

THE PENNSYLVANIA Administrator



**SAVE THE DATE
FOR SUMMIT25
Page 9**

**RSS ROUNDUP
WWDD: Dr. Dina Wert -
Leader, Mentor, Friend
Page 11**





Approved 403(b) Provider



For 55 years, our financial professionals have been helping employees of schools, universities and other non-profit organizations prepare for their retirement.



Scan the QR Code to learn more!

When you work with us you'll get access to:



a customized financial strategy to reflect your goals

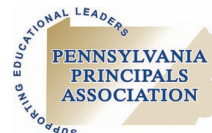
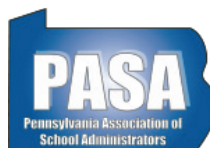


a wide selection of investment options



a wealth of financial guidance

As your financial professional, we are available to meet with you regularly to review your investments and help ensure that your retirement plan continues to reflect your needs.



To contact Lincoln Investment, please call Alexandra Gaglianese at 267-925-2634.



Philadelphia Regional Office
5 Walnut Grove Drive
Suite 240
Horsham, PA 19044

Pittsburgh Office
Blaymore I Office Building
1606 Carmody Court
Suite 102
Sewickley, PA 15143

Lehigh Valley Office
One East Broad Street
Suite 550
Bethlehem, PA 18018

The Lincoln Investment family of companies nor any of its representatives is affiliated with the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), Pennsylvania Principals Association (PPA) and Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education (PAMLE); and PASA, PPA and PAMLE does not sponsor, authorize or endorse the retirement educational services described in this or other communications of Lincoln Investment.

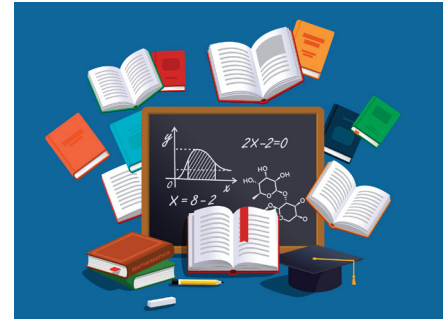
Advisory services offered through Capital Analysts or Lincoln Investment, Registered Investment Advisers.

Securities offered through Lincoln Investment, Broker-Dealer, Member FINRA/SIPC. www.lincolninvestment.com

EDITOR'S NOTE



Before the rest of the leaves fall from the trees, the air turns cold and the snow starts to fly, I hope you are enjoying the fall weather and all of the activities that come with this lovely season. Your busy school year should be well underway as the holiday season approaches. As Dr. Eshbach outlines in his *Executive Director's Notepad* column on **page 4**, we at the PA Principals Association are always creating new programs and services for you, and we are now launching some exciting new



initiatives. Additionally, you should mark **August 3–5, 2025**, as the date of our **SUMMIT25 for PA Educational Leaders**. (See page 9 for more.) Keep checking our website, *The Exchange* and future publications for more information.

In addition to lobbying on your behalf at the state and federal levels, the Association is here to help you with Act 93 assistance, professional development opportunities and the resources you need to be an effective school leader. As a school administrator, you will find many useful articles in this issue covering subjects such as recruiting practices, social emotional learning, educational leadership and improving professional development, among many others. For information on how to submit an article for the upcoming edition, see below. ■

Enjoy this issue!

Sheri Thompson, Editor

Submit an Article for The Pennsylvania Administrator Winter 2025 Edition

The Pennsylvania Principals Association is seeking articles for the **Winter 2025 issue** of *The Pennsylvania Administrator* magazine. There is no theme for this issue so any education-related article may be submitted and considered for publication by our editorial review board.

To submit an article for this issue, please send it to sherit@paprincipals.org by **January 10, 2025**. For article specifications, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/2kr8td3v>

Dates to Remember...

July 2025

11-13 UNITED - The National Conference on School Leadership
(NAESP & NASSP)
Seattle, Washington

AUGUST 2025

3-5 SUMMIT25 - For PA Educational Leaders
The Nittany Lion Inn & State College Area High School
State College, Pennsylvania

Letter to the Editor

To submit a *Letter to the Editor* for an upcoming edition of *The Pennsylvania Administrator*, please send it to Sheri Thompson, Editor, at sherit@paprincipals.org.

The deadline for the Winter 2025 issue is January 10, 2025.

SHARE YOUR GOOD NEWS!

Were you recognized at your school or district, received an award or honor, earned an advanced degree or certification, got married, added to your family?

We want to highlight YOU and share your GOOD NEWS with your fellow education leaders across Pennsylvania in our *Weekly Digest*! Please send the following information to Sheri Thompson at sherit@paprincipals.org: full name, school, school district and phone number, as well as a brief explanation of your good news (2-3 brief sentences) and a high-resolution photo of yourself or depicting your good news.

THE PENNSYLVANIA
Administrator

ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP

President

James E. Orichosky - Bald Eagle A.S.D.

Immediate Past President

Dr. Maureen D. Letcher - Hollidaysburg A.S.D.

ASSOCIATION STAFF

Executive Director

Dr. Eric C. Eshbach

Assistant Executive Director

Dr. Michael S. Snell

Assistant Executive Director for Member Engagement

Dr. Lauren S. Holubec

Director of Communications/Editor

Sheri Thompson

Director of Programs

Rebekah Smith

Director of Membership & Finance

Ashley Haynesworth

Business Manager

Jeff Ammerman

Executive Assistant

Julie Sunday

Regional Service Specialists (RSS)

East Region: Peg Foster/Dr. Carl McBreen/Thomas Mulvey

Central Region: Tammie Burnaford/Susan Martin/Darren McLaurin

West Region: Cynthia Zajac/Michael Allison/Dr. Carol Sprinker

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Dr. Mark Abbondanza, Canon-McMillan S.D.

Daniel Daum, Corry A.S.D.

Richard Houseknecht, Pennsbury S.D. (Ret.)

Dr. Edward Smith, Owen J. Roberts S.D.

Dr. Melanie Susi, Downingtown A.S.D.

Dr. Deborah Weaver, Elizabethtown A.S.D. (Ret.)

Dr. David Wiedlich, Radnor Township S.D.

The Pennsylvania Administrator is published three times a year in the winter, spring and fall by the Pennsylvania Educational Leadership Foundation and the Pennsylvania Principals Association, 122 Valley Road, Enola, PA 17025. (717) 732-4999. It is entered as third class mail in Dauphin County, PA.

Articles printed in the publication may be divergent in the point of view or controversial, but the Pennsylvania Principals Association feels that members can best be served through discussion and debate of issues. The articles published in *The Pennsylvania Administrator* represent the ideas and/or beliefs of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the ideas and views of the Pennsylvania Principals Association unless so stated. Paid advertisements printed in the publication do not denote endorsement by the association.

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.

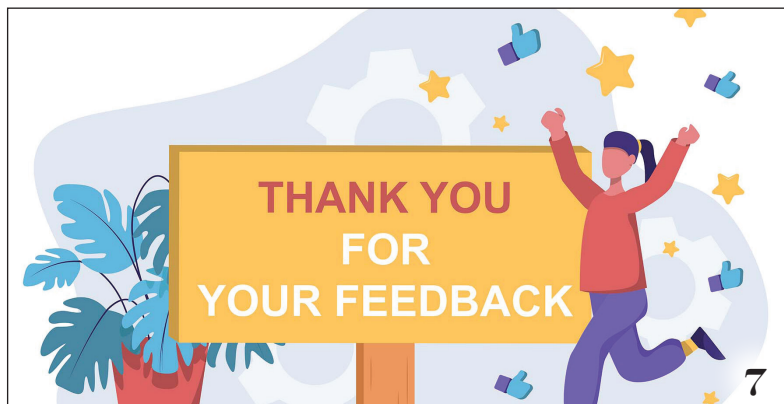
Telephone: (717) 732-4999 • Fax: (717) 732-4890

Email: sherit@papincipals.org

Website: www.papincipals.org

SPECIAL FEATURES

- 1 SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR**
The Pennsylvania Administrator Winter 2025 Edition
- 5 CHECK OUT “THE EXCHANGE” -**
Our Online Community!
- 6 MICHAEL FEDISSON NAMED PENNSYLVANIA’S**
2024 Principal of the Year
- 9 SAVE THE DATE FOR SUMMIT25**
For PA Educational Leaders - August 3-5, 2025
- 13 DOMAIN 4 IN ACTION:**
Enhancing Professional Growth by Just Sharing
Krista Venza
- 15 ENRICHING, ENGAGING AND EDUCATIONAL:**
Two Student Veteran-Centered Programs
Dr. Stephen Chortanoff and Joseph Acri
- 22 FROM HIRING TO HEALING:**
How Principals Integrate Social and Emotional Learning Through the Hiring Process
Patricia Kardambikis, Ph.D., and Jennifer Tepe, Ph.D.
- 25 ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
through Labsites: A Collaborative Initiative Between Two Elementary Schools
Dr. Edward Smith
- 29 THE SCALES OF EDUCATION:**
Accountability and Individuality
Steven Katkich
- 32 CLEARING THE HALLWAYS**
at Pottstown High School
Dr. Christian D’Annibale
- 35 PRINCIPAL JOY:**
Growing Joyfulness while Managing Job Demands
Dr. Amy Balsbaugh





REGULAR FEATURES

- 1 EDITOR'S NOTE**
Sheri Thompson
- 4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTEPAD**
Mission: Possible *Dr. Eric C. Eshbach*
- 7 FROM THE DESK OF THE ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR MEMBER ENGAGEMENT**
Shaping the Future of Our Association: Your Feedback, Our Next Steps
Dr. Lauren S. Holubec
- 10 IT HAPPENED TO ME...**
The Benefit of Legal Protection
- 11 RSS ROUNDUP**
WWDD: Dr. Dina Wert – Leader, Mentor, Friend *Cynthia Zajac*
- 18 ONE MEMBER'S VOICE**
The 16 Keys to Educational Leadership *Dr. Nicholas Indeglio*
- 31 WELCOME NEW ELEMENTARY MEMBERS / NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**
- 38 WELCOME NEW SECONDARY MEMBERS / NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**
- 40 LEGAL CORNER**
Regulating the Response to Pregnancy *Michael I. Levin, Esquire*

OUR ADVERTISERS

- IFC** Lincoln Investment Planning, LLC
- 5** PIL Offering: Transforming Student and Teacher Learning through EdCamps and Effective Professional Development
- 21** Kades-Margolis Corporation
- 28** Horace Mann Companies
- 34** PIL Offering: The Team: Building Leadership Success that Improves Student Learning
- 39** PIL Offering: PA Principals Association Micro-Credential Courses
- IBC** PlayVS
- BC** PIL Offering: Improving Leadership and Student Learning Through Simulations

Mission: Possible

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



Some amazing activities and events have recently taken place at the Pennsylvania Principals Association! At one time, I would have suggested our quest for these changes were equivalent to the title of the movie, *Mission: Impossible*. I now can report the opposite is true. I have alluded to these opportunities in the past, but I can now go on record announcing them.

First, we are happy to have been selected to be the provider of the **Principal Induction Program** for the state of Pennsylvania. Beginning this year, the Induction Program will be based on the *School Leader Paradigm* (<https://tinyurl.com/3t886nm4>). The *School Leader Collaborative*, a consortium of state principals' associations committed to supporting and sustaining the professional growth of school principals and their leadership teams, developed this curriculum. Specifically, the Collaborative enhances the collective capacity of its partner associations by building a network of shared resources, innovative best practices and research that supports school leaders throughout their careers. The PA Principals Association joined this Collaborative as a partner association in 2022 because we saw the need and opportunity to grow our professional development program around four key stages of school leadership:

- **Aspiring** — for those who are interested in becoming school leaders.
- **Launching** — for those in Year 1 and Year 2 of their school leadership tenure.
- **Building** — for those in Years 3 to 5.
- **Mastering** — for those with five or more years of experience as a school leader.

Our Association's selection as the provider of the Principal Induction Program ensures that those in the *Launching* stage of their leadership careers are provided with practical, real-time knowledge about what it takes to succeed and thrive as a principal or assistant principal. The School Leader Paradigm's tagline, "becoming while doing," embodies our key premise: The job of a school principal requires constant growth in all areas of leadership while simultaneously performing one of the most important yet most difficult jobs in education today.

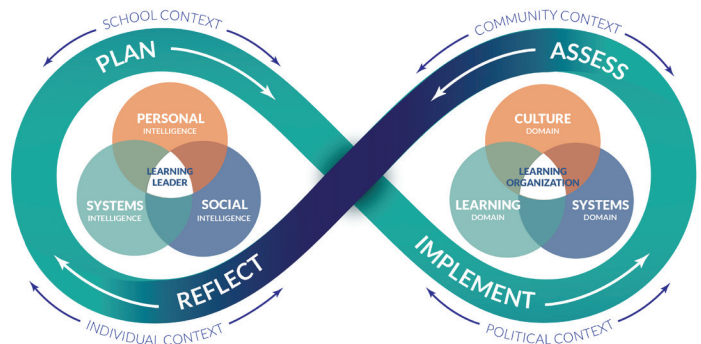
Without going into much detail in this article, readers should know that our induction program will strive to meet the needs of new administrators and their

districts. In addition, it will be facilitated by successful leaders who are currently or were formerly school principals. Our program will be a combination of face-to-face and virtual sessions that will not require attendees to be out of their buildings during the school year for days at a time. It will allow attendees to *become* great leaders while *doing* the work of a school administrator. The fact that successful PA principals, executives, specialists and board members are now guiding and developing the next wave of school leaders is quite thrilling!

The second substantial change on the horizon is a movement to make significant changes to the laws governing administrator compensation and rights. Known simply as "Act 93," section 1164 of the PA School Code has been in place for 40 years. After hearing many of our members lament over the limitations of Act 93 and working diligently to support those of our members whose livelihoods have been limited by this outdated legislation, we began the process of seeking legislative relief. My predecessor, Paul Healey, and I started the process in 2020. As anyone who has worked on legislative reform knows, it never goes quickly.

On Oct. 7, 2024, the House Education Committee passed an amended version of House Bill 2581 sponsored by Rep. Paul Takac from the State College area. This bill provides many rights that are not currently in Act 93, including rights of arbitration and mediation; salaries meant to encourage, not deter, candidates to become school administrators; and disciplinary protections. All the language included in this proposed legislation is a response to surveys and conversations we have had with members, as well as

SCHOOL LEADER PARADIGM *Becoming While Doing*



CREATING HOPE FOR ALL
#CreateHope



©2018 School Leader Collaborative

input we have received from those who work to defend and support our members from disciplinary actions taken against them.

While there are still several steps that must occur before this bill becomes part of School Code, we are optimistic. The final bill may not include everything we have worked on, and it may include amendments that we have not supported or requested. We respect, however, the fact that Rep. Takac has worked with the

PA Principals Association to support and advocate for school leaders.

It has been an exciting time to lead this outstanding association! While providing induction and continuing to push for new legislation have and will change the way we operate as an organization, they do not alter our mission: *To ensure a quality education for every child in Pennsylvania by comprehensively supporting the educational leaders in our schools.* ■



Check Out “The Exchange” - Our Online Community!

The PA Principals Association rolled out an online community last year called *The PA Principals Exchange* or “*The Exchange*.” The purpose is for members to connect, engage, interact and share with one another. It is a new member benefit and may be easily accessed at <https://exchange.paprincipals.org/> using the same login credentials for your member account and our website. **Don't miss out on any Association news such as our Legislative Updates! Use this link for instructions to get started: <https://tinyurl.com/5n6awkwt>**

If you haven't logged in to either, please use this link, <https://www.paprincipals.org>, click on **MEMBER LOGIN** at the top right of the homepage, click on forgot password and follow the prompts. Once you have logged in to *The Exchange*, please **Introduce Yourself!** We are looking forward to meeting and interacting with **YOU!**

PA Principals Association is Offering New EdCamp Across PA

Transforming Student and Teacher Learning through EdCamps and Effective Professional Development

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

Schedule:

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

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

Cost:

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

Presenters:

Primary Facilitator/PIL Coursework Coordinator: Dr. Beth Haldeman

Co-Facilitators may include PA Principals Association Staff and Board Members.

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, after school hours, a day off school or summer inservice.

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

SECONDARY PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

Michael Fedisson Named Pennsylvania's 2024 Principal of the Year



Michael Fedisson, Principal of Bellefonte Area High School in the Bellefonte Area School District, was selected as **Pennsylvania's 2024 Principal of the Year** by the Pennsylvania Principals Association. He was recognized for his achievement by the PA Principals Association over the

summer and by the National Association of Secondary School Principals this fall.

According to Dr. Eric Eshbach, Executive Director, PA Principals Association, "I am pleased with the selection of Michael Fedisson, an outstanding leader and principal, as Pennsylvania's 2024 Principal of the Year. He was chosen for this honor by a committee of his peers for his leadership and extraordinary contributions to his school, his students and his community. It is clear that Mr. Fedisson is a strong, collaborative leader who is committed to the success of everyone around him. We are extremely proud to have him represent the PA Principals Association and secondary principals across the commonwealth."

An educator for 21 years and an administrator for 13 years, Mr. Fedisson has been Bellefonte Area High School's principal since 2017. He began his career at Bellefonte Area School District as a seventh-grade English Language Arts teacher at Bellefonte Middle School (2003-2011); briefly served as the dean of students at Bellefonte Area High School (2011-2012); and served as vice principal at Bellefonte Area High School (2012-2017). In addition, he is a proud graduate of Bellefonte Area High School and a former student athlete.

Under Mr. Fedisson's exemplary leadership, numerous programs and initiatives were developed and implemented in his school. He is extremely proud of the strong courses and curriculum offered at the high school, such as their agriculture education program, "Project Lead the Way Engineering Curriculum," and the recent addition of a "Developing Future Educators" course to address the teacher shortage and highlight education careers for students. His school focuses on career education through the School to Career Committee which has expanded career speaking, job shadowing, internship and co-op opportunities for all students. "In the past three years, we have brought in over 90 speakers to provide students with further opportunities to understand various aspects of careers and the world of work," he shared. As a result of this program, students have developed a career portfolio to highlight potential career choice, post-secondary training/work plan and contributions through community service.

One of Mr. Fedisson's first initiatives at the high school was to implement a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program, and in his second year as vice principal, they were able to reduce their office discipline referrals by 50%. He said, "With continued work from our team, we have maintained that level and cultivated a positive culture in our school with a team of more than 50 student leaders. We have served as a model PBIS program for other schools in central PA."

In the past several years, Bellefonte Area High School has increased its focus on student and adult mental health. As part of the district's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) committee, "Belong, Be Connected, Be Future Ready," Mr. Fedisson and his team strive to provide additional mental health and wellness supports for staff and students. "Most notably, we have partnered with a local non-profit group, The Jana Marie Foundation, to offer training in teen mental health first aid to all 10th graders," he explained. Mr. Fedisson earned a Bachelor of Science in elementary education from Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Education from California University of Pennsylvania. He holds memberships in the PA Principals Association, NASSP, the PA Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

In addition to his career as an educator, Mr. Fedisson is actively involved in his community. He is a 2022 graduate of Leadership Centre County and serves as a committee member for Leadership Centre County Education Day (2022-2024). In 2006, he was named the Walmart Teacher of the Year.

Mr. Fedisson and his wife, Amanda, have three children, James, Jacob and Aubrey. As a family, they enjoy spending time outdoors, hiking, kayaking and fishing. ■

"Mr. Fedisson has done a wonderful job of instituting many student-centered initiatives within our high school. He also works very hard at investing in the overall pride that the students and staff have for being members of the Bellefonte Area School District. I am immensely proud of his achievements; they are well deserved!"

Tammie Burnaford
Former Superintendent
Bellefonte Area School District

Shaping the Future of Our Association: Your Feedback, Our Next Steps

By Dr. Lauren S. Holubec, PA Principals Association Assistant Executive Director for Member Engagement



At the Pennsylvania Principals Association, we are committed to ensuring that we support your needs as school leaders. To do this effectively, we turned to you — our members — for feedback through a recent survey. We wanted to understand your experiences, what is working well and where we can improve. Your responses did not disappoint. You shared valuable insights that will guide us in shaping the future of our association. Let us take a closer look at what we learned and how we are responding to your feedback.

Who We Are: A Diverse and Committed Membership

The survey revealed that our membership is incredibly diverse, with principals making up the majority (59.62%), followed by assistant principals (18.27%) and supervisors or directors (9.62%). We also have a small but important segment of retired members and superintendents.

What stood out most was the strong commitment our members have to the association. Nearly half of you (47.12%) have been with us for over 10 years, with 22.12% being members for 7-10 years. This long-term loyalty is a testament to the value you find in our services. At the same time, newer members, those who have been with us less than a year (9.62%), show that we are continuing to attract fresh faces eager to take advantage of the benefits we offer.

Why You Joined: Act 93, Legal Support and Professional Development

When we asked why you initially joined the association, the reasons were clear. Many of you joined for **Act 93 support and information** (66.35%) — a critical service that ensures you have the guidance needed to navigate complex agreements. **Legal support** (50.96%) and **professional development** (49.04%) were also top reasons for joining, reflecting your need for ongoing growth and security in your roles.

It is encouraging to see that **peer recommendations** (55.77%) played a significant role in why many of you joined. This word-of-mouth advocacy is a strong indication that members are finding real value in their membership — and that is something we will continue to build on.



Satisfaction with Services: Where We Shine and How We Can Improve

We were thrilled to see that 87.38% of you are either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the current benefits and services. Many of you highlighted the **timely legal support** you have received, with responses noting how quickly issues were resolved, often with calls returned within minutes. Several of you also praised our leadership team for their responsiveness and dedication to professional development.

But there’s always room for growth. Some of you mentioned wanting more **professional development opportunities** and **updated Act 93 agreements**. We hear you, and these are areas on which we are actively working. We are also exploring more **networking opportunities** — both formal and informal — so that you can connect with other Pennsylvania principals more easily. Whether it is through regional meetings or digital platforms, we know that being able to share experiences with your peers is vital.

Promoting the Association: Why You Recommend Us

A remarkable 85.58% of you have recommended the association to others, and we could not be prouder.

Your reasons for doing so are straightforward: The association’s **legal support**, **Act 93 resources** and **professional development programs** are helping members succeed in their roles. Some of you also highlighted the **discounts and benefits** available to members as a key reason for promoting us.

For those of you who have not yet recommended the association, many mentioned that you are still learning about the services we offer, especially if you are newer to the association. This feedback is incredibly helpful, and we will focus on ensuring that new members are fully aware of everything we have to offer, right from the start.

Professional Development: Making an Impact

Over half of you (55.21%) participated in our professional development opportunities over the past year, with **Act 45 Training** and the **Annual Summit** among the most popular. We are especially pleased to see that 64.64% of you rated these professional development activities as having a “high” or “very high” impact on your professional growth.

This feedback reaffirms the importance of offering diverse and high-quality professional development, and we are committed to expanding these opportunities. Based on your suggestions, we are also exploring new topics like **AI for administrative tasks** and **teacher recruitment and retention strategies** — areas that are top of mind for many of you.

“Over half of you (55.21%) participated in our professional development opportunities over the past year, with Act 45 Training and the Annual Summit among the most popular.”

Advocacy and Legislative Efforts: Awareness vs. Engagement

While the majority of you (89.36%) are aware of our legislative and advocacy efforts, only 19.35% have

actively engaged with these initiatives. This tells us that we need to do a better job of communicating not just what we are advocating for, but how you can get involved. We will be developing methods to make it easier for you to participate in our advocacy efforts, whether that is through action alerts, webinars or updates on key legislative issues.

Looking Forward: Your Feedback in Action

The insights you have shared with us are more than just numbers — they are a road map for where we go next. Here is how we are responding to your feedback:

- **More Networking:** We are developing new ways for you to connect with fellow members, whether that is through more regional events, online communities or dedicated forums for sharing experiences. One of those ways is by increasing the amount of information we are adding to our online community, *The Exchange!* Stay tuned for additional training and information about how to use this platform in the coming months.
- **Additional Professional Development (PD):** We hear your call for more learning opportunities, and we are exploring partnerships and programs to bring you high-quality, affordable PD on relevant topics like AI and leadership strategies. In the meantime, have you checked out our micro-credential learning opportunities on the PA Principals website? Accessing these on-demand, skills-based and shareable online learning is one click away.
- **Updated Act 93 Resources:** We will be working to ensure that our Act 93 support services remain timely and effective, with regularly updated agreements and guidance. Advocating for Act 93 reform continues to be at the forefront of our minds as we enter this new legislative session.

Your feedback is invaluable to us as we move forward. We are excited to implement these changes and continue building a stronger, more supportive association for all Pennsylvania principals and educational leaders.

Thank you for your dedication and for making this community a vibrant and essential part of school leadership in our state. Please contact me with any questions at holubec@papprincipals.org. ■

Save
the
Date



PENNSYLVANIA
SUMMIT25
FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

AUGUST 3-5, 2025

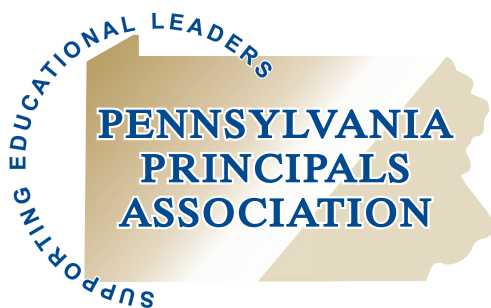
**The Nittany
Lion Inn
&
State College
Area High School**

**State College,
Pennsylvania**

**Act 45 PIL
Hours
Available!**

**More
Information
to Come!**

**Check out The Exchange,
our publications,
www.papincipals.org
& your inbox!**



**A Call for Presenters for Small Group Sessions
Will Be Available in Late 2024!**



IT HAPPENED TO ME...

THE BENEFIT OF LEGAL PROTECTION

This is a column for members by members who have had to depend on the PA Principals Association for legal advice, support and protection. The legal protection afforded to members is invaluable and makes a difference.

A series of questions was directed to a member of the PA Principals Association regarding a recent legal situation.

I had been accused of handling a particular situation poorly. As a result, I was able to share my side of the story. I became concerned when I didn't feel supported by the district or my supervisor, which led me to feeling alone and isolated in the situation. This prompted me to contact the Association. I called Dr. Eric Eshbach, and he provided me with extremely useful advice. He urged me to contact an attorney, which I did.

When you are going through a situation like this, it can be difficult and emotional, so I appreciated the options and guidance provided to me by the attorney. After speaking with the attorney and weighing my options, I made the decision to leave the position.

My advice to any member who is facing a similar situation would be:

- 1. Pay attention to your supervisor. If they are not showing support, do what is best for you! If you don't have your supervisor's support, you really don't have a future in that position.*
- 2. A valuable piece with Dr. Eshbach and Dr. Snell is that they have filled all the roles previously – teacher, principal, superintendent – and can anticipate outcomes. They are really good at predicting the next steps.*
- 3. Don't hesitate to call for guidance or legal advice. The Association is here to help you!*

-Anonymous Elementary Member

Here's your legal protection:

As a member of the PA Principals Association, you are automatically enrolled as a member of NAESP or NASSP. The national membership provides legal protection for job action taken against you as well as legal liability insurance for eligible civil suit claims. This protection provides legal fee reimbursement in the amount of \$1,000 for each consecutive year of membership up to a total of \$10,000 (for example, a person who has been a member for five consecutive years can claim up to \$5,000 in legal costs). **In the event that you are involved in any situation that may result in possible legal action, you must contact the PA Principals Association office immediately.** Members of the PA Principals Association staff will assist you in the claim submission process required by NAESP and NASSP.

However, if you let your membership in the Association lapse, when you rejoin, your legal benefit will start over at \$1,000. Therefore, it is extremely important to maintain your membership.

Principals' legal assistance:

If you are confronted with a legal situation in which job action is being taken against you, if you are named in a lawsuit or if you are dealing with an Act 93 issue, contact the PA Principals Association office immediately at **(717) 732-4999**. ■

RSS ROUNDUP

RSS ROUNDUP is written by your Regional Service Specialists (RSS): Peg Foster, Dr. Carl McBreen and Tom Mulvey, East Region; Tammie Burnaford, Susan Martin and Darren McLaurin, Central Region; and Cynthia Zajac, Michael Allison and Dr. Carol Sprinker, West Region.

WWDD: Dr. Dina Wert – Leader, Mentor, Friend

By Cynthia Zajac, West I Regional Service Specialist (RSS)

Author’s Note: This article was written in loving memory of Dr. Dina Wert. The “word cloud” below illustrates what comes to mind when I remember Dina. In the article that follows, some of these words are highlighted to demonstrate the incredible influence she had on so many people.



On March 22, 2024, many hearts were broken when Dr. Dina Wert unexpectedly passed from this world. Dina continues to inspire us as we work to make a difference for children and their families in schools across Pennsylvania.

Leader: Dina was a principal, a lifelong learner and a leader. She was recognized by the PA Principals Association as the 2013 National Distinguished Principal (NDP) and would later serve as one of the original three Regional Service Specialists (RSS) for the Association. *Trifecta!* The word rolled off her tongue as so many words did when she embraced the challenges and joys of being in this leadership role. Dina was an amazing leader! She was the kind of leader who focused her “why” on motivating others. As Dina would often say, you begin with your “why,” and “then everything seems to jive.”

“Principaling” — a term Dina invented — is an important job that involves building strong relationships

and inspiring others to learn. As a school principal, Dina embraced the philosophy of being a lead learner — encouraging others to learn as she pursued her own lifelong learning. You would often hear her say, “It’s all about learning!”

Mentor: It was no secret that Dina had a doctoral degree, and her dissertation was written about the need for principal mentorship. It was so Dina! How could she not be enamored with the concept of mentoring? She was a counselor for years and always led with her heart. She cared about people and knew when to listen and when to guide. You could always count on an optimistic perspective from Dina. One of her favorite aspects of being a Regional Service Specialist was coaching and mentoring, as she provided guidance to numerous principals and educators around the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. She would take advantage of any chance to offer guidance and advise in a supportive, caring and kind manner. Everyone felt like a rockstar with Dina. Her passion was contagious as she shared her talents, experiences and expertise with others. She embraced every interaction as an opportunity. Dina intentionally ended every conversation in a positive and helpful manner. She would say, “I get it!” or “That’s real.” or “Don’t be afraid to reach out; we’re in this together.”

Friend: “Hey Pal!” “Hi Friend!” These are words that Dina used frequently. Wow! Dina clearly knew how to be a friend. With Dina, there was an immediate connection. She had a clever way of inching into





your heart in a warm and loving manner. To be honest, she may have cleverly hooked you with her spontaneous spirit and comical sense of

humor, but always with good intentions. “Sophisticated El Ed humor!” was how she described it. Her fun-loving spirit and energetic personality made her the ideal host for a meaningful connection. It could be said that Dina set out to build a sincere and compassionate connection with everyone she met.

WWDD: The phrase, *What Would Dina Do* or *WWDD* for short, is inspired by Dina’s long-lasting book club friends who coined the acronym *WWDS* (What Would Dina Say?). For the Regional Service Specialists, this



motto has come to guide their path, while working through our roles of leaders, mentors and friends. *We love and dearly miss our Wyomissing gal!*

So, What Would Dina Do?

- Dina would end every conversation in a positive way.
- Dina would add a creative (or silly) twist to make every experience memorable.
- Dina would be funny!
- Dina would take a picture (often a selfie) of memorable moments.
- Dina would go out of her way to make you feel comfortable, especially when most needed.
- Dina would smile and bring joy to the room.

We at the Pennsylvania Principals Association are eternally grateful for Dina’s profound influence on our community of principals. The Association donated to Berks Nature for a bench in honor of Dina, with the consent and support of her family.



Donations collected through our Diamond Sponsors’ Social at Summit24, along with additional funds, will be used to purchase library books to be distributed to the schools where Dina served as principal. If you are interested in donating, please contact Dr. Eric Eshbach at eshbach@papprincipals.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Cynthia Zajac* is the West I Regional Service Specialist (RSS). She retired as the Principal of Rolling Ridge Elementary School in the Harbor Creek School District. She can be reached at zajac@papprincipals.org.

Regional Services Specialists

EAST



Peg Foster - East I
foster@papprincipals.org



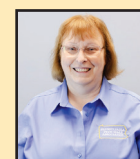
Dr. Carl McBreen - Central II
mcbreen@papprincipals.org



Thomas Mulvey - East III
mulvey@papprincipals.org



Tammie Burnaford - Central I
burnaford@papprincipals.org



Susan Martin - Central II
martin@papprincipals.org

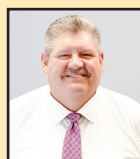


Darren McLaurin - Central III
mclaurin@papprincipals.org

WEST



Cynthia Zajac - West I
zajac@papprincipals.org



Michael Allison - West II
allison@papprincipals.org



Dr. Carol Sprinker - West III
sprinker@papprincipals.org

Domain 4 in Action: Enhancing Professional Growth by Just Sharing

By Krista Venza



The importance of continuous professional learning for educators cannot be overstated. Our districts and schools contain a wealth of knowledge and experience that is just waiting to be shared. *Just Sharing* is a voluntary professional learning initiative designed to foster collaboration, creativity and professional growth among teachers and support staff. The initiative aligns with components 4d and 4e of the Danielson Rubric, promoting participation in a professional community and ongoing professional development.

Educators often find themselves isolated in their classrooms, immersed in the daily grind of delivering instruction and managing students. Despite being surrounded by colleagues, opportunities for peer-to-peer learning are limited. *Just Sharing* aims to bridge this gap by creating structured, yet flexible, platforms for educators to share their expertise and learn from one another. This initiative is based on the belief that professional achievement and student success are deeply connected to our dedication to learning from, with and on behalf of one another. By providing structured opportunities for collaboration and learning, *Just Sharing* enhances professional capacities and fosters a collaborative school culture.

The incredible achievements and activities taking place in the classes I visit never cease to amaze me. As an administrator, I am fortunate to spend a lot of time in classrooms and witness these remarkable moments firsthand. Recognizing that teachers and staff members are rarely afforded this opportunity, I decided to create a way for them to share their ideas and expertise. Each month, I organize a *Just Sharing* session held for a half hour before students arrive. These sessions provide an opportunity for staff members to voluntarily present their insights and experiences to their colleagues.

Though over time many staff members volunteer to present without being asked, there are still occasions when staff members are encouraged to share their knowledge based on observations made during classroom visits. Staff members can share anything they would like to discuss during months when there isn't a set topic or theme for the session. The sessions are fashioned after typical conference-style sessions.

- **Speed Learning** involves five to seven presenters simultaneously sharing their insights with small groups of attendees. Each

session lasts nine minutes, after which attendees rotate to the next presenter of their choice. Over the course of three sessions, participants choose topics that interest them. The objective is to provide quick, impactful insights and ideas that attendees can immediately implement in their classrooms.

- **Spark-And-Tell** features four to five presenters delivering five-minute presentations designed to “spark” ideas and share valuable resources. This is followed by a five-minute question and answer session. The aim is to ignite curiosity and provide attendees with the inspiration and resources needed to explore topics further on their own.
- **Demonstrations** involve presenters preparing and delivering classroom demonstrations showcasing specific strategies or techniques. Each demonstration lasts 13 minutes, with four minutes allocated for travel between sessions. Attendees choose two demonstrations to attend. The goal is to offer hands-on, practical examples of effective teaching practices in action. Demonstrations are typically utilized for topics on technology.
- **Classroom visits** allow teachers to open their classrooms to peers, highlighting specific strategies or techniques during scheduled visits. Visiting teachers sign up for available slots, with coverage provided to ensure smooth transitions. Classroom visits provide an authentic observation experience, allowing teachers to see effective practices in real classroom settings. Classroom visits are typically arranged a few times a year depending on the availability of substitutes or coverage.

Following the first year of implementing *Just Sharing* at Schwenksville Elementary School in the Perkiomen Valley School District, feedback was collected to gauge the initiative’s impact. Of the 67 instructional staff members (teachers and paraprofessionals) in the building, 53 individuals responded to the survey regarding their experiences participating in *Just Sharing* sessions. In the first year, there were three sessions offered, and 12 individuals did not attend any of them. On a 5-point rating scale, where 1 is for I didn't like it and 5 is for I really enjoyed it, respondents were asked to rate their overall experience of attending and/or



Perkiomen Valley coaches, administrators and a visiting administrator shared information on Hexagonal Thinking, Background Knowledge and How it Affects Comprehension, Canva and Finding Joy.

presenting at *Just Sharing*. Of those who responded, 75% gave their experience a rating of 5, while 25% gave it a 4. Participants were also asked to mark all applicable statements regarding their experience: 71.1% reported learning something at one or all of the *Just Sharing* sessions; 67.9% stated that they attended to support their colleagues; 50.9% appreciated the breakfast items and incentives offered; and 69.8% valued the opportunity to come together as a staff to learn. When asked which format they preferred, Spark-And-Tell was the highest rated at 56.1%, followed by demonstrations in the classroom at 26.8% and Speed Learning at 17.1%. Among the three sessions held in the first year, there were 17 presenters. When asked if they would be interested in presenting during the next school year, 60% of respondents indicated that they would present or would consider presenting. We are currently beginning our fourth year of *Just Sharing* at Schwenksville Elementary School.

Just Sharing supports teachers in meeting the criteria of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, particularly components 4d and 4e. For Component 4d: Participating in a Professional Community, the initiative encourages collaboration and mutual support among colleagues, promotes the sharing of best practices and innovative teaching strategies and fosters a sense of community and collective responsibility for student success. For Component 4e: Growing and Developing Professionally, *Just Sharing* provides opportunities for ongoing professional development and learning, encourages teachers to stay informed about current educational trends and research and supports the continuous improvement of teaching practices through peer feedback and collaboration (Danielson, 2013).

Beyond the intrinsic value of professional growth and collaboration, I offer several incentives to encourage participation. Attendees can enjoy a variety of breakfast treats and receive a Dress Down Day certificate, adding a touch of fun to their week. All attendees' names are put into a drawing to win a certificate that says, "come in 30 minutes late" or "leave 30 minutes early." The winning staff member can use this certificate on a day they coordinate with the office to ensure that coverage can be supplied.

Over the past few years, other schools in our district have embraced this initiative, and our superintendent has integrated *Just Sharing* sessions into our administrative retreats. Staff members frequently praise the quick, effective and engaging format, noting the numerous benefits it brings to our professional community. I am always humbled by the number of staff members who volunteer their time to attend these sessions. I admire the courage it takes to present in front of colleagues and am incredibly grateful that the staff members I lead trust me to create this safe space for them to collaborate and take risks.

To further enrich the *Just Sharing* experience, supervisors and coaches from our district, as well as colleagues from other districts and organizations, have been invited to present and/or attend the sessions. These individuals not only bring diverse perspectives and expertise but also strengthen the professional network of our educators, enhancing the overall quality and reach of the sessions. *Just Sharing* is more than just a professional development initiative; it is a celebration of the collective wisdom and expertise within our schools. By creating opportunities for teachers to



Perkiomen Valley administrator, Schwenksville Elementary School librarian, school counselors and teachers shared information on Pebble Go, Inclusion, Self-regulation, Fluency Strategies and Breaking Down Barriers.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Enriching, Engaging and Educational: Two Student Veteran-Centered Programs

By Dr. Stephen Chortanoff and Joseph Acri



DR. STEPHEN CHORTANOFF



JOSEPH ACRI

Amid hundreds of students and staff, a Blackhawk helicopter lands on the football field; a scale replica of a communications' base is shared, priceless wartime photo albums are opened; authentic uniforms, maps and encased maps are displayed and explained. Most importantly, the veterans have arrived to tell their stories to eager students at "Visit with Veterans" and "Vietnam Veterans May Visits."

These once-young veterans, many of whom have served our nation in overseas' conflicts, have offered their time and expertise to the students and staff at Lower Dauphin High School in Hummelstown. In the midst of our current national division, these brave veterans — though fewer in number these days — are prepared to unite us around our nation's fundamental and democratic ideals. We enable a variety of veterans to share their personal stories of service and sacrifice through our two feasible, highly valuable student-veteran-centered programs, ensuring that their lived experiences are acknowledged, valued and shared. Now is the time to "arrange and engage" our local veterans with events designed to promote intergenerational learning, patriotism, citizenship, history, volunteerism and public service. Given their age and life experiences, the veterans connect with students as they discuss their schooling, enlistments, training, combat experiences and post-military family and life experiences. These are worthwhile, free programs that help both students and veterans who might not be familiar with each other's perspectives and experiences.

Two Programs:

Since 2014, during the month of November, Lower Dauphin High School has hosted the "Visit with Veterans" program which brings together veterans from WWII to the present. Veterans Day falls on November 11, making November the ideal month for this initiative. All ranks, military occupational specialty (MOS), branches and eras of service are combined for this half-day session held in the high school library. Each veteran is encouraged to bring artifacts, share stories and answer questions. There is no spotlight or microphone in this informal setting. Each veteran is provided with multiple

opportunities to speak with students as they visit during their classes, study halls and/or over their lunch periods.

The three factors that contribute to the success of "Visit with Veterans" are passion, preparation and support. Upon arrival at the school reception office, student volunteers greet the veterans and escort them to the library. They enjoy light refreshments and informal chats with students as they set up their displays on the tables. The point person distributes an informative, commemorative pamphlet to the veterans and students. To open the event, the point person provides a welcome and thank you message, and a select student choir honors the veterans with a rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner." Throughout the event, students independently visit the veterans at their display tables to learn about their experiences and to view artifacts like models, photo albums and uniforms. At the conclusion of the "Visit with Veterans" event, students deliver hand-crafted thank you cards to the veterans, and a group picture is taken featuring a large American flag as the backdrop. This special picture



2023 "Visit With Veterans" - The PA Army National Guard engaged hundreds of students and staff with a dramatic UH60 Blackhawk helicopter flyover and landing at Lower Dauphin High School. This highlight to the annual event promoted veterans' and service members' contributions and perspectives.



2022 “Vietnam Veterans May Visit” - To conclude the event, Vietnam Veterans gathered below a student-painted banner that welcomes them home and thanks them for their service.

is shared with the veterans via email and is posted on district and high school social media channels. Student-veteran engagement continues even as they escort the veterans to their vehicles. Within a week, the point person composes a follow-up email to thank the veterans and solicit their feedback about the event.

Since May 2022, Lower Dauphin High School has hosted the “Vietnam Veterans May Visit.” The timing of the program coincides with the history curriculum addressing the Vietnam War. All ranks, MOS and branches of service during the Vietnam War are welcomed and paired in our Social Studies Department classrooms. These paired sessions are mutually beneficial because the veterans can share their experiences and resources in small groups. Like in the “Visit with Veterans” program, each veteran brings artifacts, tells stories and answers questions. Some of the most authentic and engaging sessions occur in these classrooms because of the shared stories, MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), photos, wartime letters, helmets and flak jackets.

The “Vietnam Veterans May Visit” agenda is similar to the “Visit with Veterans” agenda. Upon arrival, student volunteers greet the Vietnam veterans at the school reception office and accompany them to the designated classrooms. They enjoy light refreshments and informal chats as they set up their displays. The program features a large “Welcome Home” banner and POW/MIA flag displayed near the refreshments as well as a soft opening where the point person welcomes each veteran and distributes a commemorative pamphlet. The students also provide thank you cards

during the event. The veterans remain in the classroom during the all-day event, while the students circulate through their daily schedule. The veterans share their artifacts (uniforms, photo albums, models, displays), PowerPoint presentations and stories. Free lunch is offered, and some veterans prefer to dine in the cafeteria alongside students, while others eat in small groups with staff members. To close the event, the point person takes a group picture with the “Welcome Home” banner and POW/MIA flag as the backdrop. This special picture is shared with veterans via email and via district and high school social media channels. Students continue to engage the veterans as they walk with them to their vehicles. Within a week, the point person composes a follow-up email to thank the veterans and solicit their feedback about the event.

Summary:

These programs have made an enormous difference in our school community. As annual events that connect students and veterans, they meet three important goals: **1)** enriching the school experience and curriculum; **2)** inspiring and engaging students and staff; and **3)** promoting veterans’ and service members’ contributions and perspectives. We are fortunate to have veterans who are willing and able to make these free, mutually beneficial programs a reality. It is regrettable that veterans continue to die at such high rates and before they have the chance to share their stories with future generations. Please consider this reality and create or adapt these programs to suit your school’s needs.

Implementation Checklist:

- ✓ Promote the mutually beneficial nature of veterans-in-schools’ programs.
- ✓ Designate a point person (a caring organizer).
- ✓ Consult a veterans’ network (Vietnam Veterans Association,* American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veteran Round Tables, family members of staff and students).
- ✓ Enlist students (History Honor Society, National Honor Society, volunteers, JROTC).
- ✓ Consider logistics (facilities, parking, registration, name tags, nurse, disabilities).
- ✓ Assign public relations duties (classroom teachers, school- and district-level communications).
- ✓ Set expectations for all stakeholders (time frame, refreshments, no weapons policy, not a recruiting event, etc.).
- ✓ Schedule dates that best fit veterans and the school.

- ✓ Promote and document events (social media, commemorative pamphlet, pictures).
- ✓ Make it manageable, then refine and expand to adapt to your school's needs.

Please contact the authors, Dr. Chortanoff at schortanoff@ldsd.org or Mr. Acri at jpacri40@gmail.com, for further information and support. ■

***Vietnam Veterans Association (VVA):** The Vietnam Veterans of America was established to promote and support issues important to Vietnam Veterans. Some of these issues are community involvement and to create a positive public perception of Vietnam Veterans. One of the ways this is accomplished is having veterans speak to high school students about their experiences in Vietnam.

VVA is organized with over 700 chapters in the United States. The local Harrisburg Chapter 542 is one of 27 chapters in Pennsylvania. Chapter 542 provides speakers to local public and non-public area schools. This chapter also conducts a monthly Central Pennsylvania Vietnam Round Table that is open to the public. One area of concern is while there were approximately 2.7 million individuals who served in Vietnam, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates only 643,000 are still alive, and their average age is over 75. No statistics on the number of Vietnam Veterans in Pennsylvania exist. This is the last opportunity for students, staff and veterans to interact and share their experiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: Stephen “Steff” Chortanoff, Ed.D., serves as the Dean of Students at Lower Dauphin High School in Hummelstown. During his 21 years in public education, he has served as a secondary social studies, gifted support and English teacher. Dr. Chortanoff earned his doctorate in education from Point Park University. He holds three graduate degrees and a Bachelor of Arts in History from Lycoming College.

Joseph Acri is retired from the Pennsylvania Principals Association as the Assistant Executive Director. He is a graduate of The Pennsylvania State University (Bachelor of Arts) and St. Francis University (Master of Arts). Mr. Acri served as a Sergeant in Vietnam with the U.S. Air Force. He is a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 542. He frequently, along with other chapter members, speaks at local high schools.

Domain 4 in Action: Enhancing Professional Growth by Just Sharing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

share their knowledge and learn from one another, we can build a stronger, more cohesive educational community. As we embrace the spirit of collaboration and continuous improvement, we not only enhance our own professional capacities but also contribute to the

success and achievement of our students. For further information, please contact the author at kvenza@pvsd.org. ■

REFERENCE:

Danielson, C. (2013). The framework for teaching: Evaluation instrument. The Danielson Group.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Krista Venza serves as an elementary principal at Schwenksville Elementary School in the Perkiomen Valley School District in Montgomery County. She is an experienced educator and a fierce advocate for what is best for students. Over the course of her career, she has held several leadership roles, including middle school assistant principal, middle school instructional support facilitator, middle school learning support teacher and high school emotional support teacher.

Ms. Venza earned a Bachelor of Science in Education, along with certifications in elementary and special education, from Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. She continued her education at Immaculata University, where she obtained her master's degree in educational leadership and K-12 principal certification. She is currently pursuing a doctorate at Immaculata University.

Outside of work, Ms. Venza enjoys spending time with her family and friends. She is especially proud of her four incredible sons and enjoys the company of her four dogs. Her dog, Maggie, is a certified therapy dog and often accompanies her to school where she spreads joy and brings comfort to the students and staff! Connect with Krista: Twitter: @KristaVenza; Instagram: kristavenza; and Facebook: /krista.venza.



ONE MEMBER'S VOICE

The 16 Keys to Educational Leadership

By Dr. Nicholas Indeglio



Effective educational leadership is crucial for creating a thriving learning environment that fosters student success. Based on my experiences from the past 25 years and those of my incredible colleagues, I have identified the 16 keys to success in educational leadership. Let's explore these principles together.

1. Do What is Best for Kids

The well-being and success of students is the paramount concern in educational leadership. Each decision should be evaluated through the lens of student benefit. For instance, the debate over later school start times aligns with this principle, as scientific evidence suggests significant physical and mental health benefits for teenagers with more sleep. When you start every decision-making process considering "What is best for kids," you will be able to zero in on the "right" or "best" decision most easily.

2. Either You Run the Day or the Day Runs You

This quote serves as a powerful reminder that, in order to be effective and successful, individuals must proactively manage their day by setting priorities, creating a plan of action and staying organized. It also imparts the importance of perspective and attitude. When I taught self-contained emotional support at the middle and high school levels many years ago, successful students had a "victor, not victim" mentality. They believed they could change their circumstances. Students who did not fare as well usually believed that the "world did unto them." They didn't have the agency to change their lives for the better.

3. Build Trusting Relationships

Trusting relationships are the cornerstone of success in education. Trust fosters collaboration, open communication and psychological safety, encouraging individuals to engage in productive dialogue without fear. This environment leads to higher levels of engagement, motivation and achievement. Trust is built through consistent, honest communication and by leaders being present and approachable, showing

genuine interest and concern for the needs of students, staff and the community.

4. Is the Juice Worth the Squeeze?

Leaders should weigh the benefits and costs of their decisions. A study by the Wallace Foundation (2021) by Grissom, Egalite and Lindsay, showed that leaders who carefully consider the impact of their decisions on student outcomes consistently achieve better results. A simpler interpretation of this principle also fits the old saying, "Is this really a hill you want to die on?" As I get older and wiser, I find that there are fewer "hills" worthy of taking a stand. There is a ton of bureaucracy in the education field, but much of it can be completed perfunctorily. It's only when true issues arise that either truly benefit students or that would truly hurt students, where we should choose a hill.

5. People First

Team members must be valued and supported. Studies show that prioritizing the well-being and satisfaction of staff leads to increased employee engagement and performance. In education, this may



involve balancing decisions for student benefit against potential compromises for staff. Recognizing the challenging work of educators, providing opportunities for professional development and ensuring a healthy work-life balance are all aspects of putting people first.

6. You are Only as Good as Your Last Decision

The quote “You’re only as good as your last decision” underscores the importance of continuous reflection and learning in personal and professional growth. It serves as a reminder that the reliability and caliber of one’s decision-making determines one’s reputation and efficacy. Research from Shullman (2020) suggests that leaders who frequently evaluate their decisions, learn from their experiences and adapt their approach accordingly are more successful in achieving desired outcomes. However, there is a more “devious” meaning to this, too. People have short attention spans and even shorter memories. You can make 10 amazing decisions in a row that benefit everyone, but when your eleventh decision is a dud, well, you’re right back down at the bottom of the barrel wondering how you fell so far so fast.

7. Laugh All the Time

“Do not take life too seriously. You’ll never get out of it alive.” Laughter and humor play a critical role in effective leadership, as they contribute to a positive and engaging atmosphere within an organization. It alleviates stress, boosts morale and enhances creativity. Leaders who use humor effectively can defuse tense situations and maintain a harmonious work environment. A leader’s ability to bring light-heartedness into challenging situations can significantly improve team dynamics and help to create a more enjoyable and productive workplace.

8. Don’t Bring a Problem Without a Solution

Leaders should encourage a solution-oriented approach. This mindset fosters innovation and adaptability, driving positive change. By focusing on solutions, leaders empower their teams and enhance productivity. Encouraging staff to produce potential solutions when presenting problems not only promotes critical thinking but also ensures that everyone is actively engaged in the problem-solving process.

9. You Get More Bees with Honey

Kindness and diplomacy are vital in cultivating strong relationships. Goleman’s work (1995) shows leaders who exhibit empathy and understanding are more adept at resolving conflicts and securing support.

A memorable example comes from the movie *Tommy Boy*. In a scene, Chris Farley’s character, Tommy, persuades a female server to wait on them even though the kitchen is closed. He achieves this not through

demands or anger, but by being charming and kind. This humorous yet poignant moment teaches us important lessons about leadership and human interactions — namely, that a positive approach can frequently achieve more than a negative one.

10. Hire the Very Best; Don’t Settle

In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins emphasizes the importance of assembling a talented team (Collins, 2001). Learning experiences in educational settings reinforce the value of patience and thoroughness in the hiring process, ensuring the selection of the best candidates for long-term success. The right team can make a significant difference in the overall performance of the school, contributing to a positive learning environment and high student achievement.

11. Listen Twice as Much as You Speak

Effective communication involves active listening. Improved team dynamics and increased staff satisfaction are linked to leaders who listen attentively, showing consideration for others’ perspectives and needs. By actively listening, leaders can better understand the challenges faced by their staff and students, leading to more informed and empathetic decision-making. According to a wise Native American saying, the Creator gave us two ears, two eyes and only one mouth, so we should listen and observe twice as much as we speak.

12. Extreme Accountability is Necessary for Long-Term Success

Accountability is key to leadership success. Leaders must take responsibility for both successes and failures, learning from them to foster collaboration and adaptability. This mindset, as advocated by Jocko Willink (2017), is crucial for long-term success. Embracing accountability means not only acknowledging mistakes but also actively working to correct them and prevent future occurrences.

13. Remember, this is the Business We’ve Chosen

Embracing the challenges and rewards of educational leadership is essential for success. The quote from Hyman Roth in *The Godfather II*, “This is the business we’ve chosen,” resonates deeply in this context. It signifies the acceptance of the inherent complexities and triumphs in the field of leadership. Fullan (2014) found that effective leaders demonstrate resilience and passion, driving positive change in their schools. By accepting both the responsibilities and rewards, leaders can maintain their determination and resilience, crucial for making a meaningful impact in their respective domains.

14. Be Vulnerable and Apologize When Warranted

Admitting mistakes and offering sincere apologies build trust and respect. Research from *Frontiers*



in *Psychology* (2020) indicates that apologies can significantly reduce anger and facilitate reconciliation. This approach helps repair relationships and pave the way for effective problem-solving. Leaders who demonstrate vulnerability show that they value honesty and integrity, which are essential qualities in building a strong, trusting community.

15. Promptness is the Courtesy of Kings

Punctuality reflects a leader's respect and commitment. Research supports that consistent punctuality fosters a culture of accountability and professionalism, leading to higher staff engagement and commitment. Being punctual also sets a positive example for students and staff, demonstrating the importance of respect for others' time.

16. Less is More

Simplicity in leadership can lead to more efficient and effective outcomes. Focusing on clear, concise goals and communication strategies, as advocated by Mike Schmoker (2018) in his book, *Focus 2.0*, drives significant

improvements in student achievement. Conversely, lack of focus, as seen in the case of Xerox, can lead to failure. Leaders should strive to streamline processes and focus on the essential elements that will have the most significant impact on student learning and school improvement.

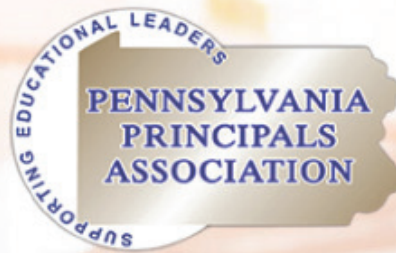
In conclusion, the 16 keys to success in educational leadership serve as a guiding light for those dedicated to shaping the future of education. By prioritizing the well-being of students, managing time effectively, building strong relationships and demonstrating accountability, leaders can create a thriving learning environment that unlocks the full potential of their students and staff. Embracing humor, empathy, vulnerability and simplicity in their decision-making processes, leaders will foster a culture of trust, collaboration and innovation. As educational leaders, we must remember that our actions today will inspire and empower the next generation of learners, paving the way for a brighter future. ■

REFERENCES:

- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to Great: Why some companies make the leap... and others don't*. New York, NY: Harper Business.
- Fullan, M. (2014). *Leading in a Culture of Change*. Jossey-Bass.
- Grissom, J.A., Egalite, A.J., & Lindsay, C.A. (2021). *How principals affect students and schools: A systematic synthesis of two decades of research*. The Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.wallacefoundation.org>
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bantam Books.
- Schmoker, M. (2018). *Focus 2.0: Elevating the essentials to radically improve student learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Shullman, S. (2020). Leadership in times of uncertainty [Webcast]. Continuing Education Series.
- Willink, J. (2017). *Extreme ownership: How U.S. Navy SEALs lead and win*. St. Martin's Press.
- Witvliet, C.V.O., Root Luna, L., Worthington Jr., E.L., & Tsang, J.-A. (2020). Apology and restitution: The psychophysiology of forgiveness after accountable relational repair responses. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 284. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00284>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Nicholas Indeglio, Ed.D.*, is the spirited Principal of Downingtown Middle School since 2010 and an innovative educator since 1998. Recognized as the 2017 National Digital Principal by NASSP, he's also the financial maestro, serving as treasurer for the PA Principals Association. In addition, he served on the PA Principals Association board as the East III Elementary State Director.

Dr. Indeglio's colorful past includes being Penn State's Nittany Lion mascot and a stint in professional wrestling. At home, he's a super dad to daughters Bella and Talia and a diverse pet brigade of nine dogs, two cats and a tortoise. His wife, Danielle, mirrors his educational zeal as a sixth-grade math teacher, making them a dynamic duo in teaching and parenting. He can be reached at nindeglio@dasd.org.



**Kades-Margolis is endorsed by the
Pennsylvania Principals Association**

WITH YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Whether you're a new Principal, or considering retirement, our Financial Advisors can help you plan for the important financial events in your life.



4kmc.com/benefits
800-433-1828



Securities & Registered Investment Advisory Services offered through GWN Securities Inc., 11440 N. Jog Road, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418, 1-561-472-2700, member FINRA, SIPC. Kades-Margolis Corporation, a USRP Company, is not affiliated with GWN Securities Inc.

From Hiring to Healing: How Principals Integrate Social and Emotional Learning Through the Hiring Process

By Patricia Kardambikis, Ph.D., and Jennifer Tepe, Ph.D.



DR. PATRICIA KARDAMBIKIS



DR. JENNIFER TEPE

It is often said that we should hire for heart and train for skill. In the ever-evolving field of education, principals work tirelessly to attract, prepare and retain high-quality teachers for their school communities. Today's principals face the complex challenge of hiring educators who excel not only in pedagogy and content knowledge but also in managing classroom dynamics and supporting children, families and colleagues with strategies that are often hard to define. When hiring new teachers, qualities such as personality, empathy and the ability to relate to students and caregivers are crucial. These soft skills significantly impact teachers' success in any educational setting.

Integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) principles into the hiring process ensures that new hires can support students' emotional and social development (CASEL, 2020). SEL helps students develop essential life skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. Teachers who are personable and empathetic can build strong relationships with students, creating a positive and supportive learning environment. A willingness to learn and adapt to new challenges is also crucial for success in the rapidly evolving field of education. Developing a hiring process that prioritizes these qualities can help principals select candidates well-suited to the unique challenges of teaching.

During interviews, principals can assess candidates' ability to implement SEL by asking situational questions that reveal their approach to student interactions and conflict resolution. Providing opportunities for professional development and continuous learning also helps new teachers adapt and thrive in their roles.

Building on our previous work, Robert Morris University's (RMU) principal candidate program and teacher preparation program have partnered to create a strong Community of Practice (CoP) that develops and connects new principals and educators (Kardambikis & Tepe, 2023). A CoP is a group of people who share a common concern, set of problems or interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals (Lave & Wenger, 1991). RMU's CoP fosters an

environment of continuous learning and professional growth, providing a platform for principals and teachers to share experiences, strategies and support.

In a recent collaboration, RMU implemented an innovative mock interview program designed to prepare preservice teachers and principal candidates for their future roles in education. This program focuses on developing a CoP within the student teaching seminar class, inspired by Fred Rogers' foundational practices (Rogers & Head, 1988). The mock interview process involves groups consisting of a principal candidate, an acting principal and a preservice teacher, with three rounds of interviews followed by feedback sessions. Four key strategies were developed: equitable partnerships, practicing tough conversations, developing different modes of feedback and expanding the CoP. Preparation included preservice teachers meeting with local principals for advice, while principal candidates developed interview questions based on research and discussions. The program has shown positive impacts on participants, improving their communication skills and preparedness for diverse educational settings.

When hiring new teachers, both acting principals and principal candidates emphasized the importance of support, relationship building and trust, which can be defined as teacher SEL. Principals are challenged with supporting and mentoring new teachers. When asked in a focus group study how to retain teachers, one participant noted, "That is tough. They must start with love. That is something you cannot teach. They must have support. They must know they are going to mess up, and that is okay" (Tepe et al., 2024 unpublished data). Preservice teachers also understand the need to connect deeply with students to be successful. One participant shared, "Sometimes, I just need to pull aside a student and say, 'I care about you, and what can I do to make this not such a negative experience for you?'" (Focus Group Quotes, Student Teachers, 2024). Although teacher SEL is not easy to define, principals continue to seek candidates with high SEL skills during the hiring process. One principal shared, "I look for someone who is personable, easy to talk to and easy to relate to, because that's how the kids will feel. If they are standoffish, that will scare the kids." Another principal added, "I want you to have a great background. But I really want you to be able to relate to kids and parents, comfort them, you know, whatever they need" (Focus Group Quotes, Principal Candidates,



2024). Personality, empathy and a willingness to learn are critical qualities for new hires. A passion for teaching and intrinsic motivation are essential for sustaining long-term commitment and enthusiasm in the profession.

Six Highlighted Themes

Through our mock interview partnership and focus group study, six key themes have emerged:

- 1. Support and Empathy:** Empathy is essential not just for students but also for teachers and leaders. A culture of empathy within the school can lead to stronger relationships, better communication and a more positive school climate. Leaders can model empathetic behavior by actively listening to their staff and students, validating their feelings and providing support when needed. This empathetic approach helps create a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and understood, which is crucial for the overall well-being of the school community.
- 2. Willingness to Learn and Fail:** Personality, empathy and a willingness to learn and adapt are critical qualities for new hires. Encouraging an environment where making mistakes is part of the learning process is important. This mindset helps teachers to be more open to trying new teaching strategies and learning from their experiences without fear of failure. It fosters a growth mindset among teachers, which is essential for continuous professional development and adaptation to the evolving educational landscape.
- 3. Happiness and Joyfulness:** A passion for teaching and intrinsic motivation are essential for sustaining long-term commitment and enthusiasm in the profession. Happy and joyful teachers positively impact the school environment and student learning. When teachers are passionate and enthusiastic about their work, it translates into a more engaging and dynamic classroom atmosphere. This positivity is contagious and can considerably enhance students' learning experiences and outcomes.
- 4. Relationships and Mentoring:** Mentorship significantly impacts leadership development. Transitioning from being a peer to a leader requires managing relationships and changing attitudes. Effective mentorship helps new teachers navigate this transition smoothly. Experienced mentors provide guidance, share their expertise and offer emotional support, which is invaluable for new teachers. Strong mentoring relationships also help in building a collaborative and supportive school culture where teachers feel connected and empowered.
- 5. Mutual Trust:** Fostering a safe and respectful community includes emphasizing the importance of mutual trust and respect. Trust is the foundation of a positive school climate. When teachers, students and parents trust each other, it leads to better communication, cooperation and overall satisfaction. Principals play a crucial role in building this trust by being transparent, consistent and fair in their interactions and decision-making processes.
- 6. Strong Desire to Be Part of a School Community:** Developing and creating a sense of community through personal connections is vital for a cohesive school environment. Teachers who feel they are part of a community are more likely to be engaged and committed to their roles. Principals can foster this sense of community by encouraging collaboration, organizing social events and creating opportunities for teachers to connect and share their experiences. A strong school community enhances job satisfaction and reduces teacher turnover.

Challenges and Next Steps

Principals are challenged to identify the characteristics of SEL practices in new teachers during the hiring process. Both principal and teacher candidates have reported the need for increased SEL practices within the hiring process and when entering a new school community. The following are challenges and next steps to consider.

Challenges:

- Identifying and hiring teachers who possess the necessary personal qualities and adaptability.
- Integrating SEL into the curriculum and fostering a culture of empathy.
- Ensuring that all modalities of professional development, hiring process development and building a strong CoP are available and relevant to all participants.

Next Steps:

- **Professional Development on SEL:** Provide professional development on SEL, incorporate SEL activities into daily routines and model empathetic behavior throughout the school community.

- **Hiring Process:** Develop a hiring process that prioritizes personability, empathy and SEL integration. Ensure ongoing professional development in these areas for continuous growth and improvement.
- **Building a Strong Community of Practice (CoP):** Create opportunities to engage teachers and principals together to develop new and innovative support systems that build teacher self-worth and self-efficacy.

By addressing these challenges with empathy, support and strategic initiatives, educational leaders can create a thriving school environment that benefits both teachers and students. Integrating SEL into the hiring process is a key step in fostering a supportive and collaborative school culture. The mock interview partnership and the CoP play crucial roles in this endeavor, providing principals and preservice teachers with the tools and insights needed to build strong, empathetic and effective educational communities. Through these collaborative efforts, we can ultimately lead to a more successful and inclusive educational experience for all. For further information, please contact kardambikis@rmu.edu or tepe@rmu.edu. ■

REFERENCES:

- Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). CASEL.org. (2020). *SEL Framework*.
Focus Group 1. (2024, May 7). [Transcript of the student teacher focus group discussion on their mock interviews]. Department of Education, Robert Morris University.
Focus Group 2. (2024, May 7). [Transcript of the principal candidate focus group discussion on their mock interviews and teacher efficacy]. Department of Education, Robert Morris University.
Kardambikis, P. & Tepe, J. (2023). The Mock Interview. *The Pennsylvania Administrator*. 27(3), 29-31.
Lava, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
Rogers, F., & Head, B. (1988). *Mister Rogers' How families grow*. Berkley Trade.
Tepe, J., Kardambikis, P., Parker, S., Charrie, & Grooms, S. (2024). Building a Community of Practice: Preservice teachers and principal candidates' perceptions of novice teachers' support needs and self-efficacy. (Unpublished raw data). Department of Education, Robert Morris University.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

- Caylin Charrie, Ph.D.**, certification specialist and part-time faculty, and **Shellie Grooms**, program director at Trying Together and Robert Morris University (RMU) doctoral candidate.
Dr. Susan Parker, professor of education and director of the Women's Leadership and Mentorship Program (WLMP).
Dr. Aaron Thomas, superintendent at Cornell School District and part-time faculty of the Principal Certification Program at RMU.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: **Patricia Kardambikis, Ph.D.**, is an Assistant Professor at Robert Morris University, Moon Township, where she is the coordinator of the principal certification program. Dr. Kardambikis also has 30 years in public education, with her last position serving as an assistant superintendent at Slippery Rock Area School District. Dr. Kardambikis holds a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Kent State University, master's degrees from Penn State University (health education) and Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania (secondary guidance certification) and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Carlow University. In addition, Dr. Kardambikis received her principal certification and Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility from Westminster College. Dr. Kardambikis' greatest achievement shared with her husband are her seven grandchildren.

Jennifer Tepe, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at Robert Morris University. Dr. Tepe has spent many years in higher education as an instructor and supervisor of preservice teachers. She also has 30 years of experience in the field of early childhood education, early intervention and special education, which includes classroom experience, home-based developmental therapy, behavioral consultation and research. Dr. Tepe holds a Ph.D. in Instruction and Learning from the University of Pittsburgh and an M.Ed. in Special Education from the University of Illinois at Chicago. In addition, Dr. Tepe has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Pittsburgh.

Enhancing Professional Development through Labsites: A Collaborative Initiative Between Two Elementary Schools

By Dr. Edward Smith



Innovative professional development models are crucial for continuous improvement in education.

Since 2019, three schools in the Owen J. Roberts School District in Southeast Pennsylvania embarked on a collaborative journey titled “Labsites,” an initiative conducted in mathematics, English Language Arts (ELA) and writing. Labsites, a well-researched and effective form of professional development (Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017), gave authentic job-embedded opportunities to educators, enhancing instructional practices and fostering a culture of continuous learning and collaboration. This approach involved creating a dynamic environment where teachers and administrators engaged in reflective practice, observed each other’s teaching methods, experimented with new instructional strategies and provided constructive feedback. Recent studies underscored the effectiveness of labsites, emphasizing significant improvements in instructional practices and student outcomes.

In addition to the foundational work by Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner (2017), recent studies continue to highlight the effectiveness of labsites in improving educational practices. A 2021 study published in *Education Week* found that schools implementing labsites observed a 20% increase in teacher retention and a measurable improvement in student engagement metrics (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Furthermore, a *Journal of Educational Psychology* report in 2023 demonstrated that educators taking part in labsites reported higher levels of job satisfaction and professional fulfillment, leading to enhanced classroom environments and student learning outcomes (Jones, Smith & Johnson, 2023). These findings underscore the ongoing relevance and impact of labsites as a transformative professional development model in contemporary education.

Critical Components of the Labsite Initiative

- 1. Cross-School Collaboration:** Teachers and administrators from East Coventry and East Vincent Elementary Schools collaborated, sharing insights and strategies to enhance their teaching practices.
- 2. Administrator Participation:** Administrators actively participated by planning and delivering lessons to students, allowing them to

experience their teachers’ instructional practices firsthand.

- 3. Observation and Feedback:** Teachers observed their administrators teaching lessons, engaged in reflective discussions and provided feedback to improve instructional methods.
- 4. Continuous Learning:** Regular debriefing sessions were held to discuss observations, share best practices and plan for future instructional strategies.

The primary purpose of the labsite initiative was to provide teachers with authentic, job-embedded professional development and to offer administrators opportunities to learn alongside teachers as they implemented the curriculum. This dual approach fostered a deeper understanding of instructional practices and built trust and collaboration between teachers and administrators. Reflective practices were crucial for all stakeholders, including teachers and administrators. According to Farrell (2015), reflective practice allows practitioners to critically analyze their actions, leading to improved professional competence and understanding.

For Administrators

The labsite initiative allowed administrators to step back into the role of the teacher, delivering curriculum and gaining insights into the day-to-day challenges and successes of classroom instruction. This experience built trust between teachers and administrators, gave administrators a deeper understanding of the instructional strategies and enhanced their ability to effectively support and guide their teaching staff. According to Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2020), such immersive experiences for administrators led to better support structures for teachers. Moreover, administrators taking part in labsite initiatives were better equipped to design and implement schoolwide policies informed by direct classroom experiences, leading to more coherent and effective instructional leadership (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Dr. Todd Oswald, the East Coventry principal, and I both agreed that labsites have bridged the gap between theory and practice. The reflective practices have fostered a culture of continuous improvement. Our instructional coaches have increased our professional development as administrators and, more importantly, created a safe environment for teachers to learn from one another. Everything was designed to enhance our instructional



Dr. Edward Smith and Dr. Todd Oswald team teaching first-grade ELA.

practices to reach the true goal of enhancing the student experience.

For Teachers

Teachers benefited from the labsite initiative through opportunities for self-reflection and analysis of their instructional practices, structured time to debrief with colleagues and administrators, gain new perspectives and make meaningful connections to the curriculum. Exposure to innovative teaching methods and peer feedback led to improved instructional practices. Reflective practice was essential for teachers as it fostered continuous improvement. According to Hattie (2008), reflective practice helps teachers develop a critical awareness of their teaching methods, leading to more effective instructional strategies and improved student outcomes. Additionally, teachers engaged in labsite initiatives often experienced increased job satisfaction and professional fulfillment due to the supportive environment and collaborative culture, which were crucial for long-term career sustainability and motivation (Collins & O'Brien, 2011). Adria Creswell, an instructional coach at East Coventry, and Lindsay Cooney, an instructional coach at West Vincent and East Vincent, shared, "It was one of the best professional developments as a staff. It opened many meaningful discussions. Additionally, many teachers expressed that it was a positive experience because it opened a dialogue between teachers and administrators. It also allowed administrators to understand better what a 'workshop' approach entails, both the planning and the execution."

For Students

Students stood to gain the most from the labsite

initiative. As teachers participated in authentic professional development and refined their instructional strategies, students benefited from higher-quality teaching informed by reflective practice, continuous improvement and engaging and effective learning experiences driven by well-prepared and motivated educators. Reflective practices enhanced teaching and significantly affected student learning. According to the *Journal of Educational Psychology* (2021), when teachers engage in reflective practices, they make better instructional decisions and improve student achievement. Furthermore, students benefited from a learning environment where teachers continuously improved their instructional techniques, leading to more innovative and effective pedagogical approaches that catered to diverse learning needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Planning and Preparation

- Conduct initial meetings with teachers and administrators to explain the labsite concept and outline instructional goals.
- Develop a schedule for labsite sessions, ensuring classroom and special education teacher participation from both schools.

Training and Orientation

- Provide training for teachers and administrators on observation and feedback techniques.
- Introduce protocols for reflective practice and structured debriefing sessions.

Execution and Observation

- Implement labsite sessions with teachers and administrators delivering and observing lessons.
- Encourage open dialogue and constructive feedback during observation periods.

Reflection and Debriefing

- Hold regular debriefing sessions to discuss observations, share insights and plan for future instruction.
- Document reflections and changes in practice to track progress and inform ongoing development.

Reflective teaching practices were essential for continuous improvement and professional growth. According to Farrell (2015), reflective practice involves teachers systematically analyzing their teaching methods, classroom interactions and student outcomes to make informed decisions about instructional practices. Dewey's reflective thinking model emphasized the importance of reflection in bridging the gap between experience and knowledge, suggesting that reflective practice transformed routine actions into intentional and thoughtful practices.

Reflective practices also promoted a culture of collaboration and shared learning among educators.

As Schön (2017) outlined, reflective practice was a cornerstone of professional practice, enabling educators to engage in meaningful dialogues about their experiences and collaboratively develop strategies for improvement. Regular reflection and debriefing sessions created a supportive environment where teachers and administrators could share insights, discuss challenges and celebrate successes, leading to enhanced instructional practices and improved student outcomes.

The labsite initiative represented a significant step forward in professional development for East Coventry and East Vincent Elementary Schools. By fostering a reflective practice and collaboration culture, this innovative approach aimed to enhance instructional practices, build trust between teachers

and administrators and ultimately improve student outcomes. The success of the labsite initiative was evident in the enhanced instructional practices and improved student outcomes. It was a professional development model that genuinely worked, demonstrating a transformative impact on educational communities. As the labsite concept continued to be implemented, the ongoing positive influence on educators' growth and the broader academic community was highly anticipated. The commitment to reflective practice and collaboration ensured that the labsite initiative would remain a cornerstone of effective professional development, driving continuous improvement and excellence in education. For further information, contact Dr. Smith at edsmith@ojrsd.net. ■

REFERENCES:

- Collins, J.W., & O'Brien, N.P. (2011). *The greenwood dictionary of education*. ABC-CLIO.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M.E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Farrell, T.S.C. (2015). *Reflective practice: Introduction; reflective language teaching: From research to practice*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Guskey, T.R., & Yoon, K.S. (2009). What works in professional development? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 495-500. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170909000709>
- Hattie, J. (2008). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.
- Jones, A.B., Smith, C.D., & Johnson, E.F. (2023). The impact of labsites on educator job satisfaction and student outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 115(2), 301-315. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000671>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- Schön, D.A. (2017). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.
- Smith, J.K., & Johnson, L.M. (2021). Enhancing student engagement through labsites: A case study of three schools. *Education Week*, 45(6), 18-22.

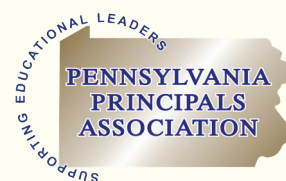
ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dr. Edward J. Smith is the K-6 Principal at East Vincent Elementary School in the Owen J. Roberts School District in Chester County. He has worked in Owen J. Roberts School District for 12 years, and he has worked in the education field for 30 years. During his career, he held positions as an elementary teacher and assistant principal in the Fairfax County Public School District (Virginia). For the past 21 years, he has lived in Pennsylvania and has served as an elementary school principal in the Daniel Boone, Spring-Ford and Owen J. Roberts Area School Districts.

Dr. Smith holds a doctoral degree from Widener University, a master's degree from George Mason University and earned his undergraduate degree from The Pennsylvania State University.

Attention Members:

Don't Let Your Membership Lapse Due to Incorrect Information

Since we've shifted to electronic invoicing, we need your help to keep our records current. Please log on to www.papprincipals.org with the email address you use to receive our communications. Whether you have recently retired, changed districts, or acquired a new job/title, you are now able to update your own membership information under your "Account Profile."



If you are having trouble logging on or are unsure of your email address for our communications, please contact (717) 732-4999.



How can a school business partnership with Horace Mann bring value to your school district?

Horace Mann is the largest financial services company focused on providing America's educators and school employees with auto, home and life insurance as well as retirement solutions. We also offer a host of value-added services to help educators in and outside of the classroom. And through a school business partnership, we can help strengthen your schools, support your teachers and enhance your classrooms.



Helping manage student loan debt

Our no-cost Student Loan Solutions Workshop describes options that may be available to remove or reduce student loan payments. Helping educators manage student loan debt can help boost employee morale and productivity and help you attract and retain talented staff.



Helping increase student attendance

Sometimes, students need a little extra incentive to push themselves. Our Perfect Attendance Spells Success (PASS) program rewards students for perfect attendance. More students in school helps everyone – students learn more, teachers have less make-up work to do and districts can receive more funding.



Helping prepare for a successful tomorrow

Horace Mann has extensive knowledge of the State Retirement Systems. We provide educators and school employees with a "big picture" view of how their state retirement benefits and supplemental retirement plans can work together. We also offer retirement solutions to help educators and their families get on the road to financial success.

How can your schools benefit from a Horace Mann partnership? Contact your local Horace Mann representative or visit horacemann.com to learn more.



Horace Mann Service Corporation and certain of its affiliates (Horace Mann) enter into agreements with educational associations where Horace Mann pays the association to familiarize association members with the Horace Mann brand, products or services. Contact association.relations@horacemann.com for more information.

The Scales of Education: Balancing Accountability and Individuality

By Steven Katkich



In the realm of law, there exists the iconic image of Lady Justice, a figure depicted as holding a set of scales weighing each side of a court case. A comparable scale system is frequently seen when examining the scope of programming in education. While this scale system is well known, it is occasionally too taboo to be discussed or called out because doing so would go against the system itself. The concept of standards-aligned instruction and, more controversially, standardized assessments represent one side of these “scales of education”; the other side is made up of non-tested, lower-stakes experiences that are incredibly valuable to the growth and development of the whole child. As an educator, and specifically an administrator tasked with overseeing the programming and schedule of learners, how does one act as Lady Justice, keeping both sides of the scale even?

The Importance of Standardized Learning

With the adoption of the Common Core and PA Core Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics over a decade ago, the amount of rigor expected and later experienced throughout our classrooms increased. For some time following, many in society were upset by the misconception that educators were being instructed how to teach, not realizing that this was still very much left up to the teacher; the effort was to standardize the “what to teach,” including common language, teacher knowledge and age-appropriateness across school and state boundaries. In multiple discussions during this time, I would emphasize how these standards would assist teachers in identifying common goals for every student and how the assessments that go along with them would provide us with insight into how we were delivering instruction. Sadly, with the change in these standards, their accompanying assessments and the seemingly endless alterations inflicted on teacher evaluations, many chose to dedicate a bulk of their day to the concept of standardized tests, even going as far as to not-so-discreetly create PSSA remediation or preparation classes to help increase their scores. A majority of learners were subjected to a one-size-fits-all schedule aimed at increasing student performance in these tested subjects. Whether people want to admit it or not, during this period in our educational history and even today, many have quietly advanced the idea —

mostly out of fear of losing their jobs — that we should only care about test scores because they are the only acceptable, quantifiable indicator of student learning and high-level teacher performance. Much time and energy have been placed on these ideas, which have regrettably caused many people to detest education.

While this narrative may seem negative at its core, the idea of standards-aligned instruction and assessment definitely has a place and value in education. As educators, it is important that we provide learners from across the landscape with similar, worthwhile content and experiences that align with these defined standards. Moreover, once instruction has been delivered, it is incredibly valuable for schools to know how well they have done and how the instructional strategies employed have impacted student comprehension, retention and performance. Indeed, standards-aligned instruction is important. It is not, however, the only significant aspect of our educational system; there is a whole other side of the scales of education.

The Ongoing Shift

Aside from the standards-aligned movement, and especially with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have noticed a rise in focus recently about the need to assist students’ social, emotional and physical well-being. From social-emotional learning (SEL) programming in schools to increased availability of mental health support services, schools have continued to attempt to improve in the area of supporting the whole child and needs beyond those specifically outlined by state standards. With the changing of the seasons, schools have attempted to provide learners with increasingly engaging experiences by thinking outside of the box about what interests them.

Schools have evolved to focus more of their attention on innovative practices and courses, innovative technologies and more opportunities for students. Many traditionalists, however, question if some of these experiences are really beneficial to our children or if we are just pacifying them by giving them fun, neat things. The variety of innovative practices that are sweeping throughout schools are crucial in helping students discover more about themselves and their future paths in life. Even if it means the child will not perform at a high level on a state assessment, giving them these kinds of experiences might be a necessary evil for their overall development.



The Great Balancing Act

Schools and educators must assess the experiences and curricula that their students are exposed to during the school day in order to strike a balance between these two occasionally opposing influences. From the vantage point of this administrator, schools in modern society must engage in a delicate balancing act to ensure that standards-aligned instruction is delivered and students are prepared to be assessed on their knowledge before moving on to the next grade. Likewise, it is equally necessary that students are given access to a variety of valuable, engaging opportunities that meet their needs and interests today and promote their growth as future members of our society.

One of the challenges we have at Beaver Area Middle School (BAMS) is creating an educational environment that is engaging for students' academic, social, emotional and behavioral development while remaining welcoming to them. As in other schools, our students experience the core content areas of ELA, mathematics, social studies and science. Further, within their daily schedule, they are expected to participate in other mandatory courses, including art, music, information literacy, robotics, coding, health, physical education, manufacturing and fabrication and Make It Your Business. All of these experiences are standard for all learners. In particular, the core content addresses the general standards on which students will be assessed each spring.

However, where the balancing act comes into play for BAMS is that not as much time is allocated to the core, tested subject areas as it may be in neighboring schools or even at the intermediate school within our district. In

collaboration with our high school, BAMS operates on a nine-period, 43-minute class schedule. Even though this can occasionally spark a philosophical discussion, most of the time it ends with the realization that including our elective periods — which are held twice a day at 43-minute intervals and allow students to select the classes they take — means achieving the greater good for the child. Traditionally, something seen more at the high school or collegiate levels, as a part of their learning experience, students at BAMS may choose to participate in any of the following course offerings during those two periods of the day: chorus, orchestra, band, Latin I, Latin II, Spanish I, Spanish II, creative problem solving, Game Plan: Esports Strategies and Careers, Student Technology Assistance Program (STAP), design and modeling, mixed media magic, Anatomy I, Anatomy II, intro to engineering, advanced robotics, creative writing, reading workshop, literature and film, broadcast media, *The Bobcat's Growl* (newspaper), photography and visual design, exploratory family and consumer science (FACS), life fitness and exploring JROTC. The variety and choice that we are able to provide for our students is something not regularly seen in middle-level education. Accordingly, teacher excitement and student engagement for these experiences is palpable because they are areas where creativity and exploration may occur; they feel different than the traditional core subjects. Still, within these courses, while we do aim to insert state standards where applicable, focus also turns to student exposure to new experiences while also supporting their social, emotional and behavioral development.

Balancing the “scales of education” can be a challenging task and often presents deep philosophical conversations among a multitude of stakeholders. Regardless, administrators, educators and any instructional leaders in a position to make programming choices must differ from the traditional depiction of Lady Justice: They must keenly focus their attention on the scale to prevent it from tipping in favor of one area at the expense of another. Schools should be held to high standards and judge themselves accordingly. They should also be laboratories affording new, unique experiences, self-expression and self-discovery. These ideas must be balanced and work in tandem for the betterment of all learners in today's society. For additional information, please contact the author at katkichs@basd.k12.pa.us. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Steven Katkich is entering his fifth year as the Principal of Beaver Area Middle School, a recently designated 2024 National School to Watch and Tier 1 Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports recognized school in Pennsylvania. Prior to this, he served as the assistant principal of Dutch Ridge Elementary School in the Beaver Area School District, during which time the school was recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School, and as a seventh-grade learning support teacher in the Avonworth School District.*

Mr. Katkich earned his principal certification from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Education in Special Education and a Bachelor of Science in Elementary and Special Education from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. This past year, he was named the 2024 Leonard R. Ference Outstanding Middle Level Principal by the Pennsylvania Association of Middle Level Education (PAMLE).

Welcome NEW Elementary Members

2/20/2024 - 6/20/2024

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>
Dr. Bonnie Betler	Brentwood Borough SD	Clint Aurand	Mifflin County SD
Dr. Diana Garaitonandia	Centennial SD	Frank Miller	Mifflin County SD
Mike Testani	Central Bucks SD	Thomas Welch	Montrose Area SD
Mandy Bates	Central Dauphin SD	Dr. Sarah Shaw	Mt. Lebanon SD
Scott Livingston	Central York SD	Mark Skoczynski	Norristown Area SD
Marc Barnes	Chester-Upland SD	Janel Babatsky	North Schuylkill SD
Kaitlyn Allison	Chestnut Ridge SD	Dr. Francis Sciallo	Plum Borough SD
Barbara Terroso	Dallastown Area SD	Susan Nichols	Punxsutawney Area SD
Dr. Barbara Pagan	East Allegheny SD	Kelli Richardson	Punxsutawney Area SD
Shannon Metzgar	East Stroudsburg Area SD	Dr. Michael Zackon	Quakertown Comm. SD
Stephanie Shoemaker	Fannett-Metal SD	Nicole Zuerblis	Quakertown Comm. SD
Christopher Evans	Forest Hills SD	Jon Smerecky	Radnor Township SD
Chad Cordek	Greater Johnstown SD	Jennifer Bradley	Scranton SD
Heather Hawkins	Greenville Area SD	Michel Hughes	Scranton SD
Amelia Bellis	Halifax Area SD	Maggie Loughney	Scranton SD
Nicole Snook	Harrisburg City SD	Shaun Rohland	Scranton SD
Patricia Pearson	Hempfield SD	Dyan Hulslander	So. Williamsport Area SD
Dr. Jeffrey Esposito	Interboro SD	Jason Thompson	Spring-Ford Area SD
Kristin Hope	Jamestown Area SD	Dr. Kathleen Kotch	Spring-Ford Area SD
Tyler Barth	Keystone Central SD	Nicole Coldren	Tunkhannock Area SD
Demetra Welters	Lancaster SD	Paul Grabowski	Tunkhannock Area SD
Dr. Mark McGalla	Lehigh Area SD	Thomas Bryan Jr.	Valley View SD
Aaron Sebelin	Lehigh Area SD	Kristine Kozlevcar	Valley View SD
Jared Wastler	Lower Dauphin SD	Amy Gries	Wayne Highlands SD
Sheila Amodei	Marple Newtown SD	Dr. Jenifer Skorvan	Yough SD
Matt Wolfe	McGuffey SD		

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Chad A. Cordek



"I joined the association because they offer a professional toolkit that supports the educational leaders of Pennsylvania schools."

Chad serves as the Assistant Principal at the Greater Johnstown Middle School in the Greater Johnstown School District. He has been an educator for 25 years with the last three as an administrator in the Greater Johnstown School

District. He can be reached at ccordek@gjsd.net.

Clearing the Hallways at Pottstown High School

By Dr. Christian D'Annibale



An Impossible Task

Pottstown High School had a leadership shortage in the fall of 2022. The new principal, assistant principal and dean of students had been hired, but could not arrive at their new positions until late in the semester. In addition, the acting principal was on his way to another position in his home district. Following the pandemic, the acting principal was tasked with managing 950 students essentially by himself, which proved to be an exceedingly difficult undertaking. At the end of the semester, despite having been assigned an impossible task, he succeeded in keeping the building together until he handed it over to the new administrative team.

By December, Pottstown High School had its full leadership team in place. As the new principal, I came to Pottstown with experience as a principal, but never at the high-school level, or in an urban setting. Pottstown High School is a wonderful place with a staff that is like family, a community that wants the best for its children and students who want success. With that said, I would be lying if I denied the shock I experienced on my first day in the building. From my first day, I observed that hundreds of students were skipping class. Coming from a suburban middle school, I had never experienced students skipping classes at such a high rate. I do not fault the acting principal because he was working alone, but during the fall 2022 semester, students consistently skipped class. During that time, there were close to 5,000 class skips with over 260 of the 950 students engaging in skipping class at least once. I knew that the matter of more than 25% of the student body skipping class had to be resolved immediately.

Student Voice Matters

I have been blessed throughout my career with great leaders to learn from. The importance of student voice was a common belief among all of my leadership mentors. The research also suggests incorporating student voice as a key, in addition to the wisdom of my previous mentors. Class cutting can be best resolved by working collaboratively with students and taking an honest look at your school's practices (Fallis & Opotow, 2003). As the new high school principal, the first thing I did was to develop a Student Advisory Council (SAC). The senior class president along with two of the most frequent class-skippers in the school were among the varied group of students who made up the SAC. Their voices were essential if we were going to solve this building-wide problem.

At the first SAC meeting, after much discussion and listening, the group agreed that the overwhelming majority of the school wants to have the hallways clear, students in classrooms and a school that is safe.

PRIDE at Pottstown High School

With the goal of clearing the hallways, the SAC asked me to share my thoughts on the issue. Since I appreciate excellence and often remind students that I trust them to put me to work, I said that I will do whatever it takes to make Pottstown High School excellent. In the next three hours, the students took the theme of "excellence" and created a framework to solve our problem. The students named their initiative "**PRIDE – Positively Recognizing Individuals Demonstrating Excellence.**" They created building-wide expectations for the hallways and designed PRIDE tickets to be distributed by teachers when students arrive to class on time, meet expectations in the hallways or use passes appropriately. Students could place their PRIDE tickets into a weekly raffle box, a monthly raffle box or a quarterly raffle box. Weekly, 20 tickets would be pulled to receive \$5 to be used at the school store. The SAC called this weekly reward "*Dr. D's Dollaz*," as an early nod to their new principal. Monthly, 10 tickets were pulled to win a \$50 gift card to a store or restaurant of their choice. Quarterly, five tickets would be drawn for a trip to the shopping outlets and a \$150 shoe shopping spree.

In addition, the SAC collaborated with our career and technology department's marketing class to create a social media campaign to inform students about the hallway expectations, the PRIDE tickets and the PRIDE raffle prize boxes. The PRIDE ticket program was instantly popular with the student body. Sadeeq Jackson, a member of the SAC and a former class skip-artist, said "We know Dr. D'Annibale can't give us a paycheck like at a real job, but knowing that we are going to be recognized and rewarded for showing up to class and doing the right thing is helping me to turn things around." His brother Abdul shared, "We really just want our own community and the communities around us to know that Pottstown is a positive place where good things happen. Knowing that we have the ability to create that positive change means the world."

Teacher Leadership and Trust

Every principal knows that building trust with staff is more important than anything else. Accordingly, I made it a point to spend plenty of time with department chairs and building union representatives to earn their trust. Our team's immediate message of wanting to clear the hallways was met with excitement and helped to



Pottstown High School students enjoying their first reward trip for the PRIDE ticket program.

build a sense of optimism and trust among the staff. The department chairs and building representatives worked with us to create an agreement that everyone would implement the PRIDE ticket program. We also implemented staff suggestions because of the staff's dedication to the students' solution.

Hallway Sweeps and Marching Bands

Our leadership team was faced with the challenge of deciding which of the over 100 staff members' recommendations for clearing the hallways would be implemented while building and maintaining trust. Our department chairs and building representatives were instrumental in assuring staff that our team was to be trusted. I requested our building reps to emphasize one important point: Clearing the hallways is not only the principal's responsibility, it is everybody's responsibility.

One of our building representatives produced the first staff suggestion, which was hallway sweeps. The idea was for every teacher and administrator to start at one end of the hallway and walk together as a solid group through the hallway "sweeping" students every block into two places: their class or the in-school suspension (ISS) room. (Once in the ISS room, administrators would use non-exclusionary strategies to get them back into class.) The teachers were willing to lose five minutes of planning time to conduct hallway sweeps. This was only possible because of the trust between the administration and our union

representatives. Ironically, the teachers found that they enjoyed this time! They shared that they never had more enjoyable conversations with colleagues about family, personal lives and weekend happenings than they did during those hallway sweeps.

The chair of the math department had the second suggestion. We all know students who skip class tend to "hang out" in restrooms. This staff member suggested that we play loud music in all the bathrooms. From that day on, our team pumped loud marching band music into every restroom to push students away from making social media videos and back to their class. It was a huge hit! Staff could not stop laughing at their "trick." It got students out of the restrooms and brought staff together through laughter.

Extending to Long Term

The PRIDE tickets, hallway sweeps and marching band music did help with clearing the hallways. We went from 5,000 skips in the fall 2022 semester to 2,000 skips in the spring 2023 semester. At the end of the school year, our leadership team and the building union representatives agreed that we were not at the finish line. Because of our mutual trust and the knowledge that everyone has a responsibility to improve the school climate, we collaborated to develop a long-term solution. Rather than hallway sweeps and marching band music, we shifted teacher planning time throughout the day to allow for teachers to have a hall duty built into their schedule. Starting in the fall of 2023, every corner of the hallway had a teacher on duty, asking for passes and serving as a constant adult presence. We have found that while on hall duty, you don't need to employ scare tactics, you just need each teacher to enforce the standards and communicate with administration in a clear and consistent manner.

When asked about the Pottstown High School journey over the past year, Jeff Delaney, a Pottstown Federation of Teachers building representative shared, "This was a dramatic change from what has been done in the past and the federation reps knew there would be some resistance from the staff. Working with Christian to deliver the proper message to the staff was critical as they needed to see that we believed in his plan and trusted his leadership. This was not a difficult task because, from the moment he arrived, he brought a positive and trusting climate and it was presented with a unified voice. The hallway issues have dramatically reduced this year, and the teachers have adjusted well to the changes."

Lessons Learned and Current Data

While at the high-school level we don't call our PRIDE program "PBIS," it is a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program. The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

PA Principals Association PIL Program

The Team: Building Leadership Success that Improves Student Learning

30 Act 45 PIL Hours - Cost is \$300/person



The Pennsylvania Principals Association will bring this PIL workshop to your school or district.

Goals of the Program:

This course is designed for building and district level teams or individuals looking to improve their leadership skills regardless of position. The text for this course is *The 360° Leader* by John Maxwell. Beyond the author's excellent leadership advice, chapters focus on leading down if you are the boss, leading up if you are the assistant and leading across to members on your team.

Participants could include any of the following:

- A principal and assistant principal. **(1&2)**
- A superintendent and assistant superintendent (and other cabinet members). **(1&2)**
- A principal, or group of principals in a district, without an assistant principal(s) who wants to improve their leadership ability. **(1-1-1)**
- An assistant principal who wants to improve their "leading up" leadership ability. **(2-2-2)**
- A school or district team. **(1-2-3)**

Learning Objectives:

- Review, discuss and improve upon the **team relationship** at the building level / district level to improve overall effectiveness and improve student learning.
- Establish routine opportunities for **communication** between the team and others.
- Assess **trust** at the building level / district level and identify pitfalls and opportunities to improve the importance of trust.
- Assess and reflect upon their personal **leadership style** to maximize impact on the team.
- Develop strategies for **leading up, leading down** and **leading across**.
- Create **daily, weekly, monthly and yearly** opportunities to talk about building leadership, building culture and student learning.

Program Requirements:

- Read text and complete **Book Read Summary**.
- Complete an **Action Plan Summary**.
- Complete a **Performance Goal Template**.

If you have additional questions or would like to schedule this PIL program, please contact Dr. Michael Snell at msnell@paprincipals.org

Principal Joy: Growing Joyfulness while Managing Job Demands

By Dr. Amy Balsbaugh



The role of the principal is complex. Buckman and Sloan (2022) found that a range of 15-30% of the nation's principals leave their schools annually, and almost 50% quit by the third year in the role. In comparison to the general population, principals demonstrate higher ratings of stress and burnout while showing lower levels of well-being. Principal mental health challenges are significantly higher than those faced by the general population.

Principals are the second strongest influence on student achievement, behind the influence of a teacher. They experience rapidly shifting and increasing responsibilities that have grown in complexity. Principals are affected by the negative psychological and physical effects of the profession. The stress levels have presented a variety of detriments, including anxiety, productivity burnout, work absences, high blood pressure, mental health problems and physical challenges. Because of the widespread political turmoil around the nation, the stresses are becoming greater still. The role of the principal is complicated, time-consuming and permeated with high expectations, causing many to be fearful of exploring the future pathway and causing others to leave the pathway that has the potential to positively impact so many.

Despite stress, principals can still nurture joy in their work. People who engage in their job, demonstrate high levels of energy and emotional connection to the work and view work as a challenge rather than a burden, are the antithesis to those who experience burnout. Shawn Achor (2010) discovered that individual interpretations of current reality can change how each person encounters life. Human beings perform best when life is approached from a positive perspective. When joyful, leaders and employees have increased performance and peak productiveness. Everyone has the potential to increase their personal happiness levels. Principals can implement individual strategies that support joy.

Positive psychology promotes self-selecting strategies from proven interventions to support

increased well-being. An array of options to support increased joy and satisfaction have been proven. Principals should develop awareness of the strategies while determining which are most preferred and attainable. Principals can implement these seemingly simple strategies today to start boosting satisfaction, well-being and joy.

Principals who prioritize maintaining a positive mindset can triumph over the challenges of the job. Upholding a positive outlook increases attributes such as happiness and energy while minimizing stress and negative effects such as depression and anxiety. Hope for the future awakens individuals within an organization to propel them into action. Leaders who overcome chronic stress demonstrate the ability to step away from problems and gain a broader perspective of challenges occurring. A principal's hope increases if they support anticipated barriers, engage in positive self-talk and employ creative thinking. Gratitude practices have been found to serve as a remedy for negativity that influences principals. Gratitude results in

recognition of thankfulness after experiencing an event that evokes joy. Gratitude practices are diverse. Making efforts to share positive events with others, showing emotion, recognizing moments of thankfulness, celebrating others, maintaining positive memories or recognizing good feelings support joy. Some leaders maintain journals where they

write daily three things they are grateful for, from acknowledging a student's success to acknowledging a beautiful sunrise. Others maintain a running list on their phone as they come across moments of gratitude in life. People who intentionally identify moments of gratitude on a regular basis are more likely to experience joy and happier moods.

When leaders focus on personal strengths, performance increases garnering greater happiness, health and stamina. Burnout can be avoided by participating in proactive behaviors such as arranging job demands and resources to better align with personal abilities and creating work in playful ways.

“Despite stress, principals can still nurture joy in their work.”



Principals who prioritize the use of their strengths experience greater well-being. When approached from a positive perspective, principals are more likely to find opportunities to apply strengths and talents in their work. Leadership and resilience have been shown to be enhanced by practices that encourage the development of present-moment awareness. Patience, along with empathetic listening, is nurtured through mindfulness, allowing leaders to be more present. Often, mindfulness is connected to intentional breathing exercises, but leaders have also benefited from engaging in devotions or prayer. Some take regular time for yoga, taking a walk or taking a moment to draw awareness to their bodies, noticing physical sensations linked to different emotional states. Through these practices, principals develop a strategy for dealing with stressors incurred. A few minutes carved out daily can support joy in work and reduce the impacts of principalship stress.

Personal relationships are the greatest guarantee of joy. Maintaining a social support network has been linked to a higher quality work experience, improving principals' mental health and reducing the negative impacts experienced at work. Relationships have benefits, both in and out of the school environment, through positive and supportive collegial relationships. Principals receive benefits from maintaining confidantes such as a mentor, colleague or partner to share and hear from in a supportive manner to decrease stress, increase happiness and reduce isolation.

Family life is also impactful on principals as it positively influences job satisfaction and well-being. Those principals who share their lives with partners or children are the happiest. Supportive spouses play a role in allowing a principal to manage the demands and stresses experienced. Children also provide perspective for principals, focusing a purpose on making the school experience positive for students, in the same way that is desired for the principal's children.

Prioritizing time to simply be present and engage with students is critical for principal joy. The most

fulfilled and joyful principals are those who value working in partnership with families to support not only academic needs but also health and basic needs, and who place a strong priority on supporting the whole child rather than seeing needs as a burden. They understand the responsibility of supporting students well beyond academics, making sure students have mental health support, food to eat and the resources needed to engage in the school system. The opportunity to directly interact with and support all students has a positive influence on principal satisfaction. Principals who find this fulfillment choose to get out from behind their desks and into the classrooms and hallways. They engage with and greet students, knowing their names and stories.

Nutrition frequently suffers as a result of the time constraints that many principals face. A relationship exists between mental and physical health and dietary habits. The quality of what is eaten as well as the frequency of eating matters. Rather than indulging in diets with high levels of caffeine or sugars, diets full of fruits and vegetables improve joy and overall performance. Principals grapple to juggle the demands of the role, while maintaining time to practice a healthy lifestyle, causing the omission of meals and exercise. This is problematic, yet the practice has been found to occur regularly as principals work overtime to meet school demands. Principals who are intentional in this area take simple steps to prioritize nutrition. Healthy sustenance is achieved despite demands and interruptions by making plans to have access to healthy foods to be eaten on the run. Whether it is keeping a smoothie maker in the office or grabbing an apple or granola bar between meetings, joyful principals are intentional in finding opportunities to support nutrition as a priority.

The resources available at work and at home, as well as job demands, are each connected to an individual's well-being. Principals thrive when balance results between personal and professional life, supporting leaders to manage the impact of the

principalship. Setting boundaries for the hours when work demands will be met increases effectiveness. However, maintaining boundaries between personal and professional lives has become more difficult to maintain. By maintaining limits related to work demands, burnout impact can be countered. With experience and time, principals can remedy the impact of task overload with prioritization, delegation and shifting expectations to others who can complete supportive tasks. Leaders are also advised to acknowledge essential tasks to prioritize what must be accomplished. Considering when to stop checking emails, setting alarms to leave school on time or protecting uninterrupted time can all have a positive influence.

While changes in legislation, school structures and roles have the potential to support principal joy and well-being, the needed adjustments will not occur overnight or without advocacy. Principals can begin to make personalized changes today that are within individual circles of control to improve joy and

satisfaction impactfully and quickly. When principals can maintain joy and satisfaction, not only will the work become more enjoyable, but the role of the principal will also become more attractive to those considering stepping into critical positions. Principals can foster joy and fulfillment in their job while advocating for systemic change through implementing positive joy-supporting strategies into practice. Principals have the power to create a more joyful future individually and collectively. Not only does our society need joyful principals, but principals need to feel joy as well. For additional information, you may contact the author at abalsbaugh@warwick.edu. ■

REFERENCES:

- Achor, S. (2010). *The happiness advantage: The seven principles of positive psychology that fuel success and performance at work*. New York, Crown Business.
- Buckman, D.G., & Sloan, B. (2022). Repairing the principal pipeline: Does hiring type slow the leak? *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 17(1), 1-22.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Dr. Amy Balsbaugh serves as an Elementary Principal and Federal Program Coordinator in the Warwick School District in Lititz. Her doctoral research at Point Park University focused on principal job satisfaction and well-being in relation to job demands, examining the behaviors of outlier principals who maintain high levels of demand and joy. She is the wife of an elementary assistant principal and mother of two, continuing to strive to find strategies to promote personal joy in life and work.*

Clearing the Hallways at Pottstown High School

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

outcomes we received as a result of implementing our PRIDE program are similar to those typically seen by schools implementing PBIS (Santiago-Rosario et al., 2023). I've concluded from my brief high school experience that these kids would not accept a PBIS program created by adults. The PRIDE ticket program was only successful because it was **created by students, for students**. With its success, the SAC expanded its PRIDE ticket program to include expectations in all school settings. Additionally, the hallway sweeps and eventual move to hall duties could not have been successful without an amazing group of building representatives and department chairs who were willing to trust a new leadership team. Finally, without the expertise, trust and persistence of my leadership team and a student dean who grew up in Pottstown, knows every student and their family, has the building's pulse and is always in our hallways and at community events, our hallways would not have been cleared.

Although this article could not provide all of the details of our journey, I am happy to report that we had nearly 5,000 skips in the fall of 2022; 2,028 skips in the spring of 2023; and only 487 class skips in the fall semester of 2023. By trusting student voice, staff trusting leadership and a shared belief that Pottstown can be excellent, we saw a 90% decrease in class skips in just one year. For additional information, contact the author at cdannibale@pottstownk12.org. ■

REFERENCES:

- Fallis, R.K. and Opatow, S. (2003). Are Students Failing School or Are Schools Failing Students? Class Cutting in High School. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59, 103-119. <https://doi.org/10.1111/15404560.00007>
- Santiago-Rosario, M. R., McIntosh, K., Izzard, S., Cohen Lissman, D., & Calhoun, T.E. (September 2023). Is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) an Evidence-Based Practice? Center on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Dr. Christian D'Annibale is in his third year as Principal of Pottstown High School in the Pottstown School District. He had previously led New Cumberland Middle School as the principal, was an assistant principal at Bermudian Springs Middle School and taught seventh-grade social studies at Mechanicsburg Middle School. Dr. D'Annibale attended Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania for his undergraduate studies and completed his doctorate in educational leadership at Shippensburg in August 2022. He and his family live in Pottstown, where they love the schools, the community and attending as many family-friendly events as possible.*

Welcome NEW Secondary Members

2/20/2024 - 6/20/2024

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>DISTRICT</u>
Brett Keeble	Allentown City SD	Megan Kirchner	Moon Area SD
Brian Siket	Allentown City SD	Amanda Jackson	Mt. Lebanon SD
Zachary McMichael	Allentown City SD	Dr. Detrick McGriff	Norristown Area SD
Dana Bogle	Altoona Area SD	Dan Swoger	North Allegheny SD
Kellie Long	Bald Eagle Area SD	Kyle Hassler	North Penn SD
Adam Whisel	Bedford Co. Technical Ctr.	Kayla Cowitch	Northampton Area SD
Stephen Caruso	Bellefonte Area SD	Steve Lehman	Northern York County SD
David Radcliffe	Brentwood Borough SD	Matthew Lukachinsky	Northwest Area SD
Alanna McMullan	Central Dauphin SD	Alissa Cawley	Northwestern Lehigh SD
Michelle Young	Central Dauphin SD	Kyle Poremba	Palmerton Area SD
Christina Lewis	Central York SD	Peter Carfagno	Pennsbury SD
Scott Schoenberger	Chambersburg Area SD	Ryan Staub	Pennsbury SD
Dr. Jason Bacani	Colonial SD	Ryan Regensburg	Pennsbury SD
Jessica Basta	Council Rock SD	Megan Axe	Red Lion Area SD
Brad Auker	Donegal SD	Teresa Casimire	Saucon Valley SD
Jenny Tilaro	Erie City SD	Margaret Cosgrove	Scranton SD
Todd Best	Fannett-Metal SD	Dr. Erin Keating	Scranton SD
Dr. Matthew Harris	Fox Chapel Area SD	Katona Miller	Scranton SD
Kristi Burgh	Franklin Regional SD	Kenneth Murphy	Scranton SD
Dr. Tawnia St. Amant	Franklin Regional SD	Jessica Norris	Scranton SD
Justin Turpin	Freedom Area SD	Gavin Lawler	Spring-Ford Area SD
Chelsea Gibbons	Greater Altoona CTC	Patrick Keating	Tunkhannock Area SD
Lindsay Miksich	Greater Altoona CTC	Matthew Wincek	Tunkhannock Area SD
Jennifer Gaston	Jefferson Co.-Dubois AVTS	Joshua Levinson	Upper Moreland Twp. SD
Nicholas Bullock	Lebanon SD	Jennifer Post	West Shore SD
Lisa Kelly	Marple Newtown SD	James Purtell	Western Area CTC
Jessica Mattei	Marple Newtown SD	Craig Robinson	West. Ctr. for Tech. Studies
Thomas Hixenbaugh Jr.	McKeesport Area SD	Brendan Hathaway	Wilmington Area SD
Timothy Wilson	McKeesport Area SD	Mallory Urbanski	Wyoming Valley West SD

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Megan J. Axe



"I hope to gain the skills and strategies necessary to unite all stakeholders to work collaboratively to assist each student in reaching their full potential."

Megan is the Assistant Principal at Red Lion Area Senior High School in the Red Lion Area School District. She has held this role since 2023, having previously worked for the same district since 2007 as a social studies teacher and department chair. She can be reached at axemj@rlasd.net.

EARN ACT 45 HOURS AT HOME

Micro-Credentials

The PA Principals Association now offers a total of **26** micro-credentials on pertinent topics for school leaders. You start and complete a micro-credential on your own time and at your own pace. At the completion, you submit a badge to us and we upload your hours to PDE. ***This is a great way to earn all of your necessary Act 45 hours!***

What are Micro-Credentials?

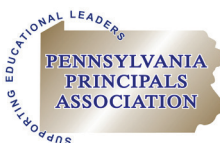
- A Micro-credential is not a course. It is an online, on-demand way to earn a badge that demonstrates your competency. The process includes submitting artifacts to be evaluated by an assessor in order to earn a sharable badge that you can use in your resumé, email signature as well as social networks.
- A Micro-credential is a career-building opportunity. Micro-credentials evidence your career skills and growth in a tangible, highly-visible way. Completing a micro-credential could potentially lead to salary advancement or help you stand out in a pool of job candidates. You can also earn professional development credit toward your licensure requirements.
- Micro-credentials are scalable learning opportunities. You can continue to add more credentials to your resume over time to demonstrate new skills and increase your marketability!

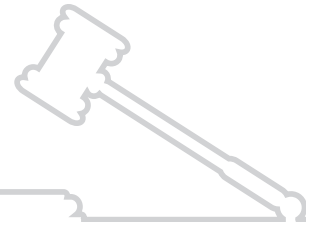
If you think you might be interested in signing up for a micro-credential, please view some additional information about micro-credentials by clicking the link below:

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/489415306>

Visit our website at www.paprincipals.org to see our full listing of micro-credentials and to register.

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





LEGAL CORNER

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

Regulating the Response to Pregnancy



Your secretary tells you that she is pregnant, that she is experiencing morning sickness and that she wants to work from home every morning. What do you do? What do you need to know?

Public school students and employees who are pregnant or who experience pregnancy-related conditions have numerous protections and rights with which principals need to be familiar. The laws that provide these protections and rights include the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000gg, *et seq.*; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000e, *et seq.*, including the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e(k); Title IX, 20 U.S.C. § 1681; the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, 43 P.S. §§ 951, *et seq.*; the Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101, *et seq.*; the Family and Medical Leave Act, 29 U.S.C. 2601, *et seq.*; Section 504, 29 U.S.C. §794; and regulations promulgated under each of these statutes. Indeed, two sets of federal regulations recently went into effect that add complexity to how requests for pregnancy-related accommodations must be handled: (1) the new Title IX regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 106; and (2) the new regulations under the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), 29 C.F.R. Part 1636. Each of these statutes and regulations must be understood in order for a principal to know what to do when their secretary asks for accommodations, such as working remotely due to morning sickness.

I. Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Retaliation and Anti-Harassment Laws

a. “On the basis of sex”

Pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions is a protected classification which means that school districts and their employees cannot discriminate or retaliate based on the pregnancy or related conditions of an employee or student. As the United States Supreme Court said long ago, “discrimination based on a woman’s pregnancy is, on its face, discrimination

because of her sex.” *Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co. v. EEOC*, 462 U.S. 669, 684 (1983). In 1978, Congress passed the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA) as an amendment to the sex discrimination section of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The PDA provides:

The terms “because of sex” or “on the basis of sex” include, but are not limited to, because of or on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions; and women affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions shall be treated the same for all employment-related purposes, including receipt of benefits under fringe benefit programs, as other persons not so affected but similar in their ability or inability to work . . . 42 U.S.C.S. § 2000e.

Under Title IX and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA), discrimination, retaliation and harassment on the basis of sex, including on the basis of pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, are prohibited.

b. Pregnancy and Pregnancy-Related Conditions as Disabilities

Pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions may be “disabilities” if they meet any of the definitions of



a “disability” under such laws as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504. Both the ADA and Section 504 prohibit discrimination, retaliation and harassment of employees or students with disabilities that result from pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions.

c. Pregnancy and Pregnancy-Related Conditions As “Serious Health Conditions”

Pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions may constitute a “serious health condition” under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) when they meet the definition of the term “serious health condition.” It is hard to imagine when pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions would not meet the definition of a serious health condition.

II. Accommodating Pregnancy and Pregnancy-Related Conditions.

Some of the anti-discrimination laws, in addition to acting as a shield protecting against unlawful discrimination, retaliation and harassment, function as a sword requiring certain affirmative accommodations and mandating certain procedures and processes regarding those accommodations. It must be stressed that procedure and process are as important as substance.

a. Accommodations under the ADA and Section 504

Under the ADA and Section 504, if a woman has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity and requests an accommodation, the school district must engage in an “interactive process” and must, as a result of the interactive process, provide reasonable accommodations that are necessary to enable the employee to perform the essential functions of her job. As one court succinctly said, “Under the ADA, an employer is not required to eliminate an essential function of a job as an accommodation.” *Groark v. City of Chi.*, 2000 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 20487, *18-20 (N.D. Ill. July 19, 2000). Engaging in the interactive process is legally important and the failure of the school district to engage in the interactive process may lead to legal liability. *Taylor v. Phoenixville Sch. Dist.*, 184 F.3d 296 (3d Cir. 1999).

Under the ADA and Section 504, depending upon circumstances, the following are the kinds of accommodations that might have to be provided to an employee who is pregnant or suffering the effects of a pregnancy-related condition.

1. Workplace Modifications, including:

- **Accessible Workspaces:** Adjusting desks, installing ramps or modifying doorways for wheelchair access.
- **Ergonomic Furniture:** Providing adjustable chairs, desks or computer equipment for employees with mobility impairments or back conditions.

- **Rearranging the Physical Layout:** Moving desks or workstations to accommodate individuals who use mobility devices.

2. Flexible Scheduling

- **Modified Work Schedules:** Allowing for part-time hours, flexible start/stop times, or additional breaks for employees who need medical treatments, rest periods, or accommodations for energy fluctuations.
- **Telework/Remote Work:** Offering the option to work from home if the essential job functions can be performed remotely.

3. Modified Job Duties

- **Job Restructuring:** Reassigning non-essential duties or altering how tasks are performed to accommodate limitations.
- **Light Duty or Temporary Reassignment:** Assigning less physically demanding tasks to employees recovering from illness or injury.

4. Assistive Technology

- **Alternative Input Devices:** Keyboards, mice or other equipment designed for individuals with physical disabilities.

5. Leave Policies

- **Extended Medical Leave:** Providing unpaid leave beyond the employer’s typical leave policy as a reasonable accommodation for recovery or treatment.
- **Intermittent Leave:** Allowing employees to take leave on a sporadic basis for medical treatment or flare-ups of a disability.

6. Transportation and Parking

- **Accessible Parking Spaces:** Reserving spaces near the entrance for employees with mobility impairments.

7. Workplace Policies Adjustments

- **Modified Dress Code:** Allowing alternative clothing or footwear for employees with medical conditions that require flexibility (e.g., orthotic shoes, compression garments).
- **Service Animals:** Permitting employees to bring service animals into the workplace to assist with their disability.

8. Medical Devices and Accommodations for Treatment

- **Private Rest Areas:** Creating spaces for employees to administer medication, manage treatments or take breaks related to their condition (e.g., lactation).
- **Adjustable Lighting:** Modifying lighting to accommodate conditions like migraines or light sensitivity.

9. Reassignment to a Vacant Position

- **Job Transfer:** If no accommodation can allow the

employee to perform their current job, reassigning them to a vacant position for which they are qualified may be necessary.

10. Modifications for Mental Health Impairment

- **Quiet Workspaces:** Offering a noise-free or distraction-limited environment for individuals with anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or sensory processing issues.

11. Breaks for Stress Management

- **Short Breaks:** Allowing short breaks throughout the day for employees to engage in coping mechanisms like meditation or breathing exercises.

This list of potential accommodations is not exhaustive and other accommodations may have to be provided to enable the employee to perform the essential functions of the job.

b. Accommodations under the FMLA

The only type of accommodation required by the FMLA is the right to take leaves of absence that are either taken in a block or intermittently as requested by an eligible employee where the employee meets the terms and conditions for such leaves.

c. Accommodations under the PWFA

The PWFA was enacted on June 27, 2023, to protect the rights of pregnant workers and those affected by childbirth or related medical conditions. The PWFA mandates that employers, including school districts, provide reasonable accommodations to employees for pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions unless doing so would pose an undue hardship on the school district. This law fills in the gaps left by previous legislation, such as the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the ADA, by specifically addressing the need for reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers. Importantly, the kinds of accommodations required, and procedures allowed under the PWFA, are different than those of the ADA and Section 504. The most significant difference is that under the PWFA there will be times when an employee must be excused from the performance of an essential function.

Importantly, new regulations were recently promulgated to implement the PWFA. The regulations were published on April 15, 2024, and became effective June 18, 2024. 29 U.S.C. Part 1636. The PWFA prohibits an employer from failing to make reasonable accommodation to the known limitations of qualified employees or applicants, absent undue hardship. The final rule, like the proposed rule, sets out additional considerations for covered entities and employees in complying with this provision. Under the final rule, there are many specific rules with which school districts must comply, including the following:

1. Unnecessary delay in making a reasonable

accommodation is prohibited.

2. An employee is not required to accept an accommodation. (However, if an employee rejects a reasonable accommodation that they need in order to be “qualified” under the PWFA then that employee will not be considered qualified.)
3. The school district cannot justify failing to make a reasonable accommodation or the unnecessary delay in providing a reasonable accommodation based on the employee failing to provide supporting documentation unless: (1) the school district seeks the supporting documentation; (2) seeking supporting documentation is reasonable under the circumstances as set out in the regulations; (3) the supporting documentation is reasonable documentation as defined in the regulations; and (4) the school district provides the employee with sufficient time to obtain and provide the documentation.
4. When choosing among effective accommodations, the school district must choose an accommodation that provides a qualified employee equal employment opportunity to attain the same level of performance, or to enjoy the same level of benefits and privileges as are available to the average employee without a known limitation who is similarly situated.
5. The PWFA prohibits the school district from requiring a qualified employee to accept an accommodation other than one arrived at through the interactive process.
6. The PWFA prohibits school districts from denying employment opportunities to a qualified employee if the denial is based on the employer’s need to make a reasonable accommodation for the known limitation of the employee or applicant.
7. The PWFA prohibits school districts from requiring a qualified employee with a known limitation to take leave, either paid or unpaid, if another effective reasonable accommodation exists, absent undue hardship.
8. The PWFA prohibits school districts from taking adverse action in terms, conditions or privileges of employment against a qualified employee on account of the employee requesting or using a reasonable accommodation for a known limitation.

In order for an employee to be protected under the PWFA, the employee must be “qualified.” There are two definitions. First, the PWFA uses language from the ADA: thus, “an employee or applicant who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position” is qualified. Second, the PWFA allows an employee or applicant

to be qualified even if they cannot perform one or more essential functions of the job if the inability to perform the essential function(s) is “temporary,” the employee could perform the essential function(s) “in the near future” and the inability to perform the essential function(s) can be reasonably accommodated. The terms “temporary,” “in the near future” and “can be reasonably accommodated” are not defined in the statute.

The regulations define the term “temporary” as lasting for a limited time, not permanent, and may extend beyond “in the near future.” If the employee is pregnant, it is assumed under the regulations that the employee could perform the essential function(s) “in the near future” because they could perform the essential functions within 40 weeks of the temporary suspension of the essential function. But the final rule’s definition does not mean that the essential function(s) of a pregnant employee must always be suspended for 40 weeks, or that if a pregnant employee seeks the temporary suspension of an essential function(s) for 40 weeks it must be automatically granted. Whether the employee could perform the essential function(s) “in the near future” in situations other than when the employee is pregnant is determined on a case-by-case basis.

The regulations discuss the meaning of the PWFA’s requirement that the inability to perform the essential function(s) can be reasonably accommodated. For some positions, this may mean that one or more essential functions are temporarily suspended (with or without reassignment to someone else) and the employee continues to perform the remaining functions of the job. For other positions, some of the essential functions may be temporarily suspended (with or without reassignment to someone else) and the employee may be assigned other tasks to replace them. In yet other situations, one or more essential functions may be temporarily suspended (with or without reassignment to someone else) and the employee may perform the functions of a different job to which the employer temporarily transfers or assigns them, or the employee may participate in the employer’s light or modified duty program. Throughout this process, as with other reasonable accommodation requests, a school district may need to consider more than one alternative to identify a reasonable accommodation that does not pose an undue hardship.

In terms of “essential function” the PWFA regulations use the same definition as found in the ADA. In general terms, it means the fundamental duties of the job. Similarly, “reasonable accommodation” is another term borrowed from the ADA, by the PWFA, meaning a change in the work environment or how things are

usually done. The regulations provide specific examples of possible reasonable accommodations under the PWFA, including:

- Frequent breaks.
- Sitting/standing.
- Schedule changes, part-time work and paid and unpaid leave.
- Telework.
- Parking.
- Light duty.
- Making existing facilities accessible or modifying the work environment.
- Job restructuring.
- Temporarily suspending one or more essential functions.
- Acquiring or modifying equipment, uniforms or devices.
- Adjusting or modifying examinations or policies.

“Undue hardship” is yet another term borrowed by the PWFA from the ADA. It means significant difficulty or expense for the operation of the school district. In order to address that under the PWFA the school district may have to accommodate an employee’s temporary inability to perform an essential function(s), the regulations add additional factors that may be considered when determining if the temporary suspension of an essential function(s) causes an undue hardship. These additional factors include: consideration of the length of time that the employee will be unable to perform the essential function(s); whether there is work for the employee to accomplish; the nature of the essential function, including its frequency; whether the employer has provided other employees in similar positions who are unable to perform the essential function(s) of their positions with temporary suspensions of those functions and other duties; if necessary, whether there are other employees, temporary employees, or third parties who can perform or be temporarily hired to perform the essential function(s) in question; and whether the essential function(s) can be postponed or remain unperformed for any length of time and, if so, for how long.

The regulations identify a limited number of simple modifications that will, in virtually all cases, be found to be reasonable accommodations that do not impose an undue hardship when requested by a pregnant employee. These “predictable assessments” in the final rule are: **(1)** allowing an employee to carry or keep water near and drink as needed; **(2)** allowing an employee to take additional restroom breaks as needed; **(3)** allowing an employee whose work requires standing to sit and whose work requires sitting to stand as needed; and **(4)** allowing an employee to take breaks to eat and drink as needed.

“Interactive process” is another term borrowed from the ADA, and the regulations explain that the “interactive process” is a method to help the school district and employee identify potential reasonable accommodations. It means a discussion or two-way communication between an employer and an employee.

Under the regulations, school districts are not required to seek “supporting documentation” from an employee who requests an accommodation. If the school district decides to seek supporting documentation, it is only permitted to do so if it is reasonable to require documentation under the circumstances to determine whether the employee has a physical or mental condition related to, affected by, or arising out of pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions and needs a change or adjustment at work due to the limitation. The regulations provide examples of when it would not be reasonable for the employer to require documentation. The definition of “reasonable documentation” means the minimum documentation that is sufficient to: (1) confirm the physical or mental condition; (2) confirm the physical or mental condition is related to, affected by, or arising out of pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions (together with (1) “a limitation”); and (3) describe the change or adjustment at work needed due to the limitation.

The regulations explain how an employee may request a reasonable accommodation. The employee must identify the limitation (the physical or mental condition related to, affected by, or arising out of pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions) and that the employee needs an adjustment or change at work due to the limitation. There are no “magic words” that need to be used by the employee.

d. Accommodations under Title IX

Neither Title IX nor the regulations under Title IX contain provisions using the word “accommodations.” Instead, Title IX focuses on prohibiting unlawful discrimination, retaliation and harassment on the basis of sex, including (1) pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy or lactation; (2) medical conditions related to pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy or lactation; and (3) recovery from pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, lactation or related medical conditions. However, there are several rules that effectively require accommodations. For example, the Title IX regulations provide that school districts “must treat pregnancy or related conditions as any other temporary medical conditions for all job-related purposes, including commencement, duration and extensions of leave; payment of disability income; accrual of seniority and any other benefit or service; reinstatement; and under any fringe benefit offered to employees by virtue of

employment.” 34 C.F.R. § 106.57(c). If accommodations are provided for such temporary medical conditions, they must be provided for pregnancy and related conditions. The Title IX regulations also provide:

- (d) *Voluntary leave of absence. In the case of a recipient that does not maintain a leave policy for its employees, or in the case of an employee with insufficient leave or accrued employment time to qualify for leave under such a policy, a recipient must treat pregnancy or related conditions as a justification for a voluntary leave of absence without pay for a reasonable period of time, at the conclusion of which the employee shall be reinstated to the status held when the leave began or to a comparable position, without decrease in rate of compensation, loss of promotional opportunities or any other right or privilege of employment.*
- (e) *Lactation time and space.*
 - (1) *A recipient must provide reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk or breastfeed as needed.*
 - (2) *A recipient must ensure that an employee can access a lactation space, which must be a space other than a bathroom that is clean, shielded from view, free from intrusion from others, and may be used by an employee for expressing breast milk or breastfeeding as needed.*

34 C.F.R. § 106.57(c) and (d).

III. A Principal’s Response to the Secretary’s Request

At the start of this article, you were asked what to do when your secretary tells you that she is pregnant and wants to work from home every morning due to morning sickness. In light of the rules discussed in this article, it is my recommendation that principals:

1. Notify the human resources department in writing of the secretary’s pregnancy and request for the accommodation.
2. Follow up to ensure that the human resources department has engaged in the interactive process and made a determination regarding the accommodations being provided.
3. Document the interactive process and follow-up actions.
4. If the secretary asks for things that have not been provided, or that are different, notify the human resources department again, and do so in writing.

IV. Conclusion

Public school employees and students who are pregnant and/or who experience pregnancy-related conditions have numerous rights which require not only considerations and protections but also affirmative accommodations. These laws and regulations subject school districts to serious liability for failing to adhere to the aforementioned considerations and processes. Therefore, school principals need to be familiar with these laws and regulations so as not to run afoul of them. ■

WHAT ARE ESPORTS?

Esports, short for electronic sports, is a collective term that describes organized competitive video gaming, where individuals use video game consoles, PC's, or mobile phones to play popular video game titles against other esports teams.

BOOSTING ESPORTS IN PA



Social Emotional Learning

Students build character and develop discipline, confidence, and sportsmanship through practice and competition.



Increase Student Engagement

Esports are co-ed, inclusive, and engage students who might not otherwise participate in school athletics or activities.



STEM Skill Growth

Esports competition is rooted in technology. Research has found a large crossover between esports players and STEM interest.



Mental Health Improvement

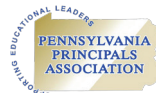
Participation in esports is linked to a range of positive social and emotional benefits, including increased social skills, communication, and motivation. 74% of esports coaches surveyed agree they've observed improvements in their players' mental health and overall positive life outlook.



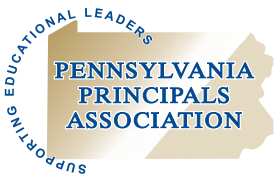
To learn more about onboarding your school with PlayVS and building your esports team for the upcoming season, schedule a consult with our local representative today!

Let's get started!

Getting started with esports as an after school activity is easy. It's a program to adopt as most schools already have equipment necessary to begin. All your students need to compete is a PC, keyboard and mouse. Additional equipment may include a headset with mic, jerseys and gaming controllers. Students can compete in teams that vary from 1 to 5 students depending on the game title.



For more information visit playvs.com



Pennsylvania Principals Association
122 Valley Road
Enola, PA 17025

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Harrisburg, PA
Permit No. 557

An Approved PIL Program for Your Administrative Team!

Improving Leadership and Student Learning Through Simulations

Earn 30 PIL Hours!

We Will Bring the Program to Your District!

- Who:** Any school leader who needs Act 45 hours or your entire administrative team.
- Where:** Program is delivered by PA Principals Association staff/consultants and is held in your district.
- When:** You select a full day that is convenient to both your team and the PA Principals Association.
- Cost:** \$250 per individual with a minimum of 10 participants. (You can coordinate with a neighboring school district, too!)

Program Purpose:

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

**For more information or to schedule a workshop
in your district, contact Dr. Michael Snell at
(717) 732-4999 or msnell@paprincipals.org**

