Principal in 1999 after nearly 25 years of service in Waynesboro Public Schools as a teacher and assistant principal. With her leadership, the faculty gained confidence, focused on the prescribed curriculum, differentiated instruction, and monitored student achievement to bring up improvement in student performance. It is easy to identify this trend shift with Mrs. Grant’s introduction as principal.

Figures 4, 5, and 6 show notable increases in pass rates beginning in 1999. The continuous improvement has resulted in student performance above state standards and state averages. In some cases the pass rate have exceed 90%. This significant progress has been accomplished with a population of students that would not be generally described as affluent or advantaged.

Leadership

In these two schools there is a perceived and actual relationship between the success in student achievement and the leadership of the principal. In the case of Wenonah Elementary School, Mrs. Weaver was the principal through the entire implementation of the Virginia State Assessment Program. She had a long-standing rapport with the faculty and a great deal of trust and loyalty had been established.
Figure 4: William Perry Elementary School Unadjusted School SOL Test Data

Figure 5: William Perry Elementary School Unadjusted 3rd Grade SOL Test Data

Figure 6: William Perry Elementary School Unadjusted 5th Grade SOL Test Data
The situation at William Perry Elementary School was different. While Mrs. Grant had been a teacher at the school, she was the assistant principal at another elementary school in the division immediately prior to returning as principal. The improvement at Wenonah Elementary School was gradual and continuous while at William Perry Elementary School it was more dramatic. Yet in both cases, student performance moved to levels well beyond what might have been judged as possible. These schools have achieved some of the highest pass rates in the area in spite of serving much less affluent students than the majority of the schools in the region.

There are a number of leadership traits and behaviors that can be identified in these two principals. While there are many individual differences between Mrs. Weaver and Mrs. Grant, common leadership themes can be seen in both schools.

**Clear Focus**

At Wenonah Elementary School and William Perry Elementary School the central focus was quality instruction and student achievement. Every faculty meeting included items related to instruction and student achievement. The focus was reinforced every day through allocation of time, conversation, and decision-making. In both schools, assignment of instructional aides, approval of field trips, and use of classroom space was determined based on instructional needs. The strategic instructional decisions enhanced the learning environment for students.

At William Perry Elementary School the principal initiated the practice of adjusting the aide assignments periodically to provide specific instructional support based on need. At times, Wenonah Elementary School used combined grade level classes to address class size and instructional need situations. Rather than allowing imbalance in certain grade levels, the principal assigned available staff to create a combination class designed to reduce class size at both grade levels and selectively assigned students based on individual needs.

**Knowledge of Instruction**

Both principals understood what was involved in quality instruction and were familiar with many of the best practice strategies that made for effective learning environments. They knew that one cannot “fake it” with teachers when it comes to discussing and improving instruction. Effective principals are diligent in their effort to be knowledgeable and confident about current, reliable teaching pedagogy. At both schools the principals routinely attended and participated in staff development activities and conferences with teachers. It was common to see both principals in grade level meetings contributing to instructional discussions.

**Modeling**

The ability of the principal to demonstrate instructional strategies, analyze student performance data, establish positive student relationships, and exhibit confidence is the type of modeling that has a tremendous impact on teachers. Nothing will undermine the commitment of the faculty and the success of a school more quickly than if the principal cannot “walk the walk.” Mrs. Weaver and Mrs. Grant continually engaged students in ways that provided good models for teachers to follow. They were confident and comfortable teaching a classroom of students and routinely found opportunities to teach. By maintaining a high professional standard for themselves, they set the same standard for teachers. At William Perry Elementary School faculty meetings often resembled lessons where instructional strategies were modeled.

**Use of Data**

Before student performance data could be manipulated electronically, these principals spent hours manually disaggregating and analyzing results of the Virginia SOL Test. They looked at the data for individual students, for each teacher, and for the school. Later, both principals did disaggregating and analysis electronically. They knew the data, they knew how to talk with teachers about the data, and they knew how to connect the data to instructional strategies. It became a routine part of the culture of these schools to use data...
to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and then make necessary adjustments.

**Collaborative Accountability**

While this may sound contradictory, effective principals are very skilled in maintaining high levels of accountability with a spirit of collaboration. While there will always be isolated situations where accountability must be autocratic, the most successful form of accountability is where there is as sense of “we’re in this together.” This atmosphere is connected to some form of consensus-based decision-making where teachers have an obligation to the total faculty, not just the principal. These principals use the language of “we,” not “you.” Their conversations with teachers focus on students’ needs or behaviors and even when it means saying, “This just isn’t good enough for our kids.” There is always a healthy blend of teacher accountability and institutional support.

**Coaching**

Evaluation is an important part of school success; however, the way evaluation is done may be even more important. If it is true that evaluation of teachers is intended to improve instruction and student performance, then it cannot be about “giving teachers a grade.” Mrs. Weaver and Mrs. Grant remain clear with teachers about their performance. If the teacher is not performing satisfactorily, then the leadership approach is directive and prescriptive with clearly defined benchmarks for improvement. If the teacher is being successful, then the dialog is designed to move the teacher toward establishing her own goals for improvement and supporting those goals. The coaching dialog must, in the end, focus on a positive effect on student achievement.

**Reinforcing Language**

If the principal is constantly and consistently using the language of continuous improvement, quality instruction, and student success, this has a tremendous impact on the school’s culture over time. This positive, constructive language becomes the language of not only the faculty and staff but of parents and students as well. Once this is ingrained in the culture it is seen as the norm and the only option. Both principals routinely showcase the students, teachers, and schools in a manner that communicates a confident message. Events like fitness marches down Main Street, concerts, SOL celebrations, and school board presentations emphasize achievement, success, and pride.

**Make it Personal**

The trick is to make it personal without taking it too personally. If we detach ourselves from influences, outcomes, and responsibility, we greatly diminish our motivation. However, if we accept the fact that the most important person in each student’s school success is the teacher, then the work becomes very serious. It is important to find the right balance. Here’s the key question, “Is each classroom one I would want my own child to be in?” Avoiding the trap of separating teacher effectiveness from student achievement has always been on the agenda of these principals. Teachers are constantly supported and reinforced in understanding that they make the critical impact on student learning.

**Celebration**

The old phrase, “What gets measured gets done,” could be rephrased, “What gets celebrated gets done.” At Wenonah Elementary School and William Perry Elementary School, celebrations were continuous. Not just any celebration, but celebrations to recognize outstanding teaching and student achievement. Celebrations that included families and the community provided positive ways for parents, volunteers, and others to become invested and committed to the work going on in the school. Wenonah Elementary School annually invites the entire fifth grade class from the previous year to join in the celebration of the school meeting accreditation and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards.
Conclusion

What is it that makes a difference in student success? Obviously, this is very complex. Is it the teacher’s skill and empathy? Is it the leadership of the principal? Is it the climate and expectations of the school? Is it the support of the family? Is it the community’s norms and expectations? It is all of these things and more. Malcolm Gladwell in Tipping Point describes factors or people that act as catalysts of change. Principals influence or tip all the variables and circumstances that are present in schools toward effectiveness and success.

The influence of school leadership enables teachers to create highly effective learning environments that result in student success. There is considerable literature and research about effective school leadership. The vignettes presented in The Results Fieldbook (2001) take a look at specific instances of successful school leaders and describe traits that contribute to student success. There are common characteristics that appear in schools where students’ performance exceed expectations, and yet something unique can be gained through the analysis of each story of success.

In the cases of Wenonah Elementary School and William Perry Elementary School, the effectiveness and confidence of teachers, as well as the success of students, were linked to the leadership of Mrs. Weaver and Mrs. Grant. The impact of a principal’s leadership on teacher and student success can never be underestimated. The common leadership behaviors observed in these two schools serve as one set of priorities that can be used to improve student and school achievement.

References

Dr. Lemons is currently Associate Professor of Education at Mary Baldwin College. He is a former school superintendent, principal and teacher.

The possibility of seeing your name published as a by-line in a professional journal is an enticing challenge, but like all challenges, it requires effort. Our over-scheduled profession does not leave much time for the reflection necessary to write, much less polish our ideas enough to see them in print for hundreds of others to read. Nevertheless, it is worth the effort, both for our own professional growth and for the chance to share our ideas and discoveries with our colleagues. As Sterne suggested nearly 300 years ago, writing should seem as easily managed as a conversation, because, indeed, it is a conversation between the writer and the reader. The question is, where do you begin?

The beginning is asking yourself why you want to write. If you have something you want to say, something you believe is valuable or will help you or others grow as you explore your ideas in your writing, then you have made a good beginning. Your own deep interest in the subject and your own knowledge are the best kind of impetus for putting pen to paper. An original perspective is a must. Try out your idea with a colleague, create a file for your idea, and begin collecting articles and relevant connections. Include necessary references for citations. Interesting anecdotes or illustrations are always a plus.

Your reader is a central consideration. Who is the reader? How much background information does he or she already have? How much interest? How much time? Imagine a typical reader of the article and write to that person. For instance, right now, I am deliberately writing to a person who may not have ever thought of submitting an article for publication or has tried to write something but stopped before finishing the piece. Knowing that deliberately shapes the advice, the tone, and even the organization I select.

Next you are ready to plan the structure of the article. Make a graph or picture of the various parts of your idea to see how they connect. An outline is the next logical step. Really, an outline is simply a linear graphic organizer. Try to summarize your article in fewer than 100 words so you know what the heart of your idea is. If you cannot find the focus, neither will the reader.

Writing the introduction is one of the hardest parts. In fact, you might want to get the body written before you tackle the introduction. However, you must have a clear thesis idea written down before beginning the body. The thesis is the focus written in one to two sentences, and since it controls the thought of the article, you must have it visible and working. The rest of the introduction can wait until later. Do consider the opening for a journal article as a lead which offers the who, what, when and why information in brief form but also interests the reader in continuing. Do avoid recitations of history, statistics, or reports; describing someone else’s ideas; or giving background information that belongs in the body.

The body itself develops your idea with support from experience or from respected sources. In other words, the body elaborates on the who, what, when, why, and adds the detailed how. It may be tempting to lard it...
up with many scholarly studies and references, but since this is not an academic class, you have to find a middle path. Plenty of specific examples, real situations, and human interest are always a welcome way to make an idea or scholarly reference come alive to the reader.

The ending is the other hard part. Don’t belabor your point. Rather, find a succinct way to summarize, answer the “So what?” question, and then end. It may be tempting to bring out the “big band” to play yourself off the stage, but beware generic statements or grandiose pronouncements. Nevertheless, a little “zing” never hurts since the last lines are what stay with the reader.

Actually, there is another hard part – learning to rewrite after a first draft. Writing with sharp clarity; using strong, active verbs; cutting the jargon – alas, often the bane of educators; and weeding out the verbiage: these are difficult things to do when we are wielding the pen. Edit sentence by sentence; then edit paragraph by paragraph. Deliberately place links and transitions between ideas and paragraphs. Check sentence sense and grammar. Ask yourself how you can make the article easier for the reader to understand. Be willing to make cuts. Be willing to read your article aloud to yourself. Be willing to let a friend read your work and make suggestions. Then, be willing to trust your editor. She/he is on your team and wants your article to be a shining contribution to the whole of the journal.

If all this sounds like too much work, ask those whose by-line appears in this edition how it feels to converse with so many readers. What is it like to know that by your words you can effect change? It may be change that you will never know about, but change that makes differences for children, teachers, administrators, parents. Words are powerful. The work is worth it. Start writing!

Carol Blauvelt has been a classroom teacher of high school English for over 36 years in Prince William County. Currently Carol is part of the Instructional Support Team in PWCS, working as a curriculum and staff developer. In addition, she is an adjunct professor for George Mason University.
# VIRGINIA EDUCATIONAL REGIONS 2007

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<tr>
<td>Giles</td>
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## Region VIII
Paul Nichols  
Halifax County Schools  
(434) 476-3116 (w)  
pnichols@halifax.k12.va.us

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
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