

The Pennsylvania **ADMINISTRATOR**

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- 
- ✓ ***Meet Your New President...
Dr. Maureen Letcher - Pages 3-5***
 - ✓ ***Bring Your Administrative Team
to SUMMIT23! - Pages 9-10***

***PLUS...2023 Assistant Principal of the Year,
RSS ROUNDUP & Legal Corner***

Magazine of the Pennsylvania
Principals Association

WINTER 2023

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Editor's Note ...

It is difficult to believe that the school year is more than half over and spring is just around the corner. We know this is a busy time for principals and education leaders, with testing, spring activities and athletics, as well as end-of-the-school-year events, on the horizon. *And, we are here for you!* The PA Principals Association continues to advocate on your behalf, provide support and guidance and develop and facilitate valuable professional development opportunities for members. We are currently gearing up for **Summit23**, which is being held from **August 6-8, 2023, in King of Prussia**. (See pages 9-10 for more information and how to register.) Summit23 will take the place of our fall LEAD Conference. The summer PA Educational Leadership Summit and our LEAD Conference have merged and will continue to provide high-quality professional development pertaining to principals, assistant principals and other education leaders. Summit23 is being hosted jointly with the PA Association for School Administrators (PASA) and **administrative teams are highly encouraged to attend!**



Check out the many interesting articles in this issue with topics such as SMART Mentoring, Pathways to Success, School Climate, Student Health and Safety, just to name a few. If you are interested in submitting an article for the spring theme edition, please see page 44. The theme is **“Creative Solutions to Current Issues in Education.”**

Enjoy this issue!

Sheri L. Thompson, Editor

DATES TO REMEMBER

July 2023

10-12 2023 NAESP Pre-K-8 Principals Conference
Gaylord National Resort &
Convention Center
National Harbor, Maryland

20-23 IGNITE23 - NASSP School Leader Conference
Gaylord Rockies Resort &
Convention Center
Denver, Colorado

August 2023

6-8 SUMMIT23 - For PA Education Leaders
Alloy King of Prussia & Upper
Merion Area High School
King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

ARTICLES SOUGHT FOR SPRING THEME EDITION

See page 44 for information regarding
The Pennsylvania Administrator magazine's
spring theme issue:

**“Creative Solutions to Current Issues
in Education.”**

The Pennsylvania ADMINISTRATOR

Volume 27 • Number 1 • Winter 2023

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This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is printed with the understanding that the association is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional services through the publication. If legal or other professional services are required, Pennsylvania Principals Association members should contact the state office or the services of other competent professionals. Printed in the U.S.A. *Postmaster:* Send address changes to Pennsylvania Administrator, 122 Valley Road, Enola, PA 17025. Copyright 2006 by the Pennsylvania Principals Association.



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SPECIAL FEATURES

- 3-5** *Meet Your New President... Dr. Maureen D. Letcher*
- 9-10** *Bring Your Administrative Team to SUMMIT23!*
- 11** *Sandra L. Means Selected as 2023 Robert E. Lavelly Assistant Principal of the Year*
- 15-16, 19** *Cursive Writing Unlocks Ancestry: Project-Based Local History*
- 17-19** *Student Health and Wellness*
- 21-23** *Pathways to Success at Garden Spot High School*
- 25-26, 28** *Students Guiding Students: A Self-Reflective SMART Mentoring Program*
- 27-28** *2023 Lift: Building a Positive School Climate, Together*
- 30-31, 33** *Home Visits – Making an I'MPACT*
- 33** *Submit a Review for Magazine Feature...READERS FOR LEADERS*
- 35-36** *School Safety After the Bell Rings*
- 37-39** *What ESL Teachers Wish Principals Knew*
- 44** *Submit an Article for The Pennsylvania Administrator: Spring 2023 THEME Edition*

REGULAR FEATURES

- 6-7** **Executive Director's Notepad...**
The Difference 62 Years Makes
Dr. Eric C. Eshbach
- 8** **RSS ROUNDUP**
"Phone a Friend": The Importance of Connecting with a Colleague
Regional Service Specialists
- 12-13** **From the Desk of the Assistant Executive Director**
THE LINCHPIN
Dr. Michael S. Snell
- 20, 23** **One Member's Voice**
Back to Basics with Helping Children Post-COVID
Dr. Thomas Krout
- 24** **Welcome NEW Elementary Members**
- 32-33** **Welcome NEW Secondary Members**
- 40-44** **Legal Corner**
The Principal's Place in the Culture Wars – General, Private or Spectator?
Michael I. Levin, Esquire

OUR ADVERTISERS

- IFC** Horace Mann Companies
- 7** PIL Offering: Transforming Student and Teacher Learning through the EdCamp Model
- 13** PIL Offering: Improving Leadership and Student Learning Through Simulations
- 14** PIL Offering: PA Principals Association Micro-Credential Courses
- 29** Lincoln Investment Planning, LLC
- 34** Kades-Margolis Corporation
- 39** Two New Act 45 Courses - Earn 30 PIL Hours Each!
- IBC** Lifetouch National School Studios
- BC** Bring Your Administrative Team to SUMMIT23!



Meet Your New President... Dr. Maureen D. Letcher



Dr. Robert Gildea (left), Superintendent of Hollidaysburg Area School District, and Dr. Maureen Letcher (right) receiving the National Blue Ribbon School (NBRSS) Award at the National Recognition Ceremony, November 2022, in Washington, D.C. Also pictured is Aba Kumi, Director of the NBRSS program, U.S. Department of Education.



Dr. Maureen D. Letcher

Maureen D. Letcher, D.Ed., Principal of Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School in the Hollidaysburg Area School District is the 2022-2023 President of the Pennsylvania Principals Association. Recently, Dr. Letcher provided her thoughts regarding the association and other important topics related to the principalship. The questions and her responses appear below and on the following pages.

Q: What are your goals as president of the Pennsylvania Principals Association?

A: *I am honored to serve as the PA Principals Association's president. Part of my role is to work with the PA Principals to advocate for the work we do as the pillars of our buildings. As we go through our days, it is important to have a network of people who can be relied upon to ask questions, provide advice or just be a sounding board. I want to make sure that all principals feel that they have a support system in place that they feel at ease contacting.*

Q: Where do you see the PA Principals Association in two years following your presidency? Is there anything that you'd like to leave as your legacy?

A: *The PA Principals Association has been in excellent hands with the past presidents. I truly believe in the need for collaboration and support among principals across the state. In each region, it is important to know your representative and feel comfortable asking questions, seeking advice, or just having a listening ear.*

Q: Why do you believe it is a benefit for principals and other educational leaders to become a member of the PA Principals Association?

A: *There are a number of benefits to being a member of the PA Principals Association ranging from legal support, to professional development, to networking, to legislative updates, to finding a group of like peers upon whom you can rely. In a job where one can sometimes feel alone on an island, belonging to a group that can support, relate to and understand all aspects of your job is one of the most important aspects of being a member.*

Q: What advice do you have for those new (or aspiring) to the principalship?

A: When you first start out, find a mentor. This person may or may not be a mentor in name, but find someone you trust, who has experience and with whom you feel comfortable. There is no room in this job for an ego, and you need to be able to admit that you are wrong because you will make mistakes. Learn from your mistakes and move forward in a more knowledgeable way.

Q: What are some issues that you feel are or should be important to principals and education leaders in Pennsylvania?

A: One of the major issues we all are experiencing is the teacher shortage. This not only has made our jobs as administrators more difficult, but it has also increased the load for teachers who have to cover for others and sometimes teach more than one class at a time. Through this issue, we need to focus on morale for our faculty, our students and our community. Being the most positive person in your building is important for success.

“ I am honored to represent the amazing principals and assistant principals across Pennsylvania. During my term, I will advocate for our members. I will do all I can to implement a support system for principals and assistant principals, and I will ensure that they feel valued, for it is the roles that they play in our districts that have made and will continue to make the education system in Pennsylvania one of the best that this country has to offer.”



Pictured above, from left to right: Maureen with her sons, Maxwell (17) and Mitchell (15).

Dr. Maureen Letcher became the 2022-24 President of the PA Principals Association when the ‘gavel was passed’ to her by Dr. Jonathan Ross, the 2020-22 President, during the annual business meeting at the LEAD22 Conference in October.

Maureen with the recipients of the Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School Principal Award.

Q: How do you see public education evolving in our post-pandemic world?

What lessons have been learned?

A: *In our post-pandemic world, we have learned we can do it... "IT" being just about anything. The word "resilient" was continuously used when describing the students and the educators during the pandemic. Educators were adaptable, flexible and outside-of-the-box-thinkers. Technology use went beyond what we ever thought possible. Educational settings were different from anything we have experienced as teachers thought outside of the box to conduct class virtually: online labs were taught, and breakout rooms were used. We utilized every online method of teaching available, and we were successful. Additionally, we continue to use these types of resources to enhance our once traditional classrooms.*



Maureen accompanied the Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School band on their trip to Disney World where the band, chorus and orchestra performed.

ABOUT YOUR PRESIDENT

Maureen D. Letcher, D.Ed., Principal of Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School in the Hollidaysburg Area School District, is the **2022-2024 President of the Pennsylvania Principals Association**. She has been a member of the association for 22 years.

Dr. Letcher has served in her current role as principal at Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School since 2013, and as assistant principal at Hollidaysburg Area Junior High School from 2009-2013. During her tenure as a principal, she has worked in a small rural school (a 7th to 12th-grade building), in a traditional junior high school (grades 7,8,9) and in a senior high school (grades 10, 11, 12). She began her career in education as an English teacher in the Williamsburg Community School District and also served as a dual enrollment English teacher for college speech and freshman composition at Allegheny College/Williamsburg School District.

Dr. Letcher most recently held the position of PA Principals Association President-Elect. She served on the PA Principals Board of Directors as the Central III Secondary Regional Representative from 2018-2019. She is a member of the Blair County Principals Association and has served as its chair since 2001. She is also a member of the Hollidaysburg Rotary Club, the Blair County Chamber of Commerce and is a graduate of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class of 2017. In addition, Dr. Letcher serves on the Board of Directors for the Hollidaysburg Community Partnership as well as on the Board of Directors for the Women's Caucus of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA).

Dr. Letcher earned a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education English with a minor in political science from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. She received a Master of Science in Secondary Guidance Counseling, her Principal Certification and a Doctorate in Administrative Leadership from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

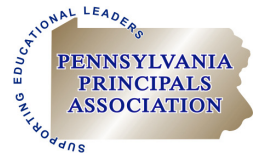
Dr. Letcher is the mother of two boys, Maxwell Baronner (17), and Mitchell Baronner (15). She has been married to Richard Baronner for 23 years. They reside in Duncansville, Pennsylvania.

Dr. Letcher may be reached at maureen.letcher@hasdtigers.com

Follow her on Twitter at [@mletcher1](https://twitter.com/mletcher1)

Executive Director's Notepad . . .

The Difference 62 Years Makes



**By Dr. Eric C. Eshbach,
PA Principals
Association
Executive
Director**

Recently, I was going through some of my late father-in-law's "treasures." He tended to hoard things, and the saying, "one man's trash is another man's treasure," came to mind quite often as I wondered, "why in the world would he have kept this stuff?" One of his "treasures" was a full page from the *York Sunday News*, dated February 12, 1961. I understood his rationale for keeping this section of the newspaper, as it included an article about the grist mill his grandfather owned and operated since the early 1900s. What caught my attention, however, were the articles on the other side of the page. In large print at the top of the page was the headline, "Principals Told to Eliminate Grade Levels," and the subtitle read, "Educator Says Students Should Progress According to Abilities" (Hodenfield, 1961, p.38). The article summarized a speech given by B. Frank Brown to the annual conference of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in Detroit. In his, no doubt, controversial speech, Brown, the principal of the nation's only ungraded high school at that time, told attendees at the conference that traditional grade levels from first through 12th grade should be abandoned and students should be allowed to "race ahead or plod along according to their individual abilities" (Hodenfield, 1961, p.38). Brown informed the crowd of examples of students in his high school who had taken college-level calculus at the same time as a remedial English course. He concluded by stating that the only casualty in the ungraded high school system would most likely be varsity athletics, which in his view, probably would not exist in the future because it wouldn't meet the needs of this new school view (Hodenfield, 1961, p.38). I admit that I laughed at this because high school athletics has not diminished in any way, shape or form. If it had, many of you who are high school principals and assistant principals would have a great deal more time to yourselves!



On the opposite side of that *York Sunday News* page was the article, "Grade Schools Get Science Course" (1961). It outlined how the Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction (the predecessor of the Pennsylvania Department of Education) was designing a course and distributing books to teachers on Earth Science that kindergartners could understand. While some had suggested that Earth Science was too advanced for young minds, Dr. Paul Glatzert, Director of the Bureau of Curriculum Services, reminded the reader that children were "playing with research" all the time (Grade Schools Get Science Course, 1961). He suggested that while some think the concept of inertia is too complex for the five-year-old learner, "What child does not know how to play marbles? So, what child couldn't grasp the meaning of inertia when a teacher rolls one marble against another?" (Grade Schools Get Science Course, 1961).

While I read these articles 62 years after they were written, the environment in which they were written did not escape me. This was the era of Sputnik and the space race. Every effort was being made to improve the American education system to compete with the Soviets. It didn't take 62 years for the realization of a system where middle school students in the district where I served as superintendent had to cross the parking lot to the high school to take more challenging math classes, or when I, an 11th grader, took chemistry with 10th and 12th graders. It didn't take 62 years for the kindergartners in the school where I served as principal to engage in play-based learning that extended their understanding of science, math, music and reading concepts. When the American education system has been encouraged and motivated by world events, economic need, environmental issues and the latest research on learning or child development, our system has met the challenge.

It also made me wonder what my grandchildren would be reading about the public education system in 2085, 62 years after I wrote this article. Will they snicker at the online articles denouncing character education programs as indoctrination? Will they be thankful that the way reading is taught in 2085 is truly the right way and we can finally put the reading wars behind us? Will they be thankful that science standards and curricula were adopted that ensured students understood the role humans played in harming the environment? Will they wonder what it was like to go to a school building, sit in rows of seats for seven hours a day and wait for a bell to ring indicating it was time to stop learning? No doubt, they will laugh at any suggestion of eliminating athletics in schools as they get ready to compete in the next e-sports league, or, dare I say it, go out to the pickleball court for the next match.

The decisions that are being made in school board meetings, in Harrisburg and in Washington, D.C., will impact my grandchildren. Reuben, Canaan, Maggie and Mara will learn differently than their parents did and in schools that look and operate differently. In 2085, my great-grandchildren will read headlines (most likely online instead of in a hard copy) from 2023. I hope they are as thankful as I am about the decisions and changes that were made and written about in 1961. I hope they can see that 2023 marked positive changes in education policy and legislation allowing our schools to continue to evolve and meet the needs of our children, our communities, our nation, our world, our economy and our environment. I also hope the only thing that causes them to chuckle and shake their heads is that someone believed that high school athletics would one day be a thing of the past.

References

Grade Schools Get Science Course. (1961, February 12). *York Sunday News*.

Hodenfield, G. K. (1961, February 16). Principals Told to Eliminate Grade Levels. *Associated Press. York Sunday News*, p.38.

PA Principals Association is Offering NEW EdCamp Across PA

Transforming Student and Teacher Learning through the EdCamp Model

Qualifies for 40 PIL Hours! 40-Participant Minimum to Hold EdCamp

Cost:

\$99 for PIL hours (*discounted from the standard PIL course cost*); **FREE** to anyone attending for experience only.

Schedule:

8:00 - 8:30 a.m. - PIL Orientation (*for those attending for PIL hours*)

8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - EdCamp

Presenters:

Primary Facilitator/PIL Coursework Coordinator: Dr. Beth Haldeman

Co-Facilitators may include: Dr. Melissa Patschke, Dr. Nicholas Indeglio & Dr. Jonathan Ross

Dr. Haldeman, Dr. Patschke, Dr. Indeglio & Dr. Ross are PA Principals Association Board Members and Practicing Administrators.

PLEASE NOTE: EdCamp can be offered virtually. If you wish to hold it in your district, this is an option. In addition, this new EdCamp would be perfect for a Saturday, a day off school, after school hours or summer inservice.

For more information, such as program requirements or to schedule an EdCamp in your district, please contact Dr. Beth Haldeman, EdCamp Facilitator, at Tabetha_Haldeman@cocalico.org

RSS ROUNDUP

RSS ROUNDUP is written by your Regional Service Specialists (RSS): Dr. Dina Wert, East Region; Susan Martin, Central Region; and Cynthia Zajac, West Region

“Phone a Friend”: The Importance of Connecting with a Colleague

By Dr. Dina G. Wert, East Regional Service Specialist



About the Author: Dr. Dina G. Wert serves the Pennsylvania Principals Association as the Regional Service Specialist for the East Region. She retired as Principal of West Bradford Elementary School in the Downingtown Area School District. Dr. Wert served as an educator for 34 years, retiring with 17 years in the principalship.

She has been a member of the PA Principals Association for 21 years and is a PIL facilitator for the PA Department of Education. In addition, she is a National Distinguished Principal (2013) and has supported both the PA Principals Association and the National Association of Elementary School Principals in various roles.

Have you ever asked an eight-year-old the age-old question, “what do you want to be when you grow up?” who actually answered, “a principal!”? Let’s face it, there is nothing particularly glamorous or glitzy about the principalship (although my son did think that making announcements over the PA system and using the microphone during assemblies was cool). I can think of a plethora of adjectives to describe the daily role of the principal including active, demanding, rewarding, draining, hopeful, intimidating, gratifying, overwhelming, productive...but might I be bold enough to add the word “lonely” to the list? As principals, we often find ourselves stuck like the peanut butter in the middle of the sandwich between central office folk, school board, state/federal mandates, and policy on one half, and our staff, families and students on the other half. That’s a lot of people. And just one of us. Alone. *(insert sigh)*.

I strongly suggest that every practicing principal seek out a mentor, a guide, a confidant, a colleague who also lives, breathes and understands the ins and outs, the ups and downs and the daily surprises that our profession brings. While I live with the love of my life, he is not an administrator, and can’t advise or empathize with the educational, moral, ethical decisions, encounters or issues that we wrestle with as educational leaders each day.

Many years ago, my doctoral research focused on the lack of mentorship opportunities for new principals. Decades(!) later, while professional development experiences for principals have become mandatory for Level I Principals to move to Level II in Pennsylvania, mentorship is not a mandated piece of our PA principal induction program. A recent survey sent to the PA Principals Association membership showed that not only did the overwhelming majority of principals with 0-4 years of experience seek a mentorship opportunity, but a majority of 5+ year experienced principals’ responses indicated they would welcome the chance to support, work with and learn from both new and experienced principals.

Principals (at any level of experience) need a trusted colleague, someone with whom they can ask a question, use as a sounding board, seek advice, reflect, check if they’re “in the ballpark,” share experiences or concerns, vent, laugh, let loose or even cry! When you share that similar experience with someone who “gets it,” you are validated, valued and vindicated. As we intentionally build a culture of belonging for our school family, we need to make sure we are taking care of the unique needs that the principalship bestows upon us. Connect with colleagues through coursework or workshops, PIL work, your (or neighboring) districts, IU-supported principal meetings or PA Principals Association networking opportunities. Make it a habit to touch base via a phone call, text or email and designate a standard time to connect regularly. Reach out to your Regional Representatives or Regional Support Specialists. Use the long drive home (or into work) as a time to chat with a colleague. An authentic and supportive relationship is symbiotic and a healthy practice for both participants!

Who will you ask to be your “go to”? Make it *your mission*...put yourself out there. The principalship can be a lonely job. Don’t be afraid to reach out and ask for or offer to be a mentor. You both will be glad you did!



You may contact your Regional Service Specialist (RSS) at:
Dr. Dina Wert – East Region (I, II, III) – wert@papprincipals.org
Susan Martin – Central Region (I, II, III) – martin@papprincipals.org
Cynthia Zajac – West Region (I, II, III) – zajac@papprincipals.org

Register Today - Up to 110 PIL Hours Available!

Visit this Link to Register:

<https://registration.socio.events/e/pasummit23>

OR

Scan QR Code
to Register:



Attention All PA School Leaders and Administrative Teams!



Dr. Nicholas
Indeglio



Dr. Benjamin
Feeny

The PA Principals Association and the PA Association of School Administrators (PASA) will host a premier professional development opportunity, **SUMMIT23, for PA education leaders, from August 6-8, 2023. Summit23 will be held in fabulous King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, at the new Upper Merion Area High School facility and the Alloy Doubletree by Hilton.**

Do you want to prepare for the 2023-2024 school year and earn much-needed PIL hours at the same time this summer? Well, sit back, relax and enjoy some of the most amazing professional development available today!

On behalf of our entire conference committee, we formally invite you and your administrative team to attend our **SUMMIT23 Conference**. Information about our keynote speakers is provided below, and you and your team will also benefit from numerous breakout sessions, knowledge about the brand-new, state-of-the-art facility in Upper Merion and multiple opportunities to connect with colleagues and vendors. *We look forward to seeing you this summer in King of Prussia!*

The Summit will provide you the opportunity to:

1. Earn PIL hours (Up to 110 hours available - pre-conference and during the conference).
2. Experience a brand-new, state-of-the-art high school campus and facility.
3. Hear from renowned keynote speakers.
4. Participate in the best "trivia game show" in the education field.
5. Enjoy the award-winning King of Prussia area with some of the best shopping and dining in the country.
6. Network and socialize with your peers.

Yours in Education: Dr. Nicholas Indeglio and Dr. Benjamin Feeny, Co-Chairs, SUMMIT23 Conference Committee

FEATURING KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Hamish Brewer

Monday, August 7th Session



Hamish Brewer is a powerful and positive disruptor who transcends the status quo and typical norms in leadership and education. He is a globally recognized advocate who built his reputation on results and performance, becoming affectionately known as *the Relentless, Tattooed Skateboarding Principal* with his galvanizing message to "Be Relentless." Mr. Brewer served as an award-winning principal at both the secondary and elementary school levels. Recognized as the NAESP National Distinguished Principal and Virginia Principal of the Year, he was also honored with the VAESP School Bell Award and ASCD Virginia Impact Award. He was named a Northern Virginian of the year by *Northern Virginia Magazine* and Principal of the Year for the online national publication, *Education Dive*.

Under his leadership, Mr. Brewer's elementary school was recognized as a Nationally Distinguished Title 1 School, and he has since gone on to turn around one of the toughest middle schools in the state of Virginia. He is the best-selling author of "*Relentless - Disrupting the Educational Norm*," published in 2019.

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Dr. Quintin Shepherd

Tuesday, August 8th Session



Dr. Quintin Shepherd, a true visionary for the future of education, is the Superintendent at Victoria Independent School District in Victoria, Texas. When Dr. Shepherd came to Victoria, his first priority was to listen to the voice of the community, parents, staff and students, and he then invited those stakeholders to be a part of shaping the future of the district. He focuses on the practice of compassionate leadership and expressing vulnerability, and he believes that's why

radical transparency works.

Dr. Shepherd brings inspiration, hope and valuable insights about how we can transform the way we lead school districts by modifying our approach to some of the most basic leadership practices, which he shares in his new book: *The Secret to Transformational Leadership*. Within the book, he considers how some leaders are able to connect with their communities, followers and stakeholders while others struggle. This guiding question sets the stage for a discussion on the language of leadership and the need for our language to evolve.

Jennifer Reiger, Upper Merion Area High School teacher and author of *Burning Sage* (a collection of short stories), will speak on Sunday, August 6th, at the Awards Dinner.

PRE-SUMMIT PIL WORKSHOPS: EARN ACT 45 HOURS!

Two Pre-Summit PIL workshops (30 PIL hours each): “*The Team: Building Leadership Success that Improves Student Learning*” and “*Research-Based Instruction, Supervision and Evaluation Strategies to Improve Student Learning*” will be held on **Saturday, August 5, 2023**. You may register for **one** of these **concurrent sessions** for an **additional fee**.

A Pre-Summit PIL workshop, “*Transforming Student and Teacher Learning through the EdCamp Model*,” will be held on **Sunday, August 6, 2023**, also at an **additional cost** to earn **40 PIL hours**.

Earn 40 Act 45 PIL Hours for attending SUMMIT23 and completing the assignments – with a Saturday Pre-Summit Session and Sunday’s EdCamp, you can earn 110 hours!

Why You Should Attend SUMMIT23

- Invest in your professional growth.
- Register as a **TEAM** and **SAVE!**
- Play a part in reshaping and reimagining what school leaders can do to lead reform efforts.
- Earn up to 110 Act 45 PIL Hours!
- Refocus on your role as a school administrator, instructional leader, change agent and advocate for students.
- Learn from nationally recognized, inspirational keynote speakers.
- Participate in face-to-face professional development, networking opportunities & fun!
- Integrate “hot topic” sessions and new practices into your daily workflow.
- Expand your opportunities by interacting with vendors.

Donate AND Receive an EXTRA Ticket for the Diamond Sponsors’ Social Prize Drawing!

A monetary donation will be accepted at the door of the Diamond Sponsors’ Social in support of the UPPER MERION COMMUNITY CUPBOARD. No food items accepted onsite. You will receive one extra prize drawing ticket with your donation or receipt of online donation.

Please visit the following link – <http://umacc.org/> – to learn more about the *Upper Merion Community Cupboard*.

Visit <https://umacc.networkforgood.com/> to make an online donation.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

the Alloy King of Prussia - a Doubletree Hotel

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Assistant Principal of the Year

Sandra L. Means Selected as 2023 Robert E. Lavelly Assistant Principal of the Year



Sandra L. Means, Assistant Principal at McDowell High School in the Millcreek Township School District, has been selected as the **2023 Robert E. Lavelly Assistant Principal of the Year** by the Pennsylvania Principals Association in conjunction with the National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) National Assistant Principal of the Year program. Mrs. Means is also eligible for consideration to be named the National Assistant Principal of the Year.

Mrs. Means has worked in the Millcreek Township School District (MTSD) for 30 years, serving in her current role as the assistant principal at McDowell High School for five years. Previously, she taught eighth-grade English Language Arts for over 20 years. In addition, she taught high school English and Gifted Education.

According to PA Principals Association Executive Director, Dr. Eric C. Eshbach, "Our selection committee has once again identified a talented, enthusiastic and committed educator to represent Pennsylvania as the 2023 Assistant Principal of the Year at the secondary level. The admirable qualities Mrs. Means demonstrates in her dedicated service to the students, staff and the entire McDowell High School community are what we look for in a candidate. I am delighted that Sandra will represent the Pennsylvania Principals Association as our 2023 Assistant Principal of the Year."

Mrs. Means' outstanding leadership and dedication have been demonstrated countless times through her commitment to create and coordinate high-quality learning opportunities at McDowell. Some of these services and programs include the Honors College and Distinctive Scholar Program, the expansion of the Advanced Placement (AP) classes and the implementation of character-building student programs. These opportunities were significant in the creation of a positive, engaged school culture at McDowell High School.

In addition, Mrs. Means spearheaded the development and implementation of the AP Capstone program at McDowell. "My goal with implementing this program was to provide students with the opportunity to develop college-level-and-beyond research skills. In addition, expanding AP course offerings and the AP Capstone program provided learning opportunities for a diverse group of students as they explored their academic interests and passions," she shared. Because of her initiative, McDowell students now have more AP class options than any other school in the tri-state area and are college- and career-ready when they graduate.

Mrs. Means is also responsible for the creation of the Student Advisory Council at McDowell. "Student voice is essential to creating a positive, caring and innovative school culture," she said. As facilitator and organizer of the Millcreek Township School District Summer Leadership Academy 2022, she created a five-day professional development program for the district's administrators and supervisors. "The academy provided opportunities to engage in professional, collegial conversations, share best practices and stretch our thinking as we aimed to build a professional community dedicated to life-long learning, continuous improvement and best practices," she explained.

"I am thankful and truly honored to receive this award of recognition; this is an award that I could not have won on my own. Thank you to my colleagues and high school administrative team who collaborate with me and challenge me to be the best leader I can be. I am especially blessed to work with an innovative and resolute staff who strive to provide unique learning experiences for our students and support my leadership initiatives throughout the school year," said Mrs. Means.

Mrs. Means earned a Bachelor of Science in English education, a master's degree in educational psychology, her secondary principal certificate and Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. She received a gifted endorsement from Neumann University.

"It is my honor to work alongside Sandy Means daily. She is a true champion for our students and staff, and McDowell is lucky to have her. Sandy comes to work every day with a mission to help students be successful in school and life, and I can't think of anyone more deserving of the Assistant Principal of the Year award," said Brian Fuller, Principal at McDowell High School and West I Regional Representative on the PA Principals Association Board of Directors.

When she is not busy with her many activities as an educator and administrator, Mrs. Means enjoys spending time with her husband, two adult children, family and friends in addition to playing golf, running, reading and attending sporting events.

"Sandy Means represents the qualities of exemplary school leadership. Her unwavering dedication to improving teacher practice, inspiring excellent student outcomes and being a thought partner to her peers are a few reasons that she deserves this honor."

**~ Dr. Ian A. Roberts
Superintendent
Millcreek Township School District**

THE LINCHPIN



By Dr. Michael S. Snell,
PA Principals Association
Assistant Executive Director

Happy 2023! As we start a new year, let's pause for a minute and think about those who helped us in our educational journey. If you are like me, there are several mentors throughout your career that are critical to success and sanity.

For me, I think back to my sixth-grade English teacher, Mr. St. Clair, who made a significant impact on me. Even though I dreaded diagramming sentences, grammar drills and poetry, I loved his class. It was because of who he was and the way he made me feel valued and a part of his classroom.

In his book *Linchpin*, marketing guru Seth Godin (2011) describes a linchpin as "the essential element, the person who holds part of the organization together." Godin wrote, "Without the linchpin, the thing falls apart." In a busy middle school schedule, Mr. St. Clair was *the linchpin* in that classroom and in my day as a middle school student.

What about a favorite principal...one that you looked up to, looked forward to seeing each day and one who understood what it is like to work with kids? You know, the one who really "got it" and wasn't just going through the motions. *Principals are the linchpin*. They are the ones who hold the organization – the school – together.

In our world of education, our "thing" would fall apart without *our linchpins* – the teachers, principals, support staff, bus drivers, custodians and parents/guardians who show our learners they matter each and every day. There is magic in being a linchpin and the relationships that are formed as a result. Magic that can never be assessed with a #2 pencil and easily converted into charts and graphs.

Sadly, that magic is maligned today, whether through teacher-bashing, accountability measures and the common use of "failure" in dialogues about education. I am confident *the linchpin factor*, the human element, the relationships between learners and the "big people" in schools, will survive the current attempts to make education an enterprise, villain or fall guy.

If you're a basketball fan (and who isn't as we prepare for *March Madness?*), you may have heard about legendary UNC Coach Dean Smith's "point to the passer" concept. The gist is players point in acknowledgement to their teammates who passed them the ball and enabled them to make a basket and score. Pointing to the passer went viral, and fans and other players have adopted it over the years.

Imagine what would happen if we, as a society, started *pointing to the passer* in education... pointing the public's perception of education toward the positive and the relationships that are so critical to the success of everyone, even our naysayers!

I will start by pointing to Mr. St. Clair. Thanks, Mr. St. Clair, for a great year of assists, lessons and care that you showed me. I will also add my two high-school principals, Mr. Wolfgang and Mr. McCoy, who also demonstrated their care and concern while I served as student council president.

Without the *human element*, education would not be nearly as magical as we remember. Let's bring back the magic that began when we were five-year-old eager learners. Here are three ideas to get you started:



1. Who do you need to point to as the “passer” in your education? Please reach out and let them know you appreciate their influence in your life. A phone call or a handwritten note is a great start.
 2. Lead the effort in your school and family. Leadership matters and a principal and a parent are in the perfect position to lead the effort. A great faculty meeting starter or dinner table conversation. *You go first ...*
 3. As an educational leader, please know that you matter. People watch your every move in the hallway, in the main office, in meetings and on cafeteria duty. Lead them well; model what it means to build great relationships, foster hopes and dreams for the future and make them feel a part of something great. *Make sure there is magic in your eyes!*
- Let’s all embrace a “point to the passer” mentality...and best of luck with your *March Madness* bracket!

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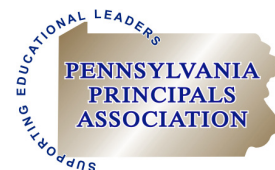
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Through the use of simulations, participants will sharpen their leadership skills of decision-making using real-life applications.

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If you have any questions, please contact Julie Sunday at sunday@paprincipals.org



Cursive Writing Unlocks Ancestry: Project-Based Local History

By Dr. Del Hart and Melissa M. Boonie



About the Authors: **Dr. Del Hart** served as Principal at East Juniata High School in the Juniata County School District for 10 years. He was also a teacher at East Juniata High School. He is now the Chief, Division of Analysis & Financial Reporting, at the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Melissa Matter Boonie is a world history teacher at Mid-West High School in the Mid-West School District, a position she's held since 2010. She is in her 23rd year as a classroom teacher. Dr. Del Hart was her biology teacher when she was a student at East Juniata High School.

In addition, she is an educational leadership doctoral student in the College of Graduate Studies, Division of Education, Immaculata University.

Cursive Writing Unlocks Ancestry

Teaching secondary level social studies is a vital component of school curriculum. A robust course must engage students in synthesizing knowledge of various groups that compose the “salad bowl” (Berray, 2019) of American society. In order to preserve our history and to gain a deeper understanding of self, it is necessary to tell the stories of our forebearers. A 21st-century curriculum should provide a vehicle for students to peer through the window of their own unique family stories. Adolescents who lose or forget their ancestry are missing vital pieces of their identity and individuality. One way for students to construct a deeper sense of culture, heritage and self is to explore local history through Project-Based Learning.

Unique Collaboration

Over a year ago, Kim Mattern, curator of the Snyder County Historical Society, re-discovered a unique item in the museum’s storage room – a “crazy quilt” made by the Ladies of the Lutheran Church in Adamsburg (now Beaver Springs), Snyder County, Pennsylvania. The quilt was donated in 1991, placed inside a pillowcase for safekeeping and forgotten for 30 years. The quilt’s most remarkable feature is the hand-stitched collection of 1,153 names – a folk-art census of individuals living in Snyder County 129 years ago. The fact that none of the current board members had ever seen the quilt and that nobody had ever looked into it puzzled Mr. Mattern. He considered the quilt the most significant artifact that was not on display at the museum. “Every name has a story, or many stories, and we’ll never know all of them,” said Mattern (Moore, 2022).

Mr. Mattern required a team to help him record, analyze and interpret this artifact. He reached out to Mid-West High School history teacher, Melissa Boonie, for help. “For several years, I have been trying to figure out a way to get high school and college students involved in the historical society,” said Mr. Mattern. “Finally, this school year, the partnership fell into place” (Poeth, 2022, p. 4). After securing permission from the principal and district curriculum director, Mrs. Boonie’s world history class accepted the task of recording all 1,153 names in a searchable, digital form. Mid-West sophomores began their work on September 6, 2022, exactly 129 years after the quilt’s construction.

Lesson One: Cursive Handwriting

At the beginning of this project, Mrs. Boonie surveyed her student’s cursive writing skills. Of 138 sophomores, only 20 (14.5%) scored “Excellent” on a cursive-writing self-assessment baseline sample. After a month of daily bellringer cursive handwriting practice, and three formative assessments later, that number had risen to 112 (81%).

Alex Carlin (2017) of the Pioneer Institute wrote: “In the age of computers and modern convenience, the relevancy of cursive is continually called into question...it is still critical in ensuring historical literacy. Students should be exposed regularly to primary source documents, and these should be presented in their original form...But, learning cursive is more than just connecting with the past; it is an important part of being civic minded to this day.”

William Stover, a sophomore involved in the project, reflected: “*Getting to learn cursive again was a good life skill that all of us needed. When we had our first writing sample, there probably wasn’t a single person who could comfortably read and write cursive. But through the daily practice, we got to re-learn or learn for the first time a skill that will follow us through the rest of our lives.*”

Lesson Two: Technology, Collaboration and Trust

The end product (an original database) was a multi-step process which required a blend of technology, collaboration and trust among a large group of student researchers.

To remove the obstacle of 140 students physically touching and potentially destroying the primary source artifact, Mr. Mattern and Mrs. Boonie photographed the 42 quilt squares individually beforehand. In the classroom, students analyzed 8x8-inch prints and high-

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resolution digital photo files on their laptops, and deliberated over indistinguishable lettering, double- and triple-checking each other's work. Students detected patterns and learned to use context clues to reach conclusions. Some students, ever perplexed by cursive, found apps on their phones to scan script and convert it into printed text, with varying degrees of success. Others discovered a technique of reversing the colors in digital photos to increase contrast, allowing them to read ivory-colored embroidery on cream-colored fabric.

Satisfied that the names were transcribed correctly, students then entered their data into a digital file. Mrs. Boonie created an Excel spreadsheet on the school's Microsoft 365 platform and shared it with the 140 students. Simultaneously working on one shared document required much trust in the large group of 15- to 17-year-old adolescents. Additionally, Mrs. Boonie saved backup copies often, cognizant that at any point, a user could delete or corrupt the hand-entered names. Fortunately, the backup was never needed.

Students reacted differently to these painstaking tasks. Sophomore Addison Bower enjoyed the process: "The Excel sheet was definitely a fun part of this quilt project. It was simple and easy to do, but yet, still a crucial part to all of it. It had some downsides, of course, like typos. Deciphering the names was fun as well. It was almost like a puzzle (especially with some of the harder, busier squares)." Class-



Crazy quilt with 1,153 names made by the Ladies of the Lutheran Church of Adamsburg (now Beaver Springs), Snyder County, PA, Sept. 6, 1893.

mate Nash Grover was not as enthusiastic: "I did not enjoy the process of copying every name down into the Excel document. I felt as if this was very tedious and just almost filler work, as I felt this process did not increase my intellectual capacity." This was a wonderful life lesson, which proves that all research steps are not enjoyable.

Lesson Three: Finding Meaning

The project took on new life when sophomore Simon Moyer discovered a book about Beaver Springs (1806-1906) on the Internet. This source, full of photos and stories about prominent citizens, made the

quilt come alive. Students matched and sorted quilt names with the individuals depicted in the book. They created posters, one for each quilt square, to synthesize names with life events.

Student Alyssa Deubner reflected: "What I loved the most about the process was reading the individual stories in the book of the history of Adamsburg, especially learning of the founders of banks and businesses we still see today in the community. Ultimately, I feel closer and connected to the community because of this project. I'm really proud I get to say I am part of history; not everyone in the world can say that."

Another student, David Woodling, discovered the name, photo and story of his great-great-great-grandfather, William B. Goodling, a farmer. "I didn't know my family has been here that long," he said, adding that his family continues to farm in the county (Moore, 2002).

Sophomore Patrick Ewing found connections with his ancestor, Ner Middleswarth. "He stood out because he is my sixth great-grandfather. He had 12 children and was a captain during the War of 1812. After the competition of his military service, he was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and then the Pennsylvania State Senate. It really makes me think if there are more people in our class related to him. He is possibly the most famous person on my family tree," he said.

With approximately 140 students investing 450 hours in the venture, the roster of names was completed. On November 2, 2022, a day of celebration, Mr. Mattern unveiled the quilt for students to examine in person at the Midd-West High School library. He is working to add the 1893 Adamsburg Quilt to the National Quilt Register. "Your names and



Sophomores Fahd Boutiban and Lashauna Mosely study the 1893 quilt.

Student Health and Wellness

By Dr. Jacqueline Fuentes-Gillespie



About the Author: Jacqueline Fuentes-Gillespie, Ed.D., is the Acting Principal at Hershey Middle School in the Derry Township School District. She started her education career at Manheim Township High School in 1999.

Dr. Fuentes-Gillespie holds two bachelor's degrees in political science and secondary education from Bloomsburg University of PA and a master's degree in classroom technology from Wilkes University. In addition, she received teaching certifications in social studies, Spanish and family and consumer science, a K-12 principal certification and a doctorate in educational leadership and administration from Immaculata University.

She is married and has two children.

Administrators are on a persistent quest to improve student health and wellness through community involvement and family relationships. Why not make an effort to communicate your in-house expertise through a health and wellness series? This article provides some ideas to get you started “right.”

There is a direct correlation between student health and academic achievement (CDC, 2019a). Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. We know that optimum health results in optimum learning. A “Health and Wellness Series” can provide families with the knowledge, tools and resources to help support their student’s learning and academic performance. Why not invite your community to partner with the school to review strategies for improving the health and wellness of its students?

You may begin by exploring specific topics such as physical health, mental health, social health and sleep. Would a family newsletter reach your desired audience? Could you create an in-school “Health and Wellness Club”? It is important that your communications and efforts not only focus on information, but professional recommendations/expertise and school offerings.

Focus on PHYSICAL HEALTH

Physical health is critical for overall well-being, and is affected by diet, level of physical activity and behavior. Do your parents know that Pennsylvania state code requires schools to measure student height and weight as part of their growth screening program? Do they have access to this information? Take the time to explain how height and weight is used to calculate body mass index (BMI) and it is one factor to consider if their child’s weight is healthy. “Normal” BMIs for students can vary greatly (PaDOH, 2022). Consider how the pandemic may have affected BMI trends at your school.

Parents should be encouraged to check with their child’s doctor if they have any concerns regarding their child’s BMI. Students with higher BMI’s are at risk for developing low self-esteem, behavioral problems and depression.

Encourage growing students to eat more fruits and vegetables, limit sugar and processed foods, limit screen time, get more sleep (sleep supports their developing brain, as well as physical growth spurts) and be physically active.

Share that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all children get 60 minutes of exercise every day, 7-days per week (CDC, 2022). Ask yourself these questions: How many days per week do your students have physical education classes? Do your students have access to the gym or gym equipment after school? Is there after-school transportation available for students who stay later for a sport, practice or club activity?

Encourage your students to join a school sports team and highlight what they are and in what season they take place. Finally, tell parents where to get more information about joining a sports team or club in your community, school or district.

Focus on MENTAL HEALTH.

Mental health includes emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how students think, feel and act. It also impacts how they handle stress, relate to others and make choices.



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We know that positive mental health allows our students to realize their full potential, cope with the stresses of life, work productively and make meaningful contributions to the school community.

Review the many factors that contribute to mental health (NLM, 2020):

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry.
- Life experiences, such as trauma or adverse childhood experiences.
- Family history of mental health problems.

Provide parents a checklist to help them identify mental health concerns with their child. These will be dependent on age. They may include:

- Changes in school academic performance.
- Excessive worry, anxiety or sadness.
- Hyperactivity, persistent disobedience or aggression, defiance of authority, truancy, theft and/or vandalism.
- Hurting or destroying things.
- Substance abuse.
- Inability to cope with problems and daily activities.
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits.
- Excessive complaints of physical ailments.
- Intense fear of weight gain or exercising too much.
- Prolonged negative mood, often accompanied by poor appetite or thoughts of death.
- Frequent outbursts of anger that seems to come from nowhere or explosive behavior.

Encourage students who may be struggling to:

- Talk to their parents, doctor, guidance counselor or other trusted adult.
- Seek professional help if needed.
- Connect and help others.
- Stay positive.
- Get physically active.
- Get enough sleep (9 to 9.5 hours per night helps protect them from depression).
- Develop coping skills.

Reassure families that mental health challenges are common, and help is available. Provide families with information regarding your Student Assistance Program and other local community services that assist families. Finally, encourage families to reach out to the Student Support Services Office and speak to their child's school counselor to learn more.

Focus on SOCIAL HEALTH.

Social health is based on relationships. Student's relationships and interactions with family, friends and community members can have a major impact on their health and well-being. Positive social habits can help them build support systems and stay healthier mentally and physically.

Encourage your students to:

- Get involved in school activities, clubs and sports.
- Volunteer in their community.
- Participate in the local activities.
- Learn self-care techniques (such as mindfulness, hobbies, interests).
- Get organized and learn executive functioning skills.
- Eat healthy foods and stay physically active.
- Spend warm, positive time with loved ones.
- Be caring and empathetic, foster a sense of belonging for all.
- Share their feelings honestly, ask for what they need and recognize how other people influence them.
- Disagree with others respectfully and learn how to compromise.
- Limit screen time.

Today, students are interconnected through social media platforms constantly and we know that extended social media use may negatively affect students, distracting them, disrupting their sleep and exposing them to bullying, rumor spreading, unrealistic views of other people's lives and peer pressure (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Too often, these social issues disrupt the normal school day and affect a student's education.

Social media "challenges," such as the "Paqui One Chip Challenge" can affect students' physical health and well-being. Encourage parents to join and spend time using the same apps their children use and see their posts to give them the best guidance. Partner with families to limit access to cell phone/social media use during the school day.

Focus on SLEEP

Sleep is essential for learning and getting good grades. It is a fundamental component of optimal health, growth and well-being and plays a key role in preventing injury, disease and directly affects the ability to learn and think at school. Lack of sleep may cause poor grades, aggressive conduct and behavior problems. Sleepiness in school may cause students to doze off during instruction resulting in loss of learning (CDC, 2019b).

Provide CDC recommended sleep times for students based on age. There are many reasons why the majority of students are not getting enough sleep, including involvement in extracurricular activities.

When possible, encourage parents to prioritize student sleep by:

- Setting early bedtimes.
- Banning tech from the bedroom (using tech at night not only cuts into teens' sleep time, it also exposes them to a type of light that suppresses the body's production of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin, making it tougher to fall asleep).
- Having a consistent bedtime routine.

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- Encouraging more exercise during the day.
- Avoiding caffeine and late-night snacks.
- Encouraging relaxation of mind and body by practicing meditation, stretching, journaling, reading, drawing, listening to audiobook or sleep sounds.

We know that healthy students are better learners, and academic achievement bears a lifetime of benefits for health. Administrators play an important role in promoting the health and safety of our students by partnering with families to establish lifelong health patterns. Administrators wanting

to expand on “health and wellness” may also consider incorporating other topics such as gratitude, spirituality and culture. There is an abundance of information available to help administrators, pupil services personnel and community stakeholders at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Healthy Schools (<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/index.htm>).

Each new year will bring to us what we bring to it. Let’s focus on the health and wellness of our students, staff and communities in which we serve.

For further information, please contact Dr. Fuentes-Gillespie at fgillespie@hershey.k12.pa.us

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Cursive Writing Unlocks Ancestry: Project-Based Local History

Continued from page 16

work will always be a part of it. You must be proud of the research and hours that you have put into the project,” he said.

Social-Emotional Learning

Mrs. Boonie’s students reflected on social-emotional benefits to using Project-Based Learning and local sources. Sophomore Madison Troup summed up her experience: *“Being a part of this quilt project was a great learning experience for everyone involved. I learned about life in the late 1800s compared to life in the 21st century. Looking closely at this quilt, you can see the hard work, intricate details and care it took to create every single letter. I like to think about the person’s hands that created the names on the quilt, who those people were, the stories they told and perseverance it took to carve out an existence in 1893 Snyder County. I think we should continue to work with*

the Historical Society in Snyder County to really grasp the concept of 1800’s life compared to what it is today, before COVID-19 and online learning before modern technology. We can all learn from projects like these, showing that history is made daily. We must hold onto and preserve our historical treasures for future generations to one day examine and think about the hands that typed these very words.”

Project-Based methods have the power to bridge the gap between generations. Mrs. Boonie firmly believes that social-emotional health may suffer when adolescent identities are not grounded in the histories of people who have faced adversity in the past. When historical skill sets grow weak, those roots must be strengthened.

For more information, please contact the authors at doc.hart@yahoo.com or melissa.boonie@mwsd.cc

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One Member's Voice

One Member's Voice is YOUR column – a place to voice your opinion regarding timely education- or school-related topics and issues.

Back to Basics with Helping Children Post-COVID

By Dr. Thomas Krout, Principal, Washington Elementary School



We often hear the phrase “It takes a village to raise a child” (Achebe, 1954). I could not agree more. I believe in today’s society, our schools work in a multitude of ways to help support children and young adults within the post-COVID pandemic era. These methods often require educational teams to look at data, research best practices for academic success and/or have a structured parent-teacher conference to help make sure each party communicates effectively.

But perhaps we need to take a lesson from the old knocks of school administration and begin to slow down, and resort to some time-honored methods of successful leadership practices that proved effective for decades of learning. These critical ideas are often overlooked and pushed to the side for more modern types of computer-based surveys, questionnaires and/or text/email responses.

Perhaps we move back to the 3 Cs of learning and discussing with our children. I have used these **3 Cs – caring, commitment and connections** – as my platform for success for over 32 years.

They often work within a triad of cooperation and also strive to be equal in all three areas.

The first one is **caring**. Back in the ole’ days of the 1970s, my dad often told me to listen more and talk less. It seems like a simple concept, but think about it...when was the last time you interrupted someone when they were talking? Force yourself to watch for this, and you will be surprised at how many times it occurs during the standard workday. The same goes for children; we need to listen to them and begin to meet them at their eye level to gain information, model respect and then begin to create a plan of action. I often catch myself creating the plan as they are speaking to me about the concern. This is not modeling active listening. Another school-based example includes greeting the children at the front door each morning. This can be challenging for a school administrator with busy meetings and staff issues. However, the importance to children is second to none. Greeting children firsthand gives you a true feel for the day and helps you to predict areas of concern using an accurate sense of visible data imperative for a successful school day. Another example exemplifying a caring school culture includes a successful school advisory council. I nickname this the “S.A.C.” group. I use these meetings to roundtable and listen to student concerns or schoolwide improvement issues. This two-way communication provides a great learning atmosphere that promotes teamwork and a high level of care.

The second area to improve upon is **commitment**. We are in a fast-paced world, and it doesn’t look like that will be changing anytime soon. As they begin to construct a third and fourth lane to the already crowded drive-through lanes at local fast-food businesses, we find ourselves needing to adapt to the “new.” However, when we become invested or committed to an organization, it is our duty to become “full time.” This may mean staying extra to complete work, using the web-based platforms from home to help solidify someone in the hiring process over the weekend and /or being fully present at an evening function, event or concert. I recently attended a community football game in which our young student-athletes were playing. They thought it was so cool their principal was attending the game, watching with purpose and taking pictures to be placed on the school TV monitors the following day. They also noticed my transparency as their school principal was actually wearing jeans. We must invest in our jobs and roles and begin to make a real commitment to focus on children and young adults, demonstrating to them that we are committed to their whole learning process and we care about them. Commitment is showing we care at all times!

The final triad is **connections**. This focal area has always been a true inspiration for me as I begin my 25th year in public school administration. I have realized that not everyone has the uncanny ability to make connections with people. Some would rather stay in the background and not become engaged. That is okay! But for those of us who love interacting with people, we need to use this and showcase what we can do to help make children’s lives more meaningful and engaged within the learning process. Many great coaches are strong in this category because they can relate and make deep connections with young learners. This innate ability can be fostered and enhanced to move into the world of knowledge and learning. An example of this “C” is greeting children by name in the hallways and around the school building. Children are impressed by my ability to not only know their name, but to know their reading level, their math grade and/or family dynamics (brothers and sisters who went to this school previously). I truly believe personalizing the learning process through

Pathways to Success at Garden Spot High School

By Dr. Matthew Sanger, Jill Hackman, John Robbins and Dr. Michael Snopkowski



About the Authors:

Dr. Matthew Sanger has served as the Principal at Garden Spot High School in the Eastern Lancaster County (ELANCO) School District for the last 10 years. He earned his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Delaware.

Jill Hackman has been a Teacher at Garden Spot High School in the ELANCO School District for 18 years. She has served in the role of career coordinator for the last seven years. She earned her Master of Education from Wilkes University and completed her Co-operative Education Certificate from Temple University.

John Robbins has served as the Transition Coordinator (four years), Special Education Consultant (seven years) and as Job Coach Coordinator for the 11 years he has worked for Garden Spot High School and Middle School in the ELANCO School District. He has 22 years' experience working with transition-aged youth in work-based learning experiences and programs.

Dr. Michael Snopkowski has been the Superintendent of the ELANCO School District since February 2022. Before that, he served in a variety of administrative roles in the Avon Grove School District and the Rose Tree Media School District. He earned his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Delaware.

Garden Spot High School in the Eastern Lancaster County School District is preparing learners for their futures through an authentic variety of academic and community-based experiences. What began several years ago as an effort to support learners with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) make a successful post-secondary transition has grown into a comprehensive series of experiences that will include all learners at the high school. Through partnerships with multiple businesses and community organizations, each learner is experiencing a *Career Coaching* approach to guide their learning and planning during their high school years.

Research and Value

The incorporation of authentic work-based experiences for learners in the traditional high school setting is increasingly seen as not only a way to enhance the academic experience of a learner, but also as a gateway for employment. Through research by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), increasingly greater attention is being paid by employers to the internships, work-based experiences and skills demonstrated by potential employees, while less attention is being focused on the GPA of an applicant (Gray, 2022). Additionally, career exploration and development while in high school can guide post-secondary decision-making, especially at a time when the cost of attending college continues to rise at a significant rate (Kerr & Wood, 2022). Finally, the value of these experiences is being recognized through the Pennsylvania Department of Education and is a key component in each school's Future Ready Index, Industry-Based Learning score.

History

Beginning in 2015 with the assignment of a teacher to a part-time role, the Garden Spot High School co-op program was born. This program was developed to prepare learners for high-priority, high-skill, high-paying 21st-century careers, and focused on learners who did not anticipate pursuing additional formal education after high school graduation. The combination of a rich classroom experience focused on employability and "soft" skills, with release time to practice and develop these skills at a local employer, was intended to prepare learners to pass the WorkKeys exams from CareerLink and be a springboard into successful employment.

The co-op program was an expansion of supports and experiences already in place to provide unique and individualized experiences for specialized groups of learners. These included learners with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) throughout their transition plan implementation, or who were nearing their graduation or aging out of the high school. In a similar way, English learners also were part of the program and were working to generalize the skills being learned in the classroom to another setting. From the program's beginning, the individualized needs of each learner were emphasized and aligned with experiences to help them be successful.

After several years of positive experiences, the core team began to explore the possibility of expanding the program. The implications of this meant not only increased internal staff, but a significant outreach to the local community to provide opportunities for learners. On a practical level, an expansion would also require the logistics and infrastructure to be in place to get learners to and from their experiences. In short, the program needed to move from a part-



Learners are often tasked with designing and building solutions to real problems faced by the business community.

Continued on next page

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time commitment to a means through which Garden Spot High School would be able to meet its mission and the needs of its learners.

Pathways to Success

The evolution of the program and its expansion to serve all learners at Garden Spot High School has been occurring since 2015 in clear and incremental ways. The original assignment of one job coach and one part-time teacher has grown into two full-time teachers and five job coaches supporting learners in all aspects of the program. Transportation for learners to get to job sites for shadowing has been made possible through the alignment of district policies and schedules, as well as the funding of the purchase of a van.

Just as importantly, the network of community partners has expanded to provide enough options so that all of the approximately 450 learners in grades 9 and 10 will have two site-based experiences each year. This is directly attributable to the networking and collaboration between the Garden Spot team and the school district community. This collaborative effort is centered on the belief that these experiences for Garden Spot High School learners are critical in their individual development, as well as supportive of the ongoing sustainability and growth of the entire community in the future.

Career Coaching

Garden Spot High School expects every learner's pathway will be unique and constantly evolving. The strengths, interests and needs of each learner will change over time and the plan developed to maximize their high school experience needs to change with them. To support each learner throughout this process, the Career Coaching framework, adapted from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Office of Career and Professional Development, is the foundation each experience is built upon and emphasizes four components in meeting the needs of our learners:

- Reflecting on strengths and interests
- Exploring career and education options
- Developing skills and experiences
- Connecting with people and opportunities

The Garden Spot High School Career Coaching program begins in ninth grade and integrates a series of authentic experiences for each learner. The focus of ninth and tenth grade is to align each learner's interests and strengths with work-based experiences. This frequently occurs with small groups visiting local businesses or organizations, under the supervision of one of the district's job coaches. After each experience, learners will reflect on the experience and determine if their current goals and plans are still in alignment with their experiences, or if they need to make any adjustments. As learners enter their junior year, increased emphasis will be placed on the connections between career interests, academic planning, and workplace experiences, very likely spurring discussion and preparation for internship opportunities.



Authentic experiences partner learners with practitioners in the field.

During their senior years, learners will have the opportunity to deepen their career exploration and readiness through internships in the community. These may be paid or unpaid and are usually scheduled for one semester for each learner. Communication between the internship provider, the high school and the learner is ongoing throughout the experience and embedded in the assignments and online submissions made by each learner throughout the internship. Onsite visitations are also conducted by the career coordinator as a means of providing just-in-time feedback and learning opportunities within the school day.

For learners who may not take advantage of a full internship program, the co-op program is an option, as is the *Access Success* program. Developed for learners who have experienced significant disruption during their educational careers, are at risk of not graduating, or who may need an even more personalized experience, *Access Success* combines core academic development, work-place skills and training and counseling support. While still a relatively new addition to the Pathways to Success options, the 2021-2022 school year saw 21 learners participate in this program, remain enrolled at Garden Spot High School and either graduate or make significant strides toward doing so. (See Figure 1 on page 23)

Future

The future of the *Pathways to Success* program is one of continued expansion of opportunities and connections for learners in the Eastern Lancaster County School District. Building upon the relationships that have been forged within the community, five businesses are partnering with curriculum teams and engaging in a pilot program during the 2022-2023 school year to align curriculum and assessments with authentic problems and situations encountered by employees and businesses in our community. Focusing on critical thinking and problem-solving, the goal of this pilot is for

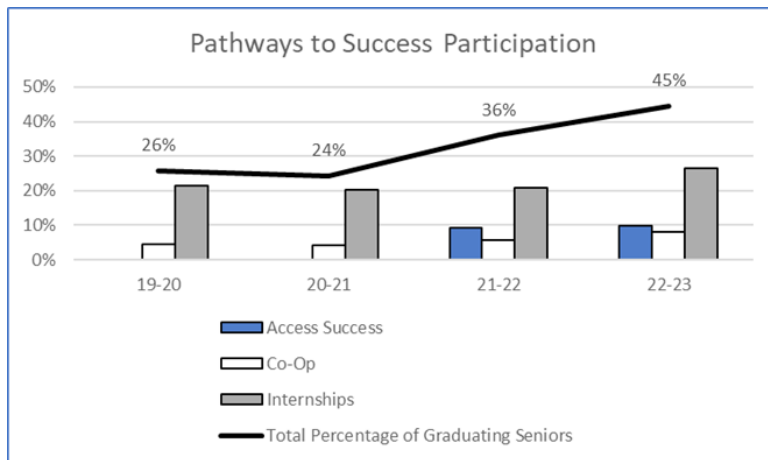
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learners to sharpen their analytical skills and never have to ask, “when will I ever use this?”, when in our classrooms.

Further resource allocation is being examined for learners to access local employers and needs are being met through an innovative collaboration between the community and the technical education department. Taking donations from the community of old or broken bicycles, learners who are practicing the skills of welding and fabrication are repurposing parts and components into functioning bicycles, which are then provided to learners who may not have their own transportation to an internship or co-op. It is projected that 10 or more learners who may have otherwise experienced the barrier of transportation will be able to fulfill their goals by receiving these bicycles.

The commitment of the board of school directors, building administration, teachers and job coaches, the community in opening its doors and workplaces, and the learners in seizing these opportunities, have all combined to create a vibrant and sustainable program. Considering the investments made in this program represent just a little over 1% of the total district budget but are positively impacting

Figure 1



almost 1,000 learners at the high school, the return on investment for our district, our community and our learners is significant. Most importantly, each learner is better prepared to become their best in our classrooms and for their future.

For further information, you may contact Dr. Snopkowski at michael_snopkowski@elanco.org

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One Member's Voice

Continued from page 20

purposeful connections helps students grow academically on a daily basis. This can be completed by learning key variables from students' interests. I often use clothing or team names to help build a positive connection with a child. For example, wearing a T-shirt for a few minutes as students enter the building in the morning because my team lost, and I had to keep my promise (or challenge) to a child. The connection focal point reminds me of the book titled, *Only One You* by Linda Kranz (Kranz, 2006). The book

walks readers through the simple steps of listening, making mistakes and learning how to avoid obstacles in the way of life.

In the end, we need to appreciate each other through various forms of care. We do this by learning how to make connections with people even when they don't want us to and finding a way to stay committed to the end goal, which is helping children and young adults grow and learn within our school settings.

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About the Author: Thomas Krout, Ed.D., is the Principal of Washington Elementary School in the Hanover Public School District in Hanover, Pennsylvania. He has served as a K-12 administrator for 25 years.

Dr. Krout's school was recognized as a Distinguished Pennsylvania School in 2018, and in 2014, it was rated as an "A rated school" on the school performance profile.

Dr. Krout and his wife reside in Hanover and they have two sons. He may be contacted about this article at tkrout@hanoverpublic.org

Welcome NEW Elementary Members

Enrolled Between 6/29/2022 - 12/30/2022

<u>Name</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>District</u>
Rebekah Anderson	Ligonier Valley SD	Leila Mesinger	Muhlenberg SD
George Angelopoulos	Bangor Area SD	Cynthia Milford	Upper Darby SD
Stacy Baldwin	Central Dauphin SD	William Moore	Upper Darby SD
Jamie Bielecki-Quinn	Connellsville Area SD	Madison Moyer	Montrose Area SD
Paul Brigman	State College Area SD	Teri Myers	Altoona Area SD
Lisa Brinker	Allentown City SD	Janet Newby	Upper Darby SD
Erin Brouse	Williamsport Area SD	Margaret Nicholas	Kiski Area SD
Julie Brunetto	Red Lion Area SD	Emily Otero	Council Rock SD
Raqueebah Burch	William Penn SD	Panagiotis Papageorge	Upper Darby SD
Susan Campbell	Upper Darby SD	James Poletto	Williamsport Area SD
Ryan Carper	Williamsport Area SD	Jennifer Preisler	Waynesboro Area SD
Matt Casertano	Upper Darby SD	Christopher Pugliese	Upper Darby SD
Christopher Cence	Penn Hills SD	Tami Pulice	Millcreek Township SD
Desmond Chisholm	Upper Darby SD	Tara Ricci	Methacton SD
Denise Clark	Williamsport Area SD	Tammi Richards	Waynesboro Area SD
Tyler Cook	Harbor Creek SD	Chelsea Robinson	Greencastle-Antrim SD
Tyler Dillinger	McKeesport Area SD	Tiffani Rossi	Erie Public Schools
Anna DiLossi	Upper Darby SD	Peter Shahda	Allentown City SD
Melody Dunn	Pottsgrove SD	Sandra Shirey	Redbank Valley SD
Jeremy Eastman	Shippensburg Area SD	Jennifer Sicinski	North Penn SD
Audrey Fields	William Penn SD	Trinidad Sierra	Bethlehem Area SD
Robin Fillman	Riverview IU 6	Andrea Simpson	Upper Darby SD
Nichole Garthwaite	Otto-Eldred SD	Krystal Smith	Portage Area SD
Damian Gessel	Selinsgrove Area SD	Donna Steff	Hopewell Area SD
Kylie Harris	Warren County SD	Jeremy Stetler	Milton Area SD
Jodi Houck	Eastern Lebanon Co. SD	Lindsey Stock	Warwick SD
Lee Jordan	Red Lion Area SD	Jennifer Sugra	Penn Manor SD
Mary Kearney	Erie Public Schools	Colleen Sullivan	Carbondale Area SD
Joseph Keenan	Franklin Area SD	Joy Sweller	Delaware Valley SD
Julie Kehr	Reading SD	Nativa Tamasy	Chartiers Valley SD
Nicole Kelly	Centennial SD	Ryan Thomas	Hatboro-Horsham SD
Dana Kenney	North Penn SD	Michael Toole	Highlands SD
Robert Kilmer	Carlisle Area SD	John Wagner	SD of Radnor Township
Marie Kim	North Penn SD	Andrew Walker	Conewago Valley SD
Douglas Knepp	West Shore SD	Deanna Webb	Southern Lehigh SD
Bethany Koenig	Whitehall-Coplay SD	Brook Webb	Mt. Lebanon SD
Susan Kreit	Fox Chapel Area SD	Deborah Whitmire	West Chester Area SD
Amanda Kusko	Whitehall-Coplay SD	Jason Williams	Schuylkill Valley SD
Jenay Leach	Seneca Valley SD	Terrance Williams	Upper Darby SD
Tanya Lewis	Butler Area SD	Loren Yerger	Allentown City SD
Heather Lilly	Bangor Area SD	Nancy Young	SD of Radnor Township
Steven Lin	Warwick SD	Philip Young, Jr.	Penncrest SD
Dawn Lynn	Huntingdon Area SD	Heather Zalar	Chartiers Valley SD
Kelly Mantzaridis	Upper Darby SD	Kelsey Zech	Central York SD
Adam Marshall	West Shore SD	Kristen Bianchi	Commonwealth Charter Academy
Ashley Martin	Greencastle-Antrim SD	Colleen Bynion	South Eastern SD
Patrick Matthews	Montrose Area SD	Lindsay Carson	Conestoga Valley SD
Jeanine Mbaeri	Upper Darby SD	Adam Holtzer	Wallenpaupack Area SD
Kerry McClellan	Wilkinsburg Borough SD	Jamie Mazzarella	Central Cambria SD
Cynthia McDonough	PA Cyber Charter	Jeffrey Rhodes	Juniata Valley SD
Sheri McGowen	Pequea Valley SD	Geri Schaffer	Capital Area IU 15
Christina McLaughlin	Lincoln IU 12	Amanda Whitworth	Freedom Area SD

Students Guiding Students: A Self-Reflective SMART Mentoring Program

By Dr. Barry P. Flicker



About the Author: Dr. Barry P. Flicker proudly serves as the Principal of Kutztown Area High School in the Kutztown Area School District in Berks County. He is currently in his 10th year in the position. He was honored to receive, on behalf of the staff and students of Kutztown Area High School, the National Blue Ribbon High School of Excellence in 2020.

Dr. Flicker's research, "An Investigation of the Effect of Advanced Placement Courses on the Short-Term Activity and Goal Achievement of College-Enrolled Students," is the basis for this article.

It is time to shift our educational focus to include our students' experiences looking through the whole child's lens. The knowledge students gain from modeling and peer-to-peer exchange "is an indispensable aspect of learning" and deserves the attention of educators (Bandura, 1971). How can schools effectively prepare students with the life skills of social interaction, empathy and goal setting? By focusing on student agency through one-to-one, student-to-student social interactions, we can harness the power of students' voices, collaboration and accountability.

The students in Kutztown Area High School (Berks County) are piloting a mentoring program where ninth graders are paired individually with a senior mentor. The Kutztown students accepted the challenge of mentoring with an open mind and eagerness to pass along relevant perseverance and resilience strategies acquired through personal experiences. "The mentorship program has made me discover my own strengths and flaws while teaching the freshman strategies to help them academically," says Aryella, a senior mentor. The two hold each other accountable for establishing essential habits for success in high school and life.

Students hold one another responsible for learning.

The program's primary goal is to foster positive relationships between a select number of students and their designated upper-class mentors. For Blake, helping others comes naturally: "The mentoring program made me reach out and help out the freshmen more in a way that I wanted the seniors to reach out to me when I was a freshman." The concept encourages the life-long skills of good study habits, excellent peer relationships and constructive decision-making.

The students are paired based on their interests; teacher and guidance counselor input is strongly considered. The ability of pupils to function in a social environment that is constantly changing, social awareness and preparation are key factors for high school and future pathway success (Thomsen & Ackermann, 2015). Students coach others in the SMART principles of self-control, motivation, assessment, reflection and teamwork as part of the mentorship program. The program was developed as a result of doctorate research into the Advanced Placement course experience for high school students viewed through the whole-child lens. Participants discussed their experiences with stress, lack of sleep, social difficulties and the necessity for communities to reassess student performance and well-being (Flicker, 2022).



What would current high school students describe as their biggest obstacles concerning their social, emotional and motivational experiences?

A limited sample of students participated in the initial investigation, which took place in the spring of 2022. It aimed to determine their SMART scores or gauge the five domains

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covered by the framework – self-regulation, motivation, achievement, reflection and teamwork – and to measure the five domains. The students' SMART results showed a need to concentrate on the child's holistic development through mentoring, introspection and peer-to-peer cooperation. According to a holistic approach to education, the poll queries pupils:

1. To self-reflect on sleep patterns and time with family or other support groups; and
2. To track the quality and frequency of positive interpersonal relationships beyond the regular school day.

The survey's self-reflective nature asks students to list their performance goals (grades) and learning goals (interests). The outcomes of the pilot program amply demonstrated the necessity and appropriateness of a whole-child approach to student participation through mentoring.

How was SMART mentoring introduced in 2022?

The findings from the spring pilot became the foundation for implementation in 2022. A request for interested seniors to act as mentors for incoming freshmen served as the program's opening announcement. The seniors attended a summer training session with administrators and guidance counselors. The preliminary data provided the framework for student mentor portfolios and curriculum writing. Senior mentors evaluated their understanding of SMART and how working with freshmen might help them develop their leadership abilities. This group became the program's leaders moving into the new school year.

For freshman teachers, a comparable professional development opportunity was created and offered. During the training, teachers concentrated on the five SMART mentoring framework topics as a self-reflective entry point into the holistic development of our pupils. The instructors act as the program's secondary mentors, providing feedback and implementation suggestions all year.

The teacher is instrumental, helped by biweekly meetings between the teacher, counselors and administration. Here, pupils were suggested based on the tiers of support they received. An illustration of a tiered intervention uses homework completion tactics, such as meeting with mentors for educational support and establishing a daily assignment book. To support the students further, we include the mentor whenever possible to assist with guidance on social interaction and decision-making.

How is mentoring affecting the culture of the high school?

The information the students gathered throughout the summer was assembled in a portfolio. The mentors' reflections and curriculum materials used in the program are organized in the portfolio for cataloging and reflection. The mentor's self-reflection and realization of the usefulness of their experiences in guiding and motivating others is a crucial part of the program. Through these relationships,

mentors express empathic behaviors, offer helpful advice and encourage student initiative. Most important is the positive changes that the mentors see in their *mentee*.

Aryella, reflects on her interaction with her mentee when asked to share a highlight of the program:

"I explained to a freshman what they are currently doing in school will be on their transcript that colleges will look at when they start applying. The student just looked back at me with wide eyes. At that moment, it clicked that they needed to apply themselves now because it does matter."

Another highlight evolved from the ninth-grade career exploration tour completed with our county workforce board. In this example, ninth graders were asked to write a brief reflection on their trip and send it to their mentors. This correspondence was unplanned but will undoubtedly be included in future trips. The response from the mentees to their mentors made a lasting impression on Leah, as she describes receiving two unannounced emails from her mentees:

"I received a long, well-thought-out email about the ninth-grade careers field trip from both of my mentees. This was so exciting for me because I could observe their thoughts on the trip – and they stated their real thoughts and not just what I wanted to hear – and how it impacted them and their future. I was not anticipating these emails, and they undoubtedly exceeded my expectations. This experience made me proud to be a mentor."

What are we discovering about seniors' willingness to mentor?

The seniors take the responsibility of guiding others very seriously and seek to build trust as a foundation for their mentoring relationship. Before any progress can be made in school, the mentees need to know they care. Leah describes the value that she places on making connections:

"It is important to set a standard for the relationship a mentor and a mentee should have with each other. By relating to them and taking a second to catch up and reflect on the interests we share with each other, I was able to create a relationship that is still successful in being a leader and an example, but also their friend, which is very important."

The responsibility for the success of the program is a two-way street. The success of SMART mentoring interactions is as strong as their commitment to working together. In addition to supporting mentees in the upcoming course selection process, mentors conducted a series of TED Talks on initiative and time management. The mentors understand the legacy of their role and request to be part of the training for next year's mentors. Their knowledge and insight will be instrumental in growing and maintaining a positive and collaborative school environment.

2023 Lift: Building a Positive School Climate, Together

By Dr. Susan Griffith



About the Author: Susan Griffith, D.Ed., is the Director of Curriculum and Educational Technology at ARIN Intermediate Unit 28 in Indiana, Pennsylvania. She has 15 years of experience in the fields of education, special education and educational leadership.

Dr. Griffith is passionate about providing quality leadership that supports people in meaningful work and professional development.

The aftermath of a pandemic – teacher shortages, increased negative behavior and students' achievement gaps – paired with the ongoing changes in education can make anyone's head spin, but particularly administrators leading the pack. School leaders have a large lift in 2023 when it comes to engaging teams and building, or sustaining, a positive climate, but are they alone?

Climate can be hard to define and even harder to gauge, but research points to indicators leaders can focus on to retain, maintain or obtain a happy and satisfied workplace. A collaborative effort of course, but heavily reliant on the shoulders of the people at the top; one of the many burdens of leadership. The following three focal points are a *great place to start* when considering the climate of a school building.

- 1. Connection to values.** They say, “when you know, you know,” and this can be applied to how team members connect with the values of an organization. Values, by definition, are one’s perspective and personal views on what is important to them and worthy of their time. Time is a precious commodity and people want to use theirs on meaningful tasks and initiatives that give purpose. According to Dr. Dave Cornell and Dr. Chris Drew (2022), a positive school climate is possible when teachers perform their job responsibility with enthusiasm. To foster this type of high energy environment, values and goals should be created and communicated collaboratively.
- 2. Decentralizing decisions.** Sharing ideas and forming agreed upon decisions together can strengthen a team as well as provide a quick, expert perspective on immediate threats or opportunities (Vantrappen & Wirtz, 2017). On a more global level, such as central district office to building level, this is referred to as School-Based Management (SBM). However, decentralizing can go even further down the ladder to include grade levels, classrooms or other groups within the building. However, you name it, the goal is to empower and influence various levels of responsibility to assume leadership in their respectful domain. Teachers, instructional coaches, curriculum directors, paraprofessionals, building substitute teachers, parent groups and the like are encouraged to provide insights as decisions are being made (Harion & Loh, 1970). Decentralizing takes time to develop, with consideration given to the policies of the district, district goals and values and resources available (Llego, Marquez & Salioan, 2016).
- 3. Safety.** A basic human need according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, a climate of safety includes social, emotional and psychological safety (Maslow, 1943). In 2012, Nettle Creek School Corporation in Hagerstown, Indiana, created a committee of parents and staff to identify and prioritize factors leading to a positive school climate, using the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI) (NCSS, n.d.). The findings concluded that safety (sense of emotional safety and physical safety) was the top concern. In a team effort, the committee worked on identifying strengths within their safety protocols, providing some evidence that the perception of safety may have played a role in their findings.



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Districts spend a lot of time and money creating policies around safety, and yet, some stakeholders, staff and students are unaware of where to turn or how to respond. Safety does not stop with students; teachers need safeguards around their mental health as well. Creating an environment where space is held to acknowledge the hardships teachers (and all staff for that matter) are facing is warranted. During the pandemic, the coined phrase “better together” was used in several ads, workplaces and in media. However, teachers can often silo themselves and silence their own psychological needs as they tend to the high needs of students, often viewing their own needs as secondary (Boudreau, 2019). According to Mental Health America, to create a climate that allows and responds to this safety, leaders at all levels can ensure not only benefits that address mental health

needs, but taking time to listen, smile, laugh, have fun and remember “the why” can be a great way to reset and feel joy.

These focal points will not guarantee an administrator has automatically accomplished a positive school climate, and there are certainly many other angles to consider. Knowing the community, district, building and team will help identify a good starting point for an administrator. The most important nugget is that it’s not a one-(wo)man show, and it takes a village to develop a climate. Leaning into the district’s resource of people, trusting their expertise and listening to what is important may support a journey of job satisfaction, team mentality and eventually, hopefully, a climate all stakeholders are proud to call their own.

For more information, please contact Dr. Griffith at sgriffith@iu28.org

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Students Guiding Students: A Self-Reflective SMART Mentoring Program

Continued on from page 26

What is the preliminary observation of the SMART mentoring program?

As the first semester comes to a close, the following discoveries are being made:

1. It’s possible that students who move to a new learning setting may face particular difficulties.
2. Connecting with an experienced, wise mentor is a great way to get involved with the school during the ninth-grade transition to high school.

3. The senior mentor program benefits both *mentees* and *mentors* equally.

We will contrast the data acquired at the start of the year with the data collected at the middle and end of the year as the mentor program grows.

For further information, please contact Dr. Flicker at bflicker@kasd.org

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Home Visits – Making an I'MPACT

By Matthew D. Moyer



About the Author: Matthew D. Moyer is in his 18th year as Principal of Rupert Elementary School, the same elementary school he attended as a child, in the Pottstown School District, Pottstown, Pennsylvania. Mr. Moyer started his career as a fifth-grade teacher in the Spring-Ford Area School District. He then spent three years as an assistant principal at Schuylkill Valley Elementary School in Leesport, Pennsylvania.

With over 20 years in administration, Mr. Moyer is also the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) 2020 National Distinguished Principal and Pennsylvania's 2020 National Distinguished Principal (elementary level). In addition to his job as principal, he is an author, national speaker, adjunct professor and staff developer with Thom Stecher and Associates.

As principals, we know the importance of connecting with our families. Home school partnerships have a positive impact on students' motivation, behavior, academics and social emotional well-being. We constantly search for ways to connect with our families that will benefit our students. In my over 20 years in administration, we have tried numerous methods to connect with families. None of them are better than visiting students at their homes. This provides an opportunity to partner with a family on a different level. At my school, we use the home visits to recognize children and to reinforce positive behavior and work habits. We call these our **I'MPACT Awards**. Our **I'MPACT Team** works together to plan home visits to recognize our students.

What is an I'MPACT Award?

I'MPACT stands for **I'm Pottstown Action Community Team**. Each marking period, the teachers choose one child in each grade level to receive the **I'MPACT Award**. This award may be given for a variety of reasons: citizenship, completion of work, improvement in a specific area, following our *Believe and Achieve* expectations, academic growth or even improved attendance. The award includes a written certificate, balloons, a yard sign and an I'MPACT winner T-shirt. The teacher of each award recipient also writes an explanation of why this child is deserving of being the I'MPACT award recipient.

Who is on the I'MPACT Team?

The **I'MPACT Team** includes the principal, as well as classroom teachers, assistants, guidance counselors, teachers from a variety of areas, district staff and sometimes school board or community members.

How do we conduct I'MPACT Visits?

At our school, we visit one student from each grade level, kindergarten to fourth grade, each marking period to thank them for all the remarkable things they do at school. Following are the steps we follow for our **I'MPACT home visits**:

- ✓ We have a team, run by building staff, which directs the process. At the beginning, my involvement was greater than it is now. The staff values the visits and plans them; however, they come to me to make sure there are no schedule conflicts or any other issues. It has definitely become a teacher-led initiative. One reason it is successful is that we worked early on to get buy-in from everyone. Once this was achieved, some of our exceptional teacher leaders took over the effort. No one is required to attend the visits. We have some teachers who attend every visit, while others attend only when a child in their class is recognized. I publicly recognize staff members individually by name for volunteering their time to be a part of our visits. We value and respect their time and involvement.
- ✓ We plan the date and time for our visits weeks in advance to ensure staff members have time to attend. We have utilized a variety of different days and times. Over the last few years, we have settled on the early dismissal days we have at the end of each marking period. This has allowed us to complete our visits within the regular contracted school day. For my current staff, this works best. However, in the past, we selected a day after school that best suited everyone's schedule. It is important to work with your team to find a time that works for them, realizing that there is never a perfect time when everyone can attend.
- ✓ Each grade level selects one student winner. Teachers try to select a child who may not normally be recognized. Often, it is a child who has shown growth or improvement in a certain area. Our teachers work as a grade-level team to determine a winner. The team has the autonomy to select a winner whom they feel is most deserving. Typically, the teachers select a student from a different class each marking period.

Continued from previous page

- ✓ Each teacher contacts the family a few weeks before our visit to let them know we are coming. **We ask the family to keep the visit a secret from their child.** The teachers explain the process and details to the family. Families make their plans at home for the event. Some invite grandparents and friends, while others prepare food and have invited us in for a few minutes.



Rupert Elementary School's I'MPACT Team make a "home visit" to a student in October 2022.

Sometimes we must be creative in order to meet unique family situations. We have made visits to daycare centers and even to a parent's place of employment. We are flexible with the families, and they work with us to help support their child.

- ✓ One of our teachers plans the route we will take for our visits. After the best route is identified, it is printed and shared with everyone in advance of the visits. Sometimes we adjust our route to meet a special need. For example, some families or staff may have a schedule conflict that requires us to visit a home first or last. We understand these circumstances arise and do everything possible to accommodate unique needs.
- ✓ We go as a team to each child's home. We have a few staff members who volunteer to drive. I know our town well, so I drive and take as many people as I can with me. Others who have knowledge of the streets also volunteer. We always have room for any and all staff volunteers. At one time, we utilized a district van that seated 15 people and borrowed from our high school, on the day of our visits. Over the past few years, we have preferred using three or four separate vehicles.
- ✓ When we arrive, I knock on the door and ask for the student to come out on the front porch. We make sure everyone is in place and that the whole neighborhood knows we are there. We bring noisemakers and everyone applauds and cheers for the student. The surprise and joy shown on the children's faces is amazing! Often, it takes time for them to process what is happening because they are surprised to see their teachers and principal at their home.

- ✓ As principal, I read a certificate about why the child was selected for this honor. This is a short, unique piece written by the teacher specifically for the child. Each is a masterpiece and something special the child and their family can keep forever.

- ✓ We give the child balloons, an "I'MPACT WINNER" T-shirt (ordered from a local vendor) and we put a sign in their yard so their achievement is visible to the entire

neighborhood. The yard signs are purchased from an online vendor and read: "I'MPACT Winner lives here!" They stay in the yard for as long as the family would like. We have seen them years after our visits, still proudly displayed in front of student homes.

- ✓ Finally, we take pictures, thank the family and move on to the next home. Our school has an "opt-out" policy for photos. This means, unless a family requests it, we are permitted to take photos and share them. We post our pictures on our school Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages. These pictures are posted on our web page as well. We also send them to the local newspapers, and occasionally they are posted on their social media pages or printed in the paper. Parents are excited to have their child featured, and often take their own photos or have us send our pictures to them.

- ✓ It takes about an hour to visit all the students and it makes a HUGE impact! These visits are the most fun we have during the entire marking period! While I cannot link this to any specific academic "outcomes," I can say that it does produce numerous "smiles per hour," and that can be measured!

Why do we make I'MPACT Visits?

It is abundantly clear that nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and families working together. These forms of involvement do not happen by accident or even by invitation. They happen by explicit, strategic actions to engage our schools with families, caregivers and other important adults in our children's lives.

We strive to find creative ways to recognize our students for their excellent work and achievements. We are hit with pies, duct taped to walls or asked to dress in silly costumes. We distribute lunches, tickets, coupons, prizes and

Continued on page 33

Welcome NEW Secondary Members

Enrolled Between 6/29/2022 - 12/30/2022

SECONDARY

<u>Name</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>District</u>
Lindsay Houston	Penn Hills SD	Nolan Gerencser	Pen Argyl Area SD
Isaac Tarbell	South Park SD	Quincy Gildea	Seneca Valley SD
Ryan Abbott	Erie Public Schools	Linda Giles	Penn-Delco SD
Dara Allen	Erie Public Schools	Melissa Gillard	Reading SD
Katie Anderson	Central York SD	Sarah Graber	Galeton Area SD
Misty Armstrong	East Penn SD	Tiffany Gratchic	Hempfield Area SD
Michael Arone	Derry Area SD	Michael Griffith	Old Forge SD
Justin Arthur	Hollidaysburg Area SD	Tysean Gross	North Penn SD
Khaled Ashraf	Reading SD	Robert Hall	Gateway SD
Chanel August Ruffin	Kennett Consolidated SD	Lisa Harding	Pine-Richland SD
Christopher Avvampato	Greater Altoona CTC	Dawn Hardman	Quaker Valley SD
Stefanie Baker	Perkiomen Valley SD	Nicole Hegerich	Moon Area SD
Joshua Barnas	Warwick SD	Beau Herbert	Greater Johnstown SD
Stephanie Barnhart	Shippensburg Area SD	Christopher Hewitt	Red Lion Area SD
John Baugher	South Western SD	Linda Hockey	Philipsburg-Osceola Area SD
Maria Baumann	Ligonier Valley SD	Nova Holeva	Warren County SD
Amanda Beckett	Chartiers Valley SD	Eri Hollinger	Conestoga Valley SD
Eric Beiler	Elizabethtown Area SD	Mark Holtzman	Spring-Ford Area SD
Jason Best	Keystone SD	Amy Horvat	Penn-Trafford SD
Janel Biagiarelli	Shaler Area SD	Carol Houck	Sharpsville Area SD
Martin Bigler	Waynesboro Area SD	Jerica Keoseyan	Quakertown Community SD
Jason Black	Susquenita SD	Sarah Kielar	Gateway SD
Staci Blair	Forest Area SD	Kathryn King	Kennett Consolidated SD
Ashton Brady	Keystone Central SD	Andrew Kirby	Downingtown Area SD
Heather Brahan	SD of Borough of Morrisville	Matthew Koval	Erie Public Schools
Andrew Brown	Shikellamy SD	Evan Kramp	Upper Darby SD
Amy Brown	Northeast Bradford SD	Tracy Kuchnicki	Pine-Richland SD
Kenneth Bui	North Penn SD	Rachael Laboranti	Mid Valley SD
Nicholas Bullock	Lebanon SD	David Laboski	Penridge SD
Juliana Ciccarelli	Muhlenberg SD	Nicholas LaMantia	Highlands SD
Jennifer Cierech	Bethlehem Area SD	Steve Lehman	Northern York County SD
Kimberly Clarke	Reading SD	Jennifer Little	Reading SD
Marilee Close	Bald Eagle Area SD	Matthew Lobb	Chambersburg Area SD
Michael Cochran	Neshaminy SD	Kate Long	Allentown City SD
Cheyenne Coladonato	Columbia-Montour AVTS	Nev Lynch	Tulpehocken Area SD
Charity Colebank	Southmoreland SD	Brian Lytz	Interboro SD
Amy Cooper	Chestnut Ridge SD	Courtney Maguire	Twin Valley SD
Toni Crater	Schuylkill Valley SD	Jason Markiewicz	Warren County SD
Kathleen Creelman	Reading SD	Ramón Marquez Pastrana	Wilson SD
Timothy Dailey	Council Rock SD	Jamie Marra	Pocono Mountain SD
Jason D'Amico	Elizabethtown Area SD	Ryan Matsook	Moon Area SD
Louis Didio	South Park SD	Justin McCord	Phoenixville Area SD
Marjorie Diegue	North Penn SD	Stefanie McDevitt	Marple Newtown SD
Natasha Dirda	North Allegheny SD	Justine McEachern	Pennsbury SD
Aaron Durn	Mifflin County SD	Tamara McGill	Wissahickon SD
Patricia Ebbert	Panther Valley SD	Dwain Messersmith	Line Mountain SD
Dawn Eby	Conestoga Valley SD	Craig Metcalfe	Cheltenham Township SD
Cambria Ely	Sayre Area SD	Leaz Metelus	North Penn SD
Jason Falconio	Downingtown Area SD	Hope Migliacco	Reading SD
Katherine Fanelli	North Hills SD	Katie Mooney	Pennsbury SD
Brad Feldmeier	Troy Area SD	Angel Moser-Fisher	Reading SD
Jessica Fetterman	Pennsylvania Cyber CS	David Mosher	Chambersburg Area SD
Alyssa Fink	Hamburg Area SD	Joseph Niagara	Upper Darby SD
Kathleen Flanagan	Upper Darby SD	Ken Nickson, Jr	Erie Public Schools
Lisa Ford	Interboro SD	L. Hope Palm	Mount Union Area SD
Randall Fox	Middletown Area SD	Albert Pater	Riverview SD
Ray Francis	Greensburg Salem SD	Ashley Penn	Avon Grove SD
Jennifer Frederick	Williamsburg Community SD	John Piniat	Philadelphia City SD
Kate Fritz	Lincoln IU 12	Carla Queenan	Norristown Area SD
April Fritz	Shippensburg Area SD	Lauren Raines	Radnor Township SD
Daniel Fuhrman	Erie Public Schools	Jesse Rawls	Cumberland Valley SD
Morgan Fuller	Upper Darby SD	Antonio Riggins	Brandywine Heights SD
Jennifer Gabryluk	Schuylkill Valley SD	Mike Rile	Whitehall-Coplay SD

Welcome NEW Secondary Members Enrolled Between 6/29/2022 - 12/30/2022

SECONDARY	<i>Name</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>District</i>
	Jamie Rockwell	Pen Argyl Area SD	Ca Misha Stewart	Bethlehem Area SD
	Michael Rohrback	Cornwall-Lebanon SD	Dan Swoger	North Allegheny SD
	Kelley Romyn	Red Lion Area SD	Darcy Szymkiewicz	Central Westmoreland CTC
	John Paul Roskos	Penn-Delco SD	Rocco Telli	Norwin SD
	Nate Ross	Towanda Area SD	Daniel Terry	Bethlehem Area SD
	Jackie Sada	Penncrest SD	James Troutman	Norristown Area SD
	Anthony Santiso	Cameron County SD	Jesse Tupper	Pottstown SD
	Charles Sawyer	Upper Darby SD	Hector Wangia	Pottstown SD
	Janelle Schaeffer	Northampton Area SD	Ken Ward	Susquenita SD
Karl Scheibenhofer	Palisades SD	Travis Welch	Burrell SD	
Kimberly Schmeltz	Mount Carmel Area SD	Rita Whalen	North Penn SD	
Rose Scioli	Phoenixville Area SD	Brandon Whitfield	Baldwin-Whitehall SD	
Meghan Sgro	Chester-Upland SD	Susan Wienand	Lancaster County CTC	
Christine Shearn	Line Mountain SD	Nicholas Wilson	Greenwood SD	
Tzvi Sinensky	Delaware County IU 25	Rebecca Wright	Erie Public Schools	
Nicole Singer	Allentown City SD	Jason Zeigler	Wyomissing Area SD	
Daniel Sivak	McGuffey SD	Mark Badtorff	Saint Marys Area SD	
Douglas Skelley	Mars Area SD	Jana Bonds	South Western SD	
Christine Smith	Penns Manor Area SD	Edward Crane III	Bensalem Township SD	
Aaron Smith	Upper Darby SD	Benjamin Harris	Cornwall-Lebanon SD	
Michael Smith	Conestoga Valley SD	Nicole Johnston	Central York SD	
Stephanie States	Waynesboro Area SD	Nathaniel Newsted	Northern Westmoreland CTC	
Robert Stauffer	Northwestern SD	Michelle Smith	Central Dauphin SD	
Matthew Stern	East Pennsboro Area SD	Thomas Wolbert	Commodore Perry SD	

Home Visits – Making an I'MPACT

Continued from page 31

so much more. But the absolute best way we have found to do this is by visiting our students at their homes to reward them! Visiting students at home to recognize them for their achievement at school is a powerful way to make an impact. It is also an excellent way to motivate students to continue their hard work and efforts at school. Although we

still use other awards, our home visits are by far the most unique and well received.

If you are not visiting students at home to acknowledge their good work at school, you are missing out on an amazing experience! For further information, please contact Mr. Moyer at mmoyer@pottstownk12.org

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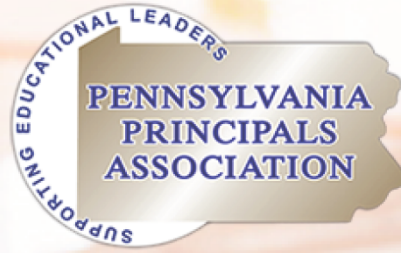
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School Safety After the Bell Rings

By Joey Melvin



About the Author: Joey Melvin is the Director of Center for Safe Schools in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. He spent more than 19 years in law enforcement and was formerly deputy director of Delaware's Comprehensive School Safety Plan. He is also an instructor and Region 3 director for the National Association of School Resource Officers. Center for Safe Schools at Center for Schools and Communities serves as a statewide resource for educators, parents, law enforcement and others on school safety, bullying prevention and youth violence prevention.

Critical incidents at after-school events are not a new phenomenon. While school shooting incident data often hit the media headlines, it is essential to note that the majority of school shootings occur at much higher rates outside of the building. According to research conducted by the *K-12 School Shooting Database*, of the 1,987 documented school shootings since 1970, 1,198 occurred outside of the building (Riedman, 2022). Of those school shootings, 1,117 occurred before or after the scheduled student day (Riedman, 2022). While I've highlighted the high-impact incidents, attention must also be given to the wide range of more commonly occurring incidents, such as fights, weather-related events and medical emergencies. The bottom line, the school's responsibility to provide safe learning environments continues well beyond the end of the school day.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (2022), approximately 7.7 million youth remain on campus for after-school or Out of School Time (OST) programs. Unfortunately, at the end of the school day, most school-based resources and supports are no longer available, yet students are commonly still present. Ranging from an Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapter meeting to the Friday night football game, many students and visitors remain on campus after the bell rings, signaling the "end of the day." For many schools, the plans and procedures practiced between student arrival and dismissal are not practical enough to be facilitated afterward. From limited communication abilities during critical incidents to visitor ignorance of campus expectations, gaps in after-school emergency planning are prevalent and can lead to tragedy.

Preparedness Begins with Discussion

A decisive first step in addressing after-school activities is the simple act of facilitating a discussion with stakeholders. Ongoing emergency planning meetings with school *safety teams* should be regularly scheduled to ensure that identifying concerns, needs and resources remains a fluid process. Individual schools' climate and respective "pulse" fluctuate based on myriad impacts, and a continual communication process is integral to enhanced prevention and response actions. Identifying practices which currently exist in your school's emergency plan provides a valuable baseline to build upon. Reviewing the existing methods will assist the stakeholder groups with creating specific processes for application to after-school activities.

For example, medical emergencies during the school day might involve pre-identified individuals assigned particular roles and responsibilities that cannot be applied after school. Most of the participants involved in the medical emergency response during the regular school day are absent. Important to after-school safety discussions is bringing together staff members who are in supervisory roles. Coaches and teachers who supervise programs after school may only have a perfunctory knowledge of their campus emergency plan. Anyone overseeing programs after school must have clear expectations of their role and responsibilities. It is also important to note that staff members available after school frequently change depending on the various activities and times of the year.



Middle school football game (Georgetown, Delaware). Many school emergencies occur after the end of the school day.

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Communication

Methods of communication commonly utilized during an emergency during the day, such as the public address (PA) system, are not accessible or of any value to communicate with persons outside of the building. Identifying methods of communication available is a valuable first step. The safety team's discussion will determine the dependency on radios for communication and the available staff to respond to an incident. Additionally, schools should consider a communication policy that includes training and requirements related to communications for after-school programs.

The safety team should craft specific responses to their after-school events, including school-sponsored, contracted events and weekdays/weekends. Those responses should include the following.

- Civil unrest
- Medical emergency
- Weather
- Threat of violence
- Evacuation
- Reunification
- Shelter in place

The examples provided should be expanded upon as schools assess and determine what emergencies could occur at their respective locations.

Follow the Discussion with Exercise

After safety teams craft emergency plan enhancements, further refinement should be made with the facilitation of tabletop exercises. Tabletop exercises provide an opportunity to identify and rectify gaps in their response before actual events and can be coordinated and facilitated to offer valuable discussions in a low-stress environment. They also provide an opportunity to bring together safety teams and external stakeholders such as law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, parents, etc. Use the tabletop exercises to identify and document gaps and actionable items to address those needs. In a case study published by the Readiness and Emergency Management



The author spoke in his role as School Resource Officer to a group of elementary school students (in Delaware) about safety.

for Schools Technical Assistance Center (REMS), the South Carolina Department of Education analyzed their facilitation of tabletop exercises, which resulted in the agency identifying the action-oriented approach as being the most successful due to its low stress, involvement of stakeholders and improvement planning focus (REMS, 2022).

Important to after-school safety discussions is bringing together staff members who are in supervisory roles. Coaches and teachers who

supervise programs after school may only have a perfunctory knowledge of their campus emergency plan. Anyone supervising programs after school must have clear expectations of their role and responsibilities.

Keeping schools safe is a foundational goal of all stakeholders in education. The daily efforts and resources put forth to meet the expectations of everyone involved in school safety are substantial. Whether you're a district superintendent, School Resource Officer, parent or student, feeling safe underlies all aspects of measuring success. Parents expect their children to return home, teachers strive for student academic achievements and administrators orchestrate safe and positive climates. Avoid complacency and do your part to prevent or mitigate the impacts of after-school emergencies by reviewing and enhancing your school's emergency plans.

For additional information, please contact Mr. Melvin at jmelvin@csc.csiu.org

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What ESL Teachers Wish Principals Knew

By Dr. Susan M. Sibert and Ian Cunningham



About the Authors: *Susan M. Sibert, D.Ed., is a Professor and Coordinator of the Administration and Leadership Studies Doctoral and Principal Certification Programs at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She is a former public-school principal and director of curriculum and federal programs.*

Dr. Sibert received the PA Principals Association's 2020 Manchester Award for Excellence in Journalism. She welcomes collaborations and comments at smsibert@iup.edu

Ian Cunningham is an English as a Second Language teacher at the Greater Johnstown School District, an urban district in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where he previously served as an English teacher. He has developed strong Spanish language skills in his work with English Learners and their families and often serves as an intermediary between school staff and parents.

Mr. Cunningham is interested in hearing from colleagues from across the commonwealth at icunningham@gjsd.net

The number of English Learners (ELs) has risen steadily in the past decade. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2021), the commonwealth's schools served 71,766 ELs in the 2020-21 school year. The United States Department of Education reports that 400 languages are spoken by ELs across the United States, with 225 languages spoken by ELs in Pennsylvania (Digest of Education Statistics, 2016). With great certainty, Pennsylvania principals will encounter ELs and their families. The number of ELs in Pennsylvania school districts varies widely, with a high of 16,530 ELs reported in the Philadelphia City School District, to many districts reporting just a handful of students, based on the most recent data available (PDE, 2021). Principals are pulled in many directions and depend heavily on English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers to support ELs and their families, not only for instruction, but to navigate the school processes. Principals should consider how to best serve ELs and engage their families through the special skills of ESL teachers, as well as annual professional development for school staff. This is key to meeting the needs of these students and families.

Special Knowledge and Skills

First, ESL teachers have special knowledge and skills to assist students and their families. Although ESL teachers are not required to be bilingual or multilingual, many are or have developed language skills to communicate well with students and their families. The most important factor, even beyond language skills, is a trusted relationship that the teachers form with students and families. ESL teachers are often summoned to assist office staff and guidance counselors in the student enrollment process. Many ESL teachers possess, in addition to foreign language skills, knowledge of translation assistance devices and application tools.

ESL teachers need to have availability to assist families and school staff. Principals might consider a duty schedule for ESL teachers that capitalizes on supporting students and families with non-instructional tasks, such as overseeing students disembarking buses to welcome them in the morning, supervising in the cafeteria line to help with food choices and serving at kindergarten registration to engage families. Consider reevaluating teacher duty assignments and schedule ESL teachers where they can best use their relationships with families and language and communication skills. ESL teachers may be tasked with making family contacts and translation to coordinate services, like access to food programs or to arrange parent conferences, such as meetings for special education. ESL teachers also function as front-line coordinators for other school staff, like communicating with the school nurse about vaccine requirements being unmet or undocumented, and assisting parents translate school photo day forms and other documents sent home in English only.

“**ESL teachers need to have availability to assist families and school staff.**”

ESL Teachers Are the School

ESL teachers teach students, but also work with families. For many parents, ESL teachers *are* the school; the first line of contact and communication to answer questions and to best know them and their child(ren). And from the school's perspective, parental information is critical to student safety and achievement. Parents must understand scheduling, transportation, bus routes, what children need throughout any given day and changes in schedules, like early dismissals or school closures. For ELs and their families, the

Continued on next page

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entirety of the academic term is often the “beginning of the year.” Some families of ELs may be migratory, so “beginning of the year” tasks such as explaining information to parents such as bus routes, student schedules, introductory communication and necessary essential student materials is often a continuous process for teachers and office staff.

Parents who speak other languages and not English may need a great deal of one-on-one explanation and reminders of basic information about the school day and how the school operates. Communication becomes key to student safety. Things like a school closure due to weather must be relayed to parents. Consider how that is being done at your school. Are parent and student handbooks and daily and weekly social media and website announcements posted in the languages that students’ families can understand? Consider all information that is made available to parents each day, week, marking period and year. All parents need that information and ESL teachers are often the source or first person an EL parent seeks or hears from at the school. Some of the information is simple, but greatly impacts a child’s day, like remembering to wear tennis shoes on gym day or for recess, or to announce special events at the school, like school spirit days or traditions of holiday celebrations or unique events. ESL teachers can provide suggestions to school administration on solutions to school communication practices.

ESL teachers find ESL families to be industrious and receptive to learning. Most parents of ELs value and appreciate education. EL families have the same high expectations of academic achievement for their children and want to be part of the school community, but may lack language skills, which could lead to lack of understanding and support to students. Consider as part of the teacher duty schedule, regular time for ESL teachers to support office staff and other teachers with the needs of EL students and families.

Employee Training is a Key

Every employee in the school should have annual ESL Awareness Training to better understand the students being served. The success and safety of ELs depends on an understanding of student needs. In particular, office staff are among the first school employees to meet ELs and their families; however, every employee in the school should have some basic cultural awareness training annually to become more familiar with student needs and languages spoken. In Pennsylvania, most ELs speak Spanish (60.8%), but there are a number of other languages spoken: Chinese (4.7%), Arabic (4.3%), Nepoli (3.7%), Vietnamese (2.4%), and all other languages (24.1%). Some schools see trends in enrollment at certain times of the year and schools that are aware of these trends can better serve students. For instance, a school may notice that between Halloween and New Year’s Day, chain migration peaks with additional students, often relatives of current students, registering for school while time is spent with relatives during the holiday season. Following the holiday season, a pattern of with-



drawing to return home may be seen as this time is important family time in some cultures. Likewise, current students may also spend time away from the school visiting family for lengthy periods of time. The work of registering students or withdrawing them takes significant time from school staff. School employees who are aware of enrollment trends can anticipate the work and better serve students entering and exiting during the school term, whether related to enrollment procedures or re-teaching lessons missed during extended absences.

Principals who share essential information can dispel myths like perceptions that ELs may be perceived as “slower paced” learners due to language barriers when the opposite is likely true. Students, particularly migrant students from non-English speaking homes, often have parents who place the highest importance on education. ELs occasionally have unique lived experiences and may have spoken two or more languages before acquiring English. Educational benefits of proficiency or developing proficiency in multiple languages improves student skills in problem-solving, developing phonetic understandings and making contextual connections. School leaders can help school staff to understand that ESL classes can be seen more on the side of extension services rather than remedial programming.

Summary

Principals who have a deeper appreciation and understanding of the learning needs of ELs and the work of ESL teachers can bring the same to the entire school staff. By utilizing the skills and knowledge of ESL teachers, as well as realizing the meaningful relationships they have with families, students and their families will be better served. Principals are responsible for a wide range of students, staff,

and programs and data indicate that it is likely the number of ELs will continue to grow. Valuing the important role ESL teachers play beyond the classroom can support the safety and success of the entire school.

For additional information, please contact Dr. Sibert at msibert@iup.edu or icunningham@gjsd.net

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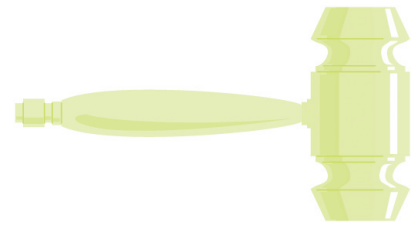
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Legal Corner



By Michael I. Levin, Esq., PA Principals Association General Counsel

The Principal's Place in the Culture Wars – General, Private or Spectator?



Principals are being attacked on all sides in the culture wars. Some principals believe that the attacks are coming from school boards, from parents, from students, from outside community groups, from advocacy groups and/or others. It is a lot to handle, to process and to address. When the Association's Executive Director, Dr. Eric Eshbach, asked that

I write on this topic, I expressed

that it would take a book to address all of the issues associated with this subject. I will attempt to provide the essential points that principals need to keep in mind in the approximately 3,000 words allotted to this column.

Before I get into the meat of this article, I must make a disclaimer. Most of the issues in the culture wars are not a matter of settled law. Some issues have been clearly decided. For example, transgender students have the right to use the bathrooms and the locker rooms consistent with their gender identity. *Doe by & through Doe v. Boyertown Area Sch. Dist.*, 897 F.3d 518 (3d Cir. 2018). However, many issues are not settled, such as the right of transgender students to compete in sports on the teams that are consistent with their gender identity or issues associated with the removal of books or flags from classrooms or libraries. In addition, it is this author's opinion that we witnessed a revolution in the Supreme Court and its methodology for deciding constitutional cases when it issued several novel decisions in the spring of 2022. Although the *Dobbs* decision was the focus of the media, a short phrase appearing in the Supreme Court's decision in *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, is a significant change. The court said: "[t]he First Amendment's protections extend to 'teachers and students,' neither of whom 'shed their constitutional rights

to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.'" *Kennedy v. Bremerton Sch. Dist.*, 142 S. Ct. 2407, 2413(2022). Never before has the Supreme Court applied the *Tinker* standard to employees. Consequently, it is possible that some of the principles that I discuss in this column may not stand the test of time as the culture wars continue to be waged. In the meantime, I offer the following.

First and foremost, always remember that principals are employees and are required to comply with their duties as employees. That means if a school district adopts a rule implicating one of the issues in the culture wars, the principal must not violate the rule. Willful neglect of duties is a basis for discipline or discharge under section 1122 of the School Code, 24 P.S. §11-1122. Principals must comply with their job descriptions and with the school district's Policies, Administrative Regulations, Code of Conduct and other applicable school district requirements.

If your supervisor asks to talk to you about an issue in the culture wars and what you are doing regarding the issue, you have a duty of cooperation and a duty to respond to the questions. Long ago, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court said: "When a [tenured employee] refuses to answer, upon being asked by his superior, . . . this is evidence, . . . of 'a lack of professional fitness' of responsibility to the [tenured employee's] profession and to the school system, and such refusal to answer, 'constitutes a willful violation of the school laws of this Commonwealth.'" *Kaplan v. Sch. Dist. of Philadelphia*, 388 Pa. 213, 226, 130 A.2d 672, 679 (1957). Unlike employees in a collective bargaining unit, principals do not have "Weingarten" rights to be represented at such a meeting when the principal is being questioned. The United States Supreme Court held that an employer's denial of employee's request that union representative be present at an investigatory interview which the employee reasonably believed might result in disciplinary action violated the employee's rights. *N.L.R.B. v. J. Weingarten, Inc.*, 420 U.S. 251 (1975). However, this rule does not apply to the "meet and discuss" groups that are for the limited pur-



poses of arriving at a compensation plan under section 1164 of the School Code, 24 P.S. §11-1164.

Although principals must comply with school district requirements, that does not mean that principals are not citizens. Principals are entitled to express their views. The issue is when and how those views are expressed and the probable effects of the expression of those views. Context matters and facts matter so you must be careful that your expression of your views is protected under applicable law and does not cross the line. There are a few fundamental rules to keep in mind.

The United States Supreme Court has said:

[A] citizen who works for the government is nonetheless a citizen. The First Amendment limits the ability of a public employer to leverage the employment relationship to restrict, incidentally or intentionally, the liberties employees enjoy in their capacities as private citizens. See *Perry v. Sindermann*, 408 U.S. 593, 597, 92 S. Ct. 2694, 33 L. Ed. 2d 570 (1972). So long as employees are speaking as citizens about matters of public concern, they must face only those speech restrictions that are necessary for their employers to operate efficiently and effectively. See, e.g., *Connick, supra*, at 147, 103S. Ct. 1684, 75 L. Ed. 2d 708 (“Our responsibility is to ensure that citizens are not deprived of fundamental rights by virtue of working for the government”).

Garcetti v. Ceballos, 547 U.S. 410, 419 (2006).

On the other hand, in that same case, the court said: We hold that when public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties, the employees are not speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline.

Id. at 421.

It is sometimes difficult to know when principals are making statements pursuant to their official duties or speaking as private citizens. But it is often easy to make that determination. When a principal is speaking at an assembly or graduation ceremony, it is pursuant to their official duties. When a principal is determining what books to keep in the library and speaks on the subject, it is pursuant to his/her official duties. When the principal posts announcements on the school's website, it is pursuant to the principal's duties.

However, if the principal opposes what the school board is or is not doing with library books, for example, there are ways to engage in professional speech that is respectful and protected under the law. For instance, unrelated to your duties as an employee, you can speak about matters of public concern under the Free Speech Clause of the First Amendment as long as you do not violate applicable rules too many to enumerate here. Suffice it to say that such speech is not totally protected under the First Amendment even when the First Amendment applies.

Other laws that protect certain speech is found in the various anti-discrimination laws, such as Title IX, Section

504, the Americans with Disabilities Act (“the ADA”), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (“the ADEA”) and Title VII. All of these laws contain anti-retaliation provisions, although the precise scope of the protections is not exactly the same in all of the laws. What this means is that if you advocate for rights that are protected by those laws, the school district cannot take an adverse job action against you. For example, the anti-retaliation provisions of Title VII provide the following:

- (a) **Discrimination for making charges, testifying, assisting, or participating in enforcement proceedings.** It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer to discriminate against any of his employees . . . *because he has opposed any practice made an unlawful employment practice by this title* [42 USCS 2000e–2000e-17], or because he has made a charge, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under this title [42 USCS 2000e–2000e-17].

42 U.S.C.S. 2000e-3. (Bold in the original; italics added.)

Principals have the right to oppose any employment practice of the school district that is unlawful under Title VII. It is critical, therefore, to know what is unlawful under Title VII because opposition to employment practices that are not unlawful is not protected.

In terms of the culture wars, the United States Supreme Court held that discrimination by an employer against a transgender employee is a violation of Title VII. *Bostock v. Clayton Cty.*, 140 S. Ct. 1731 (2020). Therefore, if a school district has a practice of prohibiting a transgender employee from using the bathroom consistent with his/her gender identity, a principal's opposition to that practice is protected. However, the principal cannot engage in that opposition while he/she is supposed to be performing his/her duties. Just like union representatives are protected when engaging in “concerted action,” they are not permitted to engage in union activities while they are supposed to be performing their duties. Therefore, a “building representative” is supposed to be “prepping” during his/her preparation period and can be disciplined if he/she is interviewing witnesses for an upcoming grievance instead. As stated previously, context and facts matter.

One of the ongoing issues in the culture wars is the use of pronouns by employees and students. There is no jurisprudence, no body of law, on the issue of pronouns. There are no laws governing pronoun usage. Pronouns are a matter of grammar and English usage. However, some individuals prefer to use pronouns and would like others to use pronouns that are not consistent with grammar or the definitions of the words. It is my opinion that the only legal rules that seem to be established for the use of pronouns is that transgender students have the right to use and be referred to with the pronoun consistent with their gender identity. Although the *Boyertown* case did not address pronoun

usage, the analysis of the court is such that it would not be reasonable to conclude that a transgender student has the right to use the bathroom consistent with his/her gender identity, but not the pronoun consistent with his/her gender identity. However, concluding that transgender employees and students have the right to use the pronoun that aligns with his/her gender identity does not automatically give any other individual, regardless of preference or sexual orientation, the right to use any pronoun that he/she desires. A male student, for example, cannot declare that he is “gender neutral” or “non-binary” and that he wants people to refer to him as “they” or “it.” Having a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment does not require that the dictionary be thrown out and that others be compelled to engage in speech with which they may disagree. The First Amendment prohibits government from compelling speech. However, there may be situations – other than the situation of a transgender student – where there may be a reason under another law to use a different pronoun. For example, the student may have a disability that is to be accommodated by the use of the student-chosen pronoun. The student may be subject to bullying or unlawful harassment, and the remedy may be to address pronoun usage. But there is no legal right for a student or employee to simply require others to violate the rules of grammar or to misuse the definitions of words like pronouns.

In the prior paragraph, I suggested that there may be laws that compel a school district to use other than the usual pronouns for a student – such as the disability discrimination laws or the anti-bullying laws. In fact, I can identify over 30 different laws, regulations and school district policies that are implicated by pronoun and name usage. The complete list is as follows:

1. The Free Speech clause of the First Amendment;
2. The Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment;
3. The constitutional right of Parents to raise their children under the Fourteenth Amendment;¹
4. The Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment;
5. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”);²
6. The regulations under FERPA;³
7. The Protection of Pupil Rights Act;⁴
8. The regulations under the Protection of Pupil Rights Act;⁵
9. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”);⁶
10. The regulations under the IDEA;⁷
11. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“Section 504 “);⁸
12. The regulations under Section 504;⁹
13. The Americans with Disabilities Act (“the ADA”);¹⁰
14. The regulations under the ADA;¹¹
15. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”);¹²
16. The regulations under Title IX;¹³



17. The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act;¹⁴
18. The Child Protective Services Act;¹⁵
19. The anti-bully provisions of the School Code;¹⁶
20. Section 1317 of the School Code;¹⁷
21. Pennsylvania’s Judicial Change of Name Statute;¹⁸
22. Regulations regarding amendments to birth certificates;¹⁹
23. The confidential communications to school personnel provision of the Judicial Code;²⁰
24. The confidential communications to psychiatrists or licensed psychologists provision of the Judicial Code;²¹
25. Chapter 14 of the regulations of the State Board of Education;²²
26. Chapter 15 of the regulations of the State Board of Education;²³
27. 22 Pa. Code 4.4(c);²⁴
28. 22 Pa. Code 11.41;²⁵
29. The law regarding the age of majority in Pennsylvania;²⁶
30. The Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for Educators;²⁷ and
31. Multiple School Board Policies, including the following:²⁸
 - a. Policy 216, regarding student records.
 - b. Policy 826, regarding protected health information.

There is not enough space in this column to address how names and pronouns implicate these laws, regulations and policies, but I will provide a few examples. Suppose a teacher decides to give his students a survey asking for them to provide their “preferred pronouns.” It is my opinion that such a survey arguably is in violation of the Protection

of Student Rights Law, 20 U.S.C.A. §1232h. That law provides, in part, as follows:

No student shall be required . . . to submit to a survey . . . that reveals information concerning . . . (3) sex behavior or attitudes; . . . (7) religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent; . . ., without the prior consent of the student (if the student is an adult or emancipated minor), or in the case of an unemancipated minor, without the prior written consent of the parent.]

20 U.S.C.S. § 1232h.

A student's preferred pronoun implicates sex behavior or attitudes and potentially religious beliefs. Consequently, such a survey should not be distributed to students, particularly without obtaining prior consent. This section also implicates Pennsylvania law as to the age of majority. For many purposes under federal law, when a student turns 18, designated parental rights transfer to the student. This section of the law, however, does not transfer the age of consent to age 18. Instead, it would appear to transfer at age 21. In Pennsylvania, the Statutory Construction Act defines an "adult" for statutory purposes as "An individual 21 years of age or over."

1 Pa.C.S. § 1991.

Suppose that the survey is conducted, and a boy responds that he wants to be referred to as "they." Is anyone required to call him "they"? Are teachers or administrators required to call this male student "they" just because he answered a survey question that "they" is his "preferred pronoun"? Are other students required to call him "they"? Are visitors and other parents in the school required to call him "they"? If the school is committed to a caring, safe and nurturing environment, and if it makes the student feel better to be called "they," does that mean when teachers meet to discuss their students outside of the presence of the student, the teachers are required to refer to the male student as "they" in that meeting? If, as a result of the meeting, records are prepared, does the writer of the records have to use the word "they" when referring to "him" in the records? Are the answers to any of these questions different if the student is six years old, or if the student is 19? Are the answers to any of these questions different if the parent opposes the student's wishes? Is it "child abuse" if the parents oppose the child's wish to be called "they"? Is it "child abuse" if a teacher or

counselor does not use the student's preferred pronoun? Is it a matter of unconstitutional "compelled speech" to require employees or other students to call the child "they"? One court summarized the applicable legal principles as follows:

"It is firmly established that freedom of speech prohibits the government from telling people what they must say." *Rumsfeld v. F. for Acad. & Institutional Rts., Inc.*, 547 U.S. 47, 61, 126 S. Ct. 1297, 164 L. Ed. 2d 156 (2006); see, e.g., *West Virginia State Bd. of Educ. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 642, 63 S. Ct. 1178, 87 L. Ed. 1628 (1943) (state law requiring schoolchildren to recite Pledge of Allegiance and salute the flag held unconstitutional). This freedom to decide "what not to say" is an "important manifestation of the principle of free speech," *Hurley v. Irish-Am. Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Grp. of Boston*, 515 U.S. 557, 573, 115 S. Ct. 2338, 132 L. Ed. 2d 487 (1995), and has been held to limit "the government's ability to force [a] speaker to host or accommodate another speaker's message." *Rumsfeld*, 547 U.S. at 63.

Emilee Carpenter, LLC v. James, 575 F. Supp. 3d 353, 370 (W.D.N.Y. 2021).

“**A student's preferred pronoun implicates sex behavior or attitudes and potentially religious beliefs.**”

The answer to all of the foregoing questions is, "it depends." It depends upon context and other facts. For example, is the student disabled under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("the IDEA") where the use of the preferred pronoun is necessary to enable the child to receive a free appropriate public education ("FAPE")? Is the preferred pronoun required under the student's Individualized Educational Program ("IEP") or the student's service agreement under Chapter 15 of the State Board regulations? See 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 15. In short, depending upon the context and facts, there may be different answers to these questions.

The best advice I can provide to principals to address these issues and to answer these questions is to advise that it is not your job to answer them or to make the decisions as to what to do. But it is your job to recognize

when these issues need to be addressed in your building and to refer the issues to those whose job it is to develop the answers and to provide guidance as to how the specific issue is to be handled. One student may have the right to be called "they," but another student may not. *It all depends.*

End Notes

- ¹ As stated by the United States Supreme Court, “[t]he Constitution protects a parent’s right to raise his children. See *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57, 66, 120 S.Ct. 2054, 147 L.Ed.2d 49 (2000).” *United States v. Shultz*, 733 F.3d 616, 623 (6th Cir. 2013).
- ² 20 U.S.C.A. § 1232g (establishing certain privacy and access rights for students and parents to student records).
- ³ 34 C.F.R., Part 99.
- ⁴ 20 U.S.C.A. § 1232h (limiting certain student surveys, analysis and evaluations).
- ⁵ 34 C.F.R., Part 98.
- ⁶ 20 U.S.C.A. § 1400*et seq.* (regulating specially designed instruction and related services for students with disabilities).
- ⁷ 34 C.F.R., Part 300.
- ⁸ 29 U.S.C.A. §794 (regulating specially designed instruction and related services for students with disabilities; prohibiting discrimination against students with disabilities).
- ⁹ 34 C.F.R., Part 104.
- ¹⁰ 42 U.S.C.A. § 12101*et seq.* (prohibiting discrimination of individuals with disabilities).
- ¹¹ 28 C.F.R., Part 35 (nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in state and local government services).
- ¹² 20 U.S.C.A. § 1681 (prohibiting sex discrimination).
- ¹³ 34 C.F.R., Part 106.
- ²⁴ 43 P.S. § 951 (prohibiting discrimination, including sex discrimination).
- ³⁵ 23 Pa.C.S.A. § 6301 (prohibiting child abuse and mandating certain reporting).
- ⁴⁶ 24 P.S. § 13-1303.1-A (prohibiting bullying of students).
- ⁵⁷ 24 P.S. §13-1317 (Every teacher, vice principal and principal in the public schools shall have the right to exercise the same authority as to conduct and behavior over the pupils attending his school, during the time they are in attendance, including the time required in going to and from their homes, as the parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to such pupils may exercise over them.)
- ⁶⁸ 54 Pa.C.S.A. § 701 *et seq.* (regulation, use and change of names).
- ⁷⁹ 28 Pa. Code §1.3.
- ²⁰ 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 5945 (protecting confidential communications of students made to certain school personnel).
- ²¹ 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 5944 (protecting confidential communication of students to school psychologists).
- ²² 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 14 (governing specially designed instruction and related services for children with disabilities).
- ²³ 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 15 (prohibiting discrimination of students with disabilities).
- ²⁴ 22 Pa. Code §4.4(c) (requires access to educational programs without discrimination on the basis of a student’s sexual orientation).
- ²⁵ 22 Pa. Code §11.41(a) provides: “Each school board shall adopt written policies concerning district child accounting, attendance, admission, excusal and program procedures as necessary to implement this chapter. The policies shall be a matter of public record.”
- ²⁶ The Statutory Construction Act defines an “adult” as “[a]n individual 21 years of age or over.” 1 Pa.C.S.A. §1991, Consequently, for purposes of statutes engaged after September 1, 1937, the “age of majority” in Pennsylvania is generally 21. For purposes of the Rules of Civil Procedure in Pennsylvania’s Courts, however, that age of majority is 18 years of age or older. Pa.R.C.P. 76. This implicates certain rights between a student and the student’s parents. However, notwithstanding the general rules that a child is not an “adult” until age 21, there are many specific federal and state statutes that terminate parental rights at age 18 or transfer those rights to the student upon attaining age 18.
- ²⁷ 22 Pa. Code, Chapter 235.
- ²⁸ Policies that are implicated regarding students’ names include 216, 210, 231 and others.

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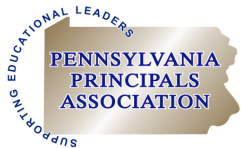
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