



REPORT



SAI recognizes excellence in school leadership

2003 Administrators of the Year



Don Ortman,
principal,
Starkweather
Elementary,
Rock Valley

School Administrators of Iowa recently named five Administrators of the Year for 2003. "It's a pleasure to be able to recognize these exemplary leaders because they truly represent the outstanding school administrators we have in Iowa," said Dr. Troyce Fisher, SAI executive director. Read more from the recipients beginning on page 6.

Elementary Principal of the Year - *Don Ortman*

Nominees: Don Dehner, Pleasant Valley; Marie McLaughlin, IKM; and Blair Redenius, Algona.

Finalists: Stephen Bradley, Oelwein; and David Kwikkel, Schaller-Crestland.

Selection Committee: Ann Bass, Dallas Center-Grimes; Ying Ying Chen, College Community; Peter Stuerman, Hinton; Nancy Vanderburgh, Newton; and Linda Whiting, Fort Dodge.



Duane Frick,
principal,
Jefferson
Junior High,
Dubuque

Middle Level Principal of the Year - *Duane Frick*

Nominees: David Dorenkamp, Okoboji; Gary Reiners, Fort Dodge; and Rollie Wiebers, Charter Oak-Ute.

Finalists: JoAnn Butler, Denver; and Bob Hutchcroft, AGWSR.

Selection Committee: Jane Brandt, Union; Brian Carico, Des Moines; Dave Gallaher, Newton; Pat Roush, Denison; Theron Schutte, Boone; and Chad Steckel, Meservey-Thornton.



Jerry Stephens,
principal,
Marshalltown
High School

Secondary Principal of the Year - *Jerry Stephens*

Nominees: Allan Eckelman, Sumner; Kent Klinkefus, Harlan; Mark Gronemeyer, Jefferson-Scranton; Michael Schmitz, Burlington; Ken Winter, Turkey Valley; and Bruce Johnson, Sioux City

Finalists: Sheryl Hall, Spirit Lake; and Joe Jarvis, Northeast.

Selection Committee: Dennis Duerling, Clinton; Dennis Frey, Sibley-Ocheyedan; Lisa Koester, Gladbrook-Reinbeck; John Monroe, Indianola; and Katy Sojka, Logan-Magnolia.



Ed Redalen,
educational
services
director,
AEA 7,
Cedar Falls

Central Office Administrator of the Year - *Ed Redalen*

Nominees: John Legg, South Tama Co.; Carroll McLuckie, South Hamilton; Juli Staszewski, Central of Clinton & Northeast.

Finalists: Jean Peters, Sioux City; and Laura Sivadge, Norwalk.

Selection Committee: David Black, Lewis Central; Susie Meade, West Des Moines; Leslie Moore, Webster City; Al Rowe, College Community; and Jim Verlengia, Heartland AEA.



Michael
O'Leary,
principal,
Central
Elementary,
Iowa City

Arts Administrator of the Year - *Michael O'Leary*

Nominees: Terry Strait, associate principal, Cedar Rapids Jefferson High School; and Thomas Chiles, associate principal, Muscatine High School.

Selection Committee: Iowa Alliance for Arts Education.

"It is our own

transformation

that creates the

best climate for

change."

- Peter Block,

The Answer to How is

Yes: Acting on

What Matters

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Notes on Leadership from Dr. Troyce Fisher

Fasten Your Seat Belts

Life is so full of surprises, isn't it? There we were, six Iowa school administrators flying back from Anaheim and NAESP last month, comfortably seated throughout the plane, assuming the frequent flyer posture of noses in our respective books, and hoping to catch a nap or just enjoy the quiet of an uneventful plane ride. Mostly, we were all just eager to be home.

About an hour out of Anaheim, the flight attendant announced that everyone should fasten their seat belts because we were entering some possible turbulence. Midway through her announcement, a brilliant flash of light seemed to envelop the plane. The interior lights went off for a brief second. At the same time, a popping sound filled the cabin, and the PA system went dead.

There was no doubt what had happened. Our plane had been hit by lightning. Suddenly, the gentleman across the aisle from me and I abandoned our previously aloof personae, and began some fairly nervous chatter. Funny thing about a perceived crisis: All of a sudden we began to act more like friends than the complete strangers we were. But I digress...

Then a reassuring voice came over the reactivated PA: "This is your pilot. While it is very unusual for lightning to strike an airplane, it is not unheard of, and we're going to be just fine. There is no reason for concern. We are in no danger, and we'll continue our flight plan as scheduled. We'll be in Denver in half an hour."

The sense of relief among the passengers was palpable. What we thought would be a predictable hour and a half plane trip turned into either a harrowing experience or an adventure, depending on one's perspective. (I couldn't help noticing that the two kids behind me were thinking this was pretty cool. The adults weren't quite as enthralled.)

You can imagine the energy of the conversation when the six of us Iowans reconnoitered in one of the airport's pubs waiting for our connecting flight to Des Moines. We had shared a unique experience and lived to tell about it!

Being a school administrator in May is a lot like being that pilot, isn't it? In addition to the "normal" demands of steering a com-

plex "ship" and navigating through often turbulent conditions, there's also the occasional lightning strike that shakes everything up. In the middle of the most of demanding of challenges, you have to be the voice of calm and reassure people that this too shall pass, and we'll make it safely through the storms.

Think of it: Budget cuts have forced us to have to tell some very fine educators that after this year, they no longer have a job with us. Our own version of the dreaded SARS (Senioritis And Restless Students) is epidemic in May. The list of things to get done before June seems endless. Teachers are tired. (We are too.) There's no money for the field trips that usually help engage kids on days when the temperature in the classroom hits 80°. Debates about whether to have graduation ceremonies inside or out take up far too much of our time. And those are just some of the predictable management demands tugging at your sleeves right now.

Being an administrator can be a lonely job. The buck always stops with you, and literally, kids' lives are in your hands. What decisions you make and what priorities you live by determine the culture of the school and the achievement levels of kids. That kind of work takes amazing levels of knowledge, skill, and spirit.

One of the keynoters at the NAESP convention said it this way: "Leadership is a function, not a position." You can't ad lib excellence. "Our role as 'pilots of the plane' is to ask ourselves three questions: (1) Do those we serve grow as persons and in the craft of helping others learn? (2) Do they become healthier, wiser, freer, and more likely to be servants of others? And (3) What is the effect of your leadership on the least privileged in society?" In other words, do they ALL land safely?

The lives of those passengers on that plane from Anaheim to Denver were in that pilot's hands. We depended on him, especially when the lightning struck. People depend on you in the same way. Thanks for what you've done this school year, sometimes in spite of the storms, to make life better for kids.



In Brief

Congratulations to SAI's newly-elected Vice President Dan Moore



Dan Moore, principal of Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School, will begin his term on September 1, 2003.

Thanks to all members who participated in the election.

NASSP Coordinator Opening

Dan Moore's election to the SAI Executive Committee creates a vacancy in the NASSP State Coordinator position.

The primary function of this office is to serve as a liaison between SAI and NASSP, become a voting member of the SAI Representative Council and represent SAI at two national meetings each year. This appointment is to complete the final year of an unexpired term and for the consecutive three-year term.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please send a letter or e-mail (troyce@sai-iowa.org) expressing your interest to Dr. Troyce Fisher by May 31, 2003.

Retiring Members

"Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile."
--Albert Einstein

SAI wishes to salute our colleagues and friends who are retiring from school administration this year. Your commitment to improving the lives of Iowa's young people and the adults who serve them is a model for living a life of integrity. We wish you the very best in your chosen next endeavors, and want you to know that SAI will always remember your many contributions to education.

SAI Dues for 2003-04

School Administrators of Iowa's policy is to set dues based on .005 percent of the average salary for all administrators for the previous year.

That figure is \$362 for dues effective September 1, 2003-August 31, 2004. Watch your mail for membership forms in mid-May or you may join online at <http://www.sai-iowa.org/joinsai.html>.

Other dues amounts for 2003-04 are:

- SAI Associate Member - \$125
- SAI Aspiring Member - \$70
- NAESP Active Member - \$195
- NASSP Active Member - \$210
- AASA Active Member - \$319

SAI Executive Committee Meets

In their April meeting, Executive Committee gave the go ahead to refinance the mortgage again to a rate of 4.5 percent; reviewed membership data by district; approved SAI dues for next year at \$362 for a regular membership; reviewed evaluations from recent SAI workshops; reviewed progress in planning framework goals via the program reports from staff; and discussed progress in the development of a corporate partners program for SAI. The "Learning Together" segment addressed implementation of the new principal evaluation instrument and services to offer during the pilot implementation stage.

SAI Refinances Mortgage

With the approval of SAI's Executive Committee, the mortgage to the SAI building was refinanced at a rate of 4.5%, down from 5.25% which was the refinanced rate SAI secured earlier this year. SAI's building will now be paid in full by October 23, 2007.

Hometown Schools Conference

Monday, June 16, 2003, State Historical Building, 600 E Locust, Des Moines, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The purpose of the conference is to provide information to school superintendents, school board members, architects, engineers and preservationists on how to:

- preserve and maintain historic schools as schools;
- find new uses for old schools;
- understand the role of the State Historical Society of Iowa in the use of federal grant monies for education options and decision points on the value of historic buildings; and
- provide a quality environment which meets educational needs for the 21st Century.

Conference registration is \$50 (\$20 discount for non-profit organizations).

Additional information and registration will be available online at <http://www.aiaiowa.org> or call the AIA Iowa office at 515-244-7502 after May 5.

Upcoming
sai Events
DERU credit is available for workshops and labs.

JUNE

24-26 - Effective Schools Conference, "Leadership in a Time of Accountability," Village East Resort, Okoboji

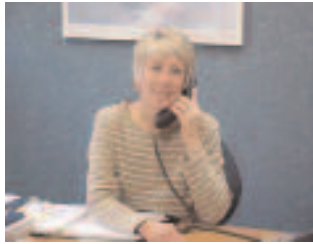
AUGUST

5 - Pre-Conference for Curriculum Director/Administrator Teams

5 - New Administrators Institute, Polk County Convention Complex, Des Moines

5 - SAI Awards Banquet, Downtown Marriott, Des Moines

6-7 SAI Annual Conference, Polk County Convention Complex, Des Moines



Dress Codes for Teachers: What Does the Law Say?

I am frequently asked about dress codes for teachers. I'm not surprised. I spend an occasional hour or two tap-dancing (aka "in-service" presentations) for school staff around the state, and have done so for over 18 years. I've watched the erosion of formality over time, from "formal" (suits or sport coats and ties for men, with dress shoes; dresses or suits, including pant suits, for women, with heels or flats) to "informal" (button-down collared shirts or sweaters and slacks for men, with loafers; skirts and blouses or sweaters for women, with flats or loafers), to "casual" (slacks, shorts, polo or golf shirts for men and women; sandals or tennis shoes), to downright sloppy (jeans or sweat suits and tennis shoes for both sexes).

It bothers me as much as it bothers some of you.

The case law is interesting. It is also very old. My intern and I found four cases involving teachers and some aspect of grooming or dress. The most recent one is from 1982. I believe, however, that the judicial analysis used in these cases is still valid and would continue to be applied in the event of a challenge. Let's look at these opinions.

In a 1974 decision by the Seventh Circuit, the court heard from a middle school math teacher who had a VanDyke beard and sideburns. He was terminated from employment for no fewer than nine reasons: difficulty in relating to pupils; difficulty in relating to parents; students unable to understand your explanations and assignments; weak in classroom control; performed personal work during class time; inadequate in maintaining students' attention; inadequate motivation of pupils; mastery of subject matter by class less than capability of class; improvement in above weaknesses not sufficient for granting of tenure. But Mr. Miller thought that he had been fired because of his beard and sideburns, so he sued. The court said there was no evidence that such had been the motive of the district, but even if it had, there was no due process violation. (Mr. Miller had argued that an individual's choice of appearance is a "liberty"

interest, and thus protected by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, which guarantee that government may not deprive any person of "life, liberty, or property" without due process of law.)

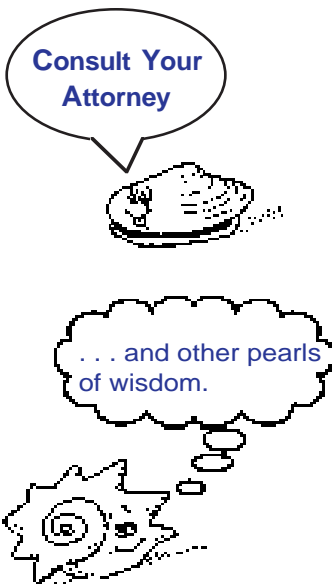
"Logically, one might argue that no significance should be attached to the appearance of a public official -- a pilot should be able to land an airplane as well in dirty overalls as in a neat uniform, and a teacher should be able to explain the Pythagorean theorem as well in a t-shirt as in a three-piece suit -- but the public's reaction to an official, and a student's reaction to his teacher, is undoubtedly affected by the image he projects.

If a school board should correctly conclude that a teacher's style of dress or plumage has an adverse impact on the educational process, and if that conclusion conflicts with the teacher's interest in selecting his own life style, we have no doubt that the interest of the teacher is subordinate to the public interest."

Mr. Miller's suit failed. P.S. The guy who wrote that decision went on to become a U.S. Supreme Court justice (John Paul Stevens).

A teacher of English and filmmaking was reprimanded in 1972 for failing to wear a tie while teaching his English class. He made (as they say) a federal case of it. The dress code of the East Hartford, Conn., school district that was applied to teachers required that attire be reflective of the professional position of the employee, commonly acceptable in the working community, and exemplary for the students. The written policy also stated specifically that "clothing should be appropriate to the assignment of the employee, such as slacks and jersey for gym teachers. In most circumstances, the application of the above criteria to classroom teachers would call for jacket, shirt and tie for men and dress, skirts, blouses and pantsuits for women." It also had a provision allowing for exceptions: "If an individual teacher feels that informal clothing such as sportswear would be appropriate to his or her teaching assignment, or would enable him or her to carry out assigned duties more effectively, such requests may be brought to the attention of the Principal or Superintendent."

Mr. Richard Brimley was given permission to go tie-less in teaching filmmaking, but not in teaching English. When he bucked the



establishment, he was given a reprimand. He grieved the reprimand all the way to arbitration. (P.S. The Arbitrator was none other than Archibald Cox, who soon became a national figure when he was appointed Special Prosecutor to argue the public nature of the Nixon tapes. Just a little side history lesson again.) Prof. Cox concluded that there was nothing in the master contract dealing with dress codes, so Brimley's grievance failed as not being covered by the collective bargaining agreement. (We forget sometimes that not all management decisions are grievable; the grievant has to be able to allege a violation of the master contract. Things like dress codes are seldom in the CBA—for good reason!)

Mr. Brimley lost his federal suit. Presumably he didn't lose his tie from then on. The Second Circuit determined that the school board's right to impose reasonable regulations governing the appearance of its teachers outweighed any First Amendment (freedom of expression) or Fourteenth Amendment (liberty) interests of the teacher.

Twenty-five year-old French teacher Claudette Tardif (not to be confused with Tart-ish) wore her skirts too short to please her 30-year veteran department chair, Mme. Proulx, who made her displeasure well known to the young and untenured teacher. The Harper Valley School Board (just kidding!) terminated her employment, and in doing so gave her four good reasons for it: (1) lack of interest in professional growth, (2) insufficient participation in school activities, (3) unwillingness to work with students after school, and (4) poor image. When she appealed the loss of her job to court, the district judge found that she had failed to meet her contractual requirements with respect to taking outside courses for credit (item #1, presumably), and upheld her termination on that ground alone. She appealed that decision, and the First Circuit was forced to address the issue of whether she was terminated, as the judge wrote, "only because of her 'image,' in particular that it was over-exposed." (See? I'm not the only lawyer with a sense of humor!)

Ms. Tardif didn't claim her First Amendment freedom of expression had been violated; she relied on the old Fourteenth's "liberty interest" again. She lost. The Court wrote, "Whatever constitutional aspect there may be to one's choice of apparel generally, it is hardly a matter which falls totally beyond the scope of the demands which an employer, public or private, can legitimately make upon its employees." The Court left open the door for future dress code suits if the teacher could show the rule was "so irrational as to demon-

strate lack of good faith." But clearly, they found that if any hint that the termination of this teacher was made on the basis of her skirt length, they couldn't say that motivation was not a legitimate school concern.

The last case Rocky Robbins and I found was from 1982 and involved a Louisiana school board that applied its student dress code rule (no beards) to all of its employees. Violators would be subject to "harsh discipline or termination." Tenured, bearded teachers and bus drivers filed suit, seeking a declaration that the rule violated their constitutional rights. The district court concluded they had no constitutional right to wear a beard, and the school employees appealed. The Fifth Circuit concluded that although there is a constitutional liberty interest in the freedom to choose one's own hairstyle (shouldn't that be "facial hair" style?), the board's rule was a "reasonable means of furthering the district's undeniable interest in teaching hygiene, instilling discipline, asserting authority and compelling uniformity" and was therefore valid. I would not recommend using some of those phrases if you are contemplating adoption of a school dress code. It worked in Louisiana in 1982; don't push their luck.

In an article in the February (03) issue of *The School Administrator*, three different school districts' staff dress codes were excerpted, and phone numbers or web sites were given for five others. Obviously, this is not a problem exclusive to Iowa. An excellent piece appeared in the *AASA* magazine this winter, also. The site for that is http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/2003_02/sternberg.htm. The advice in that piece is particularly valuable, as each superintendent talked about the process for reaching an agreement with the teachers on a dress code, even though the topic wasn't part of formal bargaining.

For those of you utilizing an interest-based approach to decision making in your districts, or who have a problem-solving committee, that's probably the best place to start. Identify the problem; typically it only involves a handful of teachers who want to push the issue by dressing poorly. If we can solve the problem without adopting a dress code, let's do it! If we have to resort to rules, sitting down and making the rules together is probably a good bet. If you do it right, the cases discussed above indicate you're likely to win in court if you're challenged.

The article, *Consult Your Attorney*, is intended only as a reference in regard to the subject matter covered. It is furnished with the understanding that SAI is not engaged in rendering legal advice. If a legal opinion is desired, private legal counsel should be consulted.

Sample Districts' Teacher Dress Policies

Contact information on obtaining copies of policies.

- Goose Creek Consolidated School District, Baytown, Texas
Call 281-420-4842 or contact Supt. Barbara Sultis at bsultis@goosecreek.cisd.esc4.net.

- Denver Public Schools
Visit the Web site <http://www.dpsk12.org> under personnel policies.

- Wake County Public Schools, Raleigh, N.C.
Go to the district's Web site (<http://www.wcps.net>) under policies.

- Colorado Springs District 11. Click on "search" function at <http://www.cssd11.k12.co.us>.

- Erlanger-Elsmere School District, Erlanger, Ky. Call Superintendent Michael Sander at 859-727-2009.

- Placentia-Yorba Linda School District, Placentia, Ca. Call Superintendent Dennis Smith at 714-985-8400.

- Sayreville Public Schools, Sayreville, NJ. Call Superintendent Dennis Fyffe at 732-525-5200.

- Santa Ana Unified School District, Santa Ana, Ca. Call the public information office at 714-558-5555.

Speaking from Experience

Five Administrators of the Year were given eight questions and were requested to answer three. Their responses follow.

In Memoriam

Orville Frazier, former superintendent, Harlan, and president of Iowa Association of School Administrators in 1976. (4-12-03)

Don Cleveland, former high school principal and superintendent, Belmond. (4-20-03)

Larry Parr, former high school principal, Ankeny. (4-23-03)

Don Ortman

What books or ideas have most significantly impacted your outlook as an administrator? Ken Blanchard's books have always been a favorite of mine. They are quick reads and motivating. They will make you GUNG HO about your job, your staff will be giving their coworkers HIGH FIVES!, and the community will be your RAVING FANS. Reggie Routman, Steven Covey, Harry Wong, and Sharon Draper are some of my other favorite authors.

What important leadership behaviors have you learned from mentors you've had over the years? Phil Rink, Jay Hoogeveen, and Betty Johnston, my administrators at Griswold, always promoted the positive and made all decisions in the best interest of students.

Dennis Mozer, my current superintendent, allows me to run my building and make decisions based on the district's mission and beliefs. His door is always open for support and he reels me in for critical advice when I need it.

AEA 4 Elementary Principal Cadre meets bimonthly and serves as outstanding role models and resources committed to helping teachers and students succeed. Meeting with them is great for my mental health too.

My life experience with my father, Lee Ortman, who was an Iowa administrator for 29 years and is currently in his 39th year as a school superintendent is the best role model I could have ever wished for. He taught me the power of hard work and ethical leadership. His endless commitment to education and serving others has been my inspiration as a school administrator and person.

What is one strategy/practice you've helped implement that has had a positive impact on school culture? The Character Counts program ties in nicely to our school beliefs, mission, and my personal philosophy of working with others and teamwork. It has provided a common language, focus, and expectation for students, staff, parents and the community on how we treat each other and work together.

Duane T. Frick

What important leadership behaviors have you learned from mentors you've had over the years? I have been fortunate both to work for and work with some very positive mentors. The greatest gift they provided was an environment of "trust" but "accountability." Each principal, upon assuming the role, brings to it (or should) a belief system that encapsulates his or her understanding of the principalship and his or her sense of what is important in terms of administrative behavior, leadership, schools and schooling. These principles did not change much for me over the years. The challenge is to be able to convey a dependable organizational structure. This ability is a necessary precondition to all other work.

What are three of your core, fundamental beliefs that drive your day-to-day decision-making? The longer I am in this position, the more I am convinced that core beliefs are fundamental to all decision making. Narrowing this response to three core beliefs is difficult, but the three that rise to the top include 1. school improvement is fundamentally and primarily people improvement; 2. expectations influence accomplishments; and 3. diversity strengthens. Core beliefs focused clearly on our core business of providing a quality education for all students will result in a positive decision making process.

What is the legacy you most want to leave at the end of your career? I think all of us would like to be remembered as "making a difference in the lives of the students entrusted to our care." Ultimately, I most definitely would like to be remembered as a leader that was effective – made a difference in the organization – and affective – made a difference in the lives of those with whom I had contact.

Jerry Stephens

What books or ideas have most significantly impacted your outlook as an administrator? Stephen Covey's book "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" has been an inspiration to me. Habit 5, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood," has been a guiding principle for me.

What important leadership behaviors have you learned from mentors you've had over the years? My mentors have taught me to treat everyone with respect and to remain calm in all situations.

What is the legacy you most want to leave at the end of your career? The following quote best relates how I feel, "A hundred years from now... it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove... but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child," (author undetermined). We can each make a difference and we can alter the face of the world by what we do each and every day.

Ed Redalen

What books or ideas have most significantly impacted your outlook as an administrator?

Writers and ideas shared by others that center on an optimistic view of people have helped me the most personally and professionally. This psychological base is proactive and present future oriented. Victor Frankl in Man's Search for Meaning best explains this orientation: "It is the peculiarity of man that you can only live today for something significant yet to do." Further: "It does not really matter what we expect from life, but rather what life expects of us."

What important leadership behaviors have you learned from mentors you've had over the years? From mentors and from study, I have learned about four key behaviors that I work to internalize. They include: 1) Make known to staff and others what is important including why we exist, our core beliefs, values, and responsibilities; 2) Model thinking and doing behaviors consistent with what is important; 3) Provide staff with feedback, encouragement, and correction (when needed) relative to what is important; and 4) Build consensus on those decisions and actions that the staff ultimately will carry out.

What are three of your core, fundamental beliefs that drive your day-to-day decision-making?

- We all have a responsibility to develop and maintain a psychologically healthy work environment and maintain high standards of core competencies.
- The work of the Area Education Agency system begins and ends with our school communities -- they are our customers.
- Relationship building forms the basis of our work; leadership and service evolves from it.

Michael O'Leary

What important leadership behaviors have you learned from mentors you've had over the years? Listen before reacting. Be proactive. Try to find the positive aspects of any event. Network with other administrators to gain experience and support. Be respectful.

What is one strategy/practice you've helped implement that has had a positive impact on school culture? I believe that I should be available at any time of the day to deal with issues as they arise. I am very involved with students and faculty and spend little time in my office. I encourage parents to call me at school or at my home whenever they have a concern.

What is the legacy you most want to leave at the end of your career? I have gone out of my way to help disadvantaged students and their families whenever I can see a need or opportunity. I make numerous home visits throughout the school year and during the summer months. I know my students and their families well and work hard to maintain relationships with them.

Okoboji Effective Schools Conference *Leadership in a Time of Accountability*

SAI, Iowa ASCD, and the DE are pleased to present the **Effective Schools Conference, Leadership in a Time of Accountability**, June 24-26.

This conference is one-of-a-kind for many reasons. You'll work directly with a nationally-recognized leader in school leadership, Dr. Thomas Sergiovanni. You'll also learn from people implementing best practices right here in Iowa, a team from Ballard Community Schools and Brenda Colby from the Department of Ed. You'll enjoy over two days in a resort environment, with a golf course out the back door and a lake around the corner at Village East in Okoboji.

Bring a team to explore a practical yet powerful perspective on why so many popular organizational theories just don't work for schools. Dr. Sergiovanni's alternative vision of schools as caring, intimate places built on mutual respect, civic responsibility, and shared purposes gets to the heart of excellence in education. Bring your family and enjoy the relaxing atmosphere.



The Iowa School
Public Relations
Association

a series of monthly
articles from school
PR professionals

For more information
about the articles or
ISPRA, call Steve Jones
at (515) 270-9030.

Provide Recognition for Teachers and Board Members

**Teacher
Appreciation
Week**
May 5-10

**School Board
Recognition
Week**
May 11-17

sai REPORT

The SAI Report is published for association members and selected community and business leaders by School Administrators of Iowa.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

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Promoting Education in Iowa

Junior high undertakes ambitious School Improvement Plan

by Marti Kline, Community Relations Coordinator, Southeast Polk Community Schools

In its continuing quest to improve student achievement, reduce bullying and student conflict, and accommodate growth in the school district, Southeast Polk Junior High embarked this year on an ambitious School Improvement Plan.

Solid research on middle level education indicates optimal learning occurs when teaching groups have fewer than 120 students. To reduce class sizes with more students coming through the junior high, this year the seventh-grade added a third team, and next year both grades will have three teams. Each team includes the following teacher combination: one each of English, social studies, math, science, Level I special education, and an exploratory teacher.

Core classes run 42 minutes on "A" days and 61 minutes on "B" days. P.E. is offered on alternating days. Alternating P.E. days is the primary difference between a team's "A" and "B" day schedule. All students take either band, chorus, or a fine arts course, and all students have a "study table" time every other day, with core teachers available to assist with individual and/or small group support and remediation. Half of a team of students has P.E. one period while the other half of the team is in study table. All students from a team have their music class during the same period.

The School Improvement model improves the student:teacher ratio to approximately 20:1, besides increasing core staff interaction with students during study table. It also allows Level I students and staff time to address IEP monitoring and timely academic review. During study table time, students also have time for gifted education activities and contact with counselors, prevention specialists, and at-risk programs.

Exploratory classes include Family and Consumer Science, Industrial Technology, Modern Languages, Art, Computer Applications, and Health. Each is taken for 12 weeks once during the two years of junior high. Speech is integrated into the core curriculum across the disciplines.

"Team time" allows teachers to collaborate one period every other day, when they can plan interdisciplinary units, contact parents, and discuss individual or group student needs. Teachers share a common planning period each day, as well. A Dimensions of Learning/Literacy coach has been added to each grade level. The DoL/Literacy coach is a collaborative teacher who works with all subject areas to assist with implementation of research-based instructional strategies. A major emphasis is to implement effective literacy instruction across all content subject areas. The DoL/Literacy coach provides direct

student instruction through collaboration with content area teachers, and professional growth support for teachers.

The fine arts course required for students who do not participate in band or chorus offers units that include African drumming, readers' theater, folk dancing, guitar, hand chimes, American musical theater, and the physics of sound in music. Besides being fun, learning these skills and playing these instruments teaches community and teamwork, as well as independence within a team or community.

Scheduling retains the popular RAP program, a 20-minute, home-room advisory class each morning to start the day. Students stay with the same RAP teacher all year, and the groups use the opportunity to discuss ways to improve the school environment, plan community service learning projects, read for enjoyment, and participate in Character Counts!™ activities, etc.

Since half the students are on "A" day and half are on "B" day, class periods differ in length. One major change involves no bells to signal the end of a class period. Fewer students are in the hallways at any given time, reducing the potential for conflict and harassment. Some class periods are longer, allowing for extended periods for lab-based activities and academic programming.

Additional staff members were needed, initial scheduling was a challenge, and some teachers are more receptive to change than others, but the objectives of improved climate and student achievement are reasons enough to tackle such a bold endeavor. The plan was undertaken only after extensive analysis, staff surveys, review of district goals, study of research and best practices, and review of model programs in other districts. Limitations were analyzed realistically, and flexibility was built in to accommodate fine-tuning. Decisions were made based on student needs, as opposed to adult preferences.

Hallways are quieter, discipline referrals are down 30 percent, and the fine arts alternative is a smashing success with the students. Spring 2003 ITBS scores are up appreciably in reading, math and science. It is a little early to tell what the long-term student achievement effect will be, but the study table and greater emphasis on literacy skills in all curricular areas appears to be improving academic results already.

SAI Annual Conference, Aug. 6 & 7

***Making Schools Brain Compatible* featuring Dr. David Sousa**

Dr. David A. Sousa is an international educational consultant and author of *The Leadership Brain: How to Lead Today's Schools More Effectively*; *How the Brain Learns, Second Edition*; *How the Special Needs Brain Learns*, and *How the Gifted Brain Learns*. A popular presenter at previous SAI conferences, he has conducted workshops in hundreds of school districts on brain research, brain based learning, instructional skills, supervision, and science education at the elementary, secondary, and university levels.

Dr. Sousa has a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Massachusetts State College at Bridgewater, a Master of Arts in Teaching degree in science from Harvard University, and a doctorate from Rutgers University. His teaching experience covers all levels. He has taught junior and senior high school science, served as a K-12 director of science, and as Supervisor of Instruction for the West Orange, NJ, schools. He then became superintendent of the New Providence, NJ, public schools. He has been an adjunct professor of education at Seton Hall University and a visiting lecturer at Rutgers University.

Dr. Sousa was president of the National Staff Development Council in 1992. He is listed in *Who's Who in the East* and *Who's Who in American Education* and has received awards from professional associations and school districts for his commitment to research, staff development and science education.

***Student Achievement and Students' Sense of Community* featuring Dr. Eric Schaps**

Eric Schaps is founder and president of the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland, Calif. Established in 1980, DSC specializes in designing educational programs and evaluating their effects on children's academic, ethical, social and emotional development. The Center has a full-time staff of 60; its work has been supported by 40 philanthropic foundations and governmental agencies; its in-school and after-school programs have been recognized as exemplary in a number of governmental and other program effectiveness reviews.

Dr. Schaps is the author of three books and over 60 book chapters and articles on school change, character education, and preventing problem behaviors. He has served as board president of the Character Education Partnership in Washington, DC, and currently serves on several boards including the education advisory board of Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

August 5 Pre-Conference with Dr. Lee Jenkins

Lee Jenkins is a dynamic presenter who helps educators move beyond frustrations around data collection to the real reasons we collect data.

By giving 10 specific examples of how to move beyond barriers to data collection, he makes the connection between data and student achievement come alive. His Web site is named "L' to "J," for the ways schools can help all kids achieve, not leave some in the bell curve. Because administrators help to make things happen, and curriculum directors focus on what should happen for kids, it will be a valuable experience to have district teams hearing Dr. Jenkins' message at the same time.

He has had a distinguished career as a teacher, principal, university professor, curriculum director and superintendent of schools. During his professional career which spans more than three decades, his focus has always centered upon creative and yet practical ways to improve student learning. Lee applied the management concepts and practices of Dr. W. Edwards Deming among his staff which led him to write a book titled, *Improving Student Learning: Applying Deming's Quality Principles in Classrooms*. Lee is now devoting his entire professional energies toward helping school administrators and teachers apply these principles in their schools.



School Administrators of Iowa is a statewide professional organization serving all of Iowa's educational administrators. SAI is incorporated under the nonprofit organization laws of Iowa and has received a 501(c)(6) classification from the Internal Revenue Service. Payments to SAI are not tax deductible as charitable contributions; however, membership dues and workshop fees may be tax deductible as business expenses depending on each individual's tax status. SAI estimates that the nondeductible portion of 2002-2003 dues allocable to lobbying is 10%.

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