

# Washington Principal

Association of Washington School Principals

FALL 2013



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# Washington Principal

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School Principals

FALL 2013

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### 16 5 Big Ideas From Common Core Standards to Curriculum

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CHRIS TUMBUSCH

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**Cover photo:** Eric Boles, former NFL player and motivational speaker, embraces his most memorable teacher, Rosa Cartledge, during the studio taping session for the "Great Teaching" PSA series created by Tacoma Public Schools.

Photo by Casey Madison/Tacoma Public Schools

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Association of Washington Middle Level Principals

Washington Association of Secondary School Principals

#### National Affiliates

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Secondary School Principals

# Creative writing... You want fries with that?

*Research now shows that young children who read and write often do better on every test they take*

**By Linda Farmer, APR**

*Managing Editor*

I always knew there was a connection between reading and writing. When I'm deep into a good book, one with powerful verbs and descriptive phrases, my writing seems to flow easier, faster.

The opposite also has been true. I journaled fiendishly growing up. Page after page, on every subject under the sun (okay, a lot of it may have about adolescent boys). The more I wrote, the more I wanted to read. I soaked up words, thoughts and ideas and looked for ways to express them through writing.

I was going to be a writer. My parents wrung their hands, the phrase "You want fries with that?" looming over my limited job opportunities. I'm feeling my own twinges of parental worry as I watch my daughter, now a first grader, dive headfirst into reading and writing.

Last week, though, I ran across a study that shows that one of the best ways children can learn and retain new material is by writing about it (Karpicke & Blunt, 2011). Noted author Pam Allyn cites the study in her book, "Your Child's Writing Life." Her premise is that writing fosters a child's emotional growth, helps develop critical thinking skills and leads to guaranteed improvement in academic achievement.

A regular routine of reading and writing leads to better test taking and grades? Teachers and principals know this. It's not just one study, it's a whole body of work.

Teachers and principals do struggle with competing needs for instructional time, however. That's why it's imperative that parents encourage their kids to engage in writing, drawing and storytelling exercises in their free time.

I'll be picking up more crayons and paper on the way home tonight.



*Linda Farmer, APR is the Director of Communications and Business Partnerships for AWSP. She serves as Managing Editor for Washington Principal.*

**Maxwell Wins 2013 Torch of Leadership**



Marcie Maxwell won AWSP's 2013 Torch of Leadership Award for her commitment to K-12 education during the 2013 legislative session. At the time of the award, Maxwell represented the 41st district. She is now Gov. Jay Inslee's education policy advisor. Established in 2009, the award honors public officials who support the principalship.

**How Can AWSP Better Support Assistant Principals?**

The Assistant Principals Leadership Conference (APLC) has been a staple in the AWSP professional development lineup. In recent years, however, attendance has waned to less than a quarter of the 900+ assistant principals in the state. It's time to make a change: what should we do instead of APLC? How can we support assistant principals in the important work they do? Contact Scott Seaman at [scott@awsp.org](mailto:scott@awsp.org) or 800.562.6100, with your ideas.

**AWSP 2013 President's Award Goes to Jim Howard**



Jim Howard, Ph.D., is the 2013 recipient of the AWSP President's Award. Howard, the program administrator for the WSU-Spokane Administrator Preparation Program, has been influential at the state level with principal preparation programs. The AWSP President's Award honors those outside the association who support the principalship.



**AWSP Leadership Framework Team Honored**

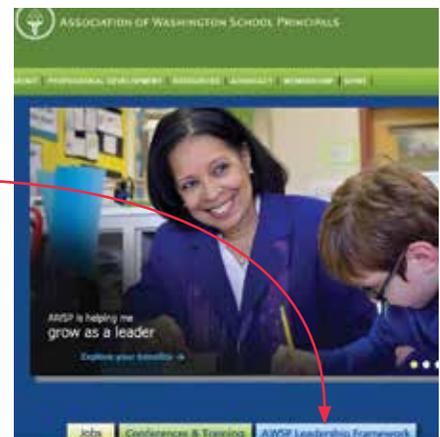
AWSP bestowed its 2013 Special Recognition Award on a group of practicing principals, university researchers and industry experts who created Version 2.0 of the AWSP Leadership Framework. The Framework has been adopted by nearly all the state's 295 school districts to use with the required principal evaluation system.

Recipients:

- Gene Sharratt, Ph.D.
- Glenn Malone, Ed.D.
- Sally Lancaster, Ed.D.
- Larry Lashway
- Chad Lochmiller, Ph.D.
- Kristen Schroeder
- Nancy Strobel
- Ailene Baxter, Ed.D.
- Brian Lowney

**Resources Galore for AWSP Leadership Framework**

Need resources to help with the AWSP Leadership Framework? Visit [www.awsp.org](http://www.awsp.org) and click on the blue Framework tab to access more than 600 surveys, case studies, books, DVDs, interviews, best practices and other resources tied to the eight principal evaluation criteria. A group of practicing principals, scholars and researchers compiled and vetted the contents.



**Eight New Laws That Affect Principals**

More than 40 bills became law in 2013 that change the way schools operate. A few that directly change the way a principal leads a building this year include:

- AP Computer Science
- Epinephrine Autoinjectors
- School Safety-Related Drills

Find a one-page summary of eight new laws in the Advocacy section of the AWSP website.

# Comprehensive Engagement

Is there any other mode for a principal today to operate in?

**By Karen Owen**

*Principal, Nisqually Middle School  
North Thurston Public Schools*

**As I consider** the concept of engagement, I see it through multiple perspectives. Five distinct perspectives, to be exact: professional, staff, student, family and community and personal. When these areas converge, they create the authentic and holistic engagement necessary to be effective as an educational leader.

### Professional Engagement

This is the degree that I involve myself in our profession. I am honored and proud to serve this year as president of your state association. I have served on the leadership board at the middle level, been elected middle level principal of the state and allowed to remain on the board. As I neared the end of my term, I chose to serve on the AWSP executive board. Why? My professional engagement is a strong one that serves to energize and strengthen my abilities as a person and school principal. I would encourage each of you to make the effort to get involved at the local level. The rewards far exceed the time!

### Staff Engagement

Another level of engagement where I find myself totally committed is my staff. As a principal in the same building for the past 10 years, I am rededicating myself this year to enhancing and growing the relationships within my school. I have begun the year by sharing this focus then meeting with each staff member individually. After just a few meetings I am reminded of the high

level of commitment, professionalism, and skill of the individuals I work with.

### Student Engagement

This is where we spend much of our thinking and observation time. My goals include assuring that every student is connected with at least one

Being an effective and balanced principal requires continual attention to each of the levels and perspectives of engagement that make up our daily lives both at work and home.

adult and to the community of our middle school. The programs in place to ensure this engagement include a comprehensive advisory, a host of student recognitions, (one of my favorites is the teacher choice recognition), student leadership, which includes nearly 10 percent of our students, and before- and after-school activities. Lastly the program that ties all the students together is our consistent, sound and intentional approach to PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions Support). Our Totem Traits are taught, posted and reinforced everywhere!

### Family and Community Engagement

This continues to be a goal area for me this year. We don't have a PTA or Booster group, however, for the first time in some years I have high interest. Our main focus will simply be to increase the connections between school and home. We also intend to start a WATCH D.O.G.S. program.

### Personal Engagement

This last level of engagement is my foundation and includes my faith, my family and my personal commitment. I work intentionally to keep this level of engagement in balance. I am committing to daily goal setting, or the "daily wins" as a speaker from the WASA/AWSP Summer Conference spoke about. The wins include both my professional and personal life.

Being an effective and balanced principal requires continual attention to each of the levels and perspectives of engagement that make up our daily lives both at work and home. ■



*Karen Owen has served as principal at Nisqually Middle School for more than 10 years. A longtime AWSP member, she is serving as president this year.*

*From Obligation to Opportunity*

# Teacher Supervision

*That Improves*

# Student Learning

**By Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman**

*Co-directors, MiraVia, LLC*

**In Washington State, as in most of the country, teacher evaluation processes are changing dramatically.**

**T**he focus of the supervisory process is shifting: from fulfilling contractual obligations to promoting opportunities for growth; from using data to prove to using data to improve, from evaluation as an event to evaluation as a process, and from teachers asking “what are my scores?” to asking “what are my goals?”

Much of the impetus for these initiatives stems from a fundamental premise: Teacher effectiveness links directly to student learning and skillful supervision links directly to teacher effectiveness. In well-implemented evaluation systems, the difference between highly rated teachers and those scoring at the lower ends of performance scales can be an entire year’s worth of additional learning for students.

Such evaluation systems include: clearly articulated and well-understood stan-

dards and related performance scales, high-levels of supervisor observation and analysis skills, and both formative and summative conferences aimed at teacher development, not remediation.

Recent studies suggest that even when the first two factors are in place, confidence and competence in learning-focused supervisory conferences make a fundamental difference in teacher growth.

Thus, for supervisors, the ability to structure and facilitate powerful learning-focused conversations lies at the heart of both one-to-one and collective work with teachers. Standards provide the what to talk about; learning-focused supervision offers the how.

Learning-focused supervision is a growth-oriented process that embeds four essential qualities. This approach to building professional expertise is developmental, standards-driven, data-based and customized.

*Continued on page 10*



Principal Peter Donaldson observes a class at Mount Erie Elementary (Anacortes SD).

## Developmental

Learning is a developmental process, for children and adults alike. In teaching, as in all fields, there is a definable novice to expert journey. Rubrics describing performance levels illuminate this pathway. As student demographics shift, as technology infuses classrooms and expectations for higher levels of understanding drive changes in assessment systems, all teachers will be on a developmental trajectory no matter how many years of experience they have. Learning-focused supervisors take a growth-oriented approach—shaping their interactions based on both a teacher’s present practices and shared expectations for future practices.

## Standards-driven

Standards frame shared expectations and establish and clarify measures of excellence for teacher and student performance. Applied effectively, they become rallying points for important conversations about teaching and

learning and they set aspirations for goal setting and continuous growth. In learning-focused cultures, standards not only shape expectations—they raise them. Deeply researched and validated teaching standards with their associated rubrics now define and describe good teaching. Excellence is a measurable destination, not a vague aspiration or locally developed checklist.

## Data-based

Productive supervisory interactions are grounded in a variety of data that capture the effects and outcomes of a teacher’s practice. Literal notes, student work products and other forms of objective data focus supervisory conversations on tangible evidence that become a catalyst for exploration and analysis. Without accurate information, conversations drift in a sea of inference and distraction. Clear data establish the

foundation for calibrating performance against standards, stimulating goal setting and the clarification of desirable actions and measureable results.

## Customized

Growth-promoting supervisors customize their work with teachers. The classroom practices of two teachers with similar overall ratings

might be vastly different. By clarifying and contextualizing specific elements and discrete components within standards, learning-focused supervisors and teachers can explore fine-grained vari-

ation in skills. During planning and reflecting conversations, skillful supervisors clarify expectations using examples based on the teaching assignment, grade level or content area. These supervisors flexibly apply templates and tools to personalize their approach and build professional expertise for individual teachers.

Standards provide the *what* to talk about; learning-focused supervision offers the *how*.

## A Continuum of Learning-focused Interaction

Learning-focused supervision is a partnership in which evaluator and teacher construct new understandings based on contextualized data, relevant research and explicit standards reflecting principals of effective practice. These constructs support goal setting, problem solving and action planning.

To keep supervisory conversations learning-focused, skillful supervisors shift between four stances: calibrating, consulting, collaborating, and coaching to develop teachers’ capacities to reflect upon data, to generate ideas and options, and to increase personal and professional awareness and skills. Each stance serves a specific function and all are effective tools for rich conversations.

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## Learning-focused Conversations: The Continuum of Interaction

Supervisor/ Specialist	Information, analysis, goals			Teacher
	Calibrating	Consulting	Collaborating	Coaching
Guiding question	What are the gaps/growth areas indicated for this teacher based on present performance levels and the standards?	What information, ideas and technical resources will be most useful to this teacher at this time?	What are some ways to balance my contributions with this teacher's experiences and expertise?	What mental and emotional resources might be most useful for this teacher at this time?
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articulating standards</li> <li>• Using data to identify gaps between expected standards and present results</li> <li>• Defining problems</li> <li>• Prescribing results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarifying standards</li> <li>• Using data to analyze gaps between expected standards and present results</li> <li>• Offering information and ideas</li> <li>• Providing problem analysis and perspectives</li> <li>• Naming principles of practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jointly clarifying standards</li> <li>• Using data to co-analyze gaps between expected standards and present results</li> <li>• Co-generating information and ideas</li> <li>• Co-analyzing problems</li> <li>• Expanding perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referencing standards as a focal point</li> <li>• Using data to explore gaps between expected standards and present results</li> <li>• Facilitating teacher idea production</li> <li>• Mediating teacher problem-framing and analysis</li> <li>• Enhancing teacher capacities for planning, reflecting, problem-solving and decision making</li> </ul>
Role in planning for action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining teacher actions/goals</li> <li>• Naming success criteria</li> <li>• Establishing timelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposing teacher actions/goals</li> <li>• Defining success criteria</li> <li>• Confirming timelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-constructing teacher actions/goals</li> <li>• Co-developing success criteria</li> <li>• Agreeing on timelines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring teacher actions/goals</li> <li>• Eliciting success criteria</li> <li>• Clarifying timelines</li> </ul>
Cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credible voice</li> <li>• Using neutral language, as in <i>"These data ..."</i> <i>"This example ..."</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credible voice</li> <li>• Using neutral language or personal pronouns, as in, <i>"I think that ..."</i> <i>"It is important to ..."</i> <i>"Here is one way to think about that"</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approachable voice</li> <li>• Collective pronouns, as in <i>"Let's think about ..."</i> <i>"How might we ..."</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approachable voice</li> <li>• Second person pronouns, as in <i>"What are some of your ...?"</i> <i>"How might you ...?"</i></li> </ul>
Cautions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take care not to let personal preferences become prescriptions. Judgments must be supported by clear, external criteria.</li> <li>• Use literal observation notes, classroom artifacts and assessment data to avoid subjectivity or bias.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and manage the impulse to help or rescue. Stay learning-focused and don't let personal passion overcome patience with the developmental process.</li> <li>• Be aware that overuse of the consulting stance may build dependency on the supervisor for problem solving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resist the impulse to dominate the conversation and provide the bulk of the analysis and thinking.</li> <li>• Monitor for balance in idea production. Don't allow personal enthusiasm or preferences to override the intention to co-create ideas and options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce potential frustration by posing developmentally appropriate questions. Questions should stretch not strain thinking.</li> <li>• Be sure that questions allow for multiple responses and do not signal that there is a preferred answer.</li> </ul>

*Continued on page 12*

As the table on page 11 illustrates, each stance is defined by who is the primary source of determining the data-based, standards-driven level of performance, who provides technical information, problem definition and gap analysis, and who identifies and establishes growth goals and action plans.

Application of the Continuum is not static. Skilled supervisors fluently and flexibly navigate across all four stances. Just as in teaching, it is important to know and be able to select from a variety of strategies that are appropriate to the learner's needs. In this way, the Continuum helps keep learning-focused supervision both developmental and customized. The ultimate aim of these stances and their cumulative effect is to support continuous learning for teachers and to enhance their capacity to reflect upon and learn from their own practice and to contribute to productive collegial relationships.

### Calibrating Stance

Guiding question for the supervisor: "What are the gaps/growth areas indicated for this teacher based on present performance levels and the standards?"

In the calibrating stance, the supervisor clarifies performance standards and expectations, identifies gaps, and names and monitors improvement goals and success indicators. For the supervisor, this stance is used to connect observational and other data to a performance level with confidence, clarity and credibility.

Because it is most desirable for the teacher to make these assessments, using the calibrating stance is limited to occasions when a directive approach is called for – generally for very low-performing or unsatisfactory teachers or sometimes for "complacent" teachers who need motivation.

It is important to note that the act of calibration, or assessing the level of practice based on a standard must



A teacher at Davis High School (Yakima SD) demonstrates a problem on the board.

INGRID BARRENTINE

occur in every evaluative conversation. This determination requires clear standards, a rubric delineating levels of performance based on those standards and literal data to determine the "fit."

In the calibrating stance, the supervisor determines and communicates the level of performance to the teacher. Based on a variety of data sources the supervisor establishes a level of performance and organizes the data and the conversation to inform and discuss this rating with the teacher, clearly explaining the thinking behind the assessment as it relates to all of the information available.

In the most extreme cases, the calibrating stance becomes the dominant stance in the conversation, with the greater percentage of time spent there. Some triggers for this choice include: teaching behaviors that create an unsafe or harmful environment physically or emotionally, teacher responses that are inappropriate, classroom management that is non-existent, student performance that is consistently below expectations and instructional planning and delivery that is ineffective.

### Supervisory Functions

In the calibrating stance, the supervisor defines and reinforces teaching standards and expectations. The verb to calibrate means an active process of matching an object or performance to an agreed upon value. Simplistically, that value might be a shoe size or the diameter of a section of tubing. In contemporary educational discourse such values are expressed as standards. To operate with integrity within a calibrating stance the conversation must be driven by data. These data are

used to identify gaps between expected standards and the present results, and/or to reinforce and illuminate effective practices. Clearly articulating the standards and accessing available resource materials, learning-focused supervisors define and illuminate successes and challenges. They customize the conversation by presenting models and examples of the standards in action that are content and grade level specific and explicitly name expectations. In planning for action, skillful supervisors take a developmental approach in determining achievable goals, success criteria and timelines for completion.

In learning-focused cultures, standards not only shape expectations—they raise them.

## Consulting Stance

Guiding question for the supervisor: “What information, ideas and technical resources will be most useful to this teacher at this time?”

Based on the teacher’s initial responses, or at some other point during the conversation, the supervisor recognizes gaps in content knowledge, student knowledge, or instructional repertoire. In some cases the teacher’s problem frame is narrow, or potentially inaccurate or the range of strategies is small. In others, there is limited understanding of factors that might be causing an issue. As a result, the supervisor determines that a shift to the consulting stance would be effective.

## Supervisory Functions

In the consulting stance, a supervisor offers perspectives on present concerns, by naming possible causes and possible approaches to improve performance. Beyond this gap analysis, a thoughtful supervisor also

shares essential information about learning and learners and curriculum and content as they relate to existing issues, principles of practice, connections to expected performance standards and relevant craft knowledge.

By offering, “Here’s what you should pay attention to” and “Here’s why that matters” and “Here are some options”, learning-focused supervisors make their thinking transparent. Here again, an approach that is customized and developmentally appropriate drives many of the supervisor’s choices. For example, in planning for action, skillful supervisors propose a menu of teacher goals to promote student achievement and professional growth, and provide opportunities for the teacher to choose and prioritize. Defining indicators of success and confirming timelines for completion are essential parts of the planning process. As teachers internalize principles of learning and teaching, these understandings become resources for more generating their own approaches and solutions.



A teacher observes a STEM lesson at Stevens Elementary (Aberdeen SD).

CHRISTUMBUSCH

## Collaborating Stance

Guiding question for the supervisor: “What are some ways to balance my contributions with this teacher’s experiences and expertise?”

The collaborative stance creates a shared platform for the co-construction of knowledge. In this stance, both participants generate ideas, offer solutions, analyze problems. In many cases the learning-focused supervisor shifts to a collaborative stance to increase the teacher’s confidence in his or her own ability to analyze data, frame problems and develop strategies. Much like the gradual release concept in classroom practice, this developmental orientation contributes to greater ownership of the strategies and actions generated.

In this stance, the supervisor provides support for idea generation balanced with respect for the teacher’s ability to generate ideas and solutions. A rich, inquiry-driven collaboration creates permission for both parties to add ideas and perspectives without anyone dominating the conversation.

## Supervisory Functions

From the collaborative stance, the supervisor and teacher jointly clarify standards to ensure shared understanding. Together, they analyze data

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to identify a level of performance, identifying gaps between standard-driven expectations and current practice. In partnership, they generate potential causal theories, establish goals for growth, develop plans and produce strategies for action. Shared perspectives lead to greater insights for both teacher and supervisor.

Each stance is in large part defined by which participant in the conversation is producing the information and/or analysis at a given moment. The collaborative stance has the widest range of participation. In this stance, both parties are contributing. In some cases, the supervisor leans more towards consulting by suggesting criteria or offering a principle of practice upon which to base ideas. In others, the supervisor might lead with a completely open-ended inquiry, and the collaboration has more of a coaching quality.

## Coaching Stance

Guiding question for the supervisor: “What mental and emotional resources might be most useful for this teacher at this time?”

The coaching stance assumes that the teacher has the resources necessary to engage in data-centered reflection

on practice and modify and manage personal learning. Operating from this stance, the supervisor respectfully invites the teacher to draw upon his or her experience and lead in the construction of new ideas, problem frames, growth oriented goals and action plans.

The coaching stance communicates high expectations and high regard for teachers’ capacities. For this reason, one key principal of practice is to enter the conversation from a coaching stance with an initial inquiry and close the conversation in that stance, as well, to identify new learning and clarify next steps.

Supervisory exchanges must offer opportunities to think, reflect and problem-solve within the flow of the real work of learning to teach.

## Supervisory Functions

In the coaching stance, the supervisor references teaching and learning standards and a variety of data as focal points for the conversation. The supervisor inquires into the teacher’s thinking about each of these resources to identify levels of performance. In this stance, the teacher is the primary source of problem frames, gap analysis, potential solutions and strategies. Through an inquiry process, the supervisor’s role is to enhance teacher’s capacities for planning, reflecting, problem solving and decision-making.

The coaching stance is one of inquiry. This means that there are multiple appropriate responses, and that the supervisor has not predetermined a correct answer.

The value of these questions is that they influence the teacher’s underlying thought processes. By inquiring, pausing, and probing for details as data are explored, the supervisor supports both idea production and the exploration of the “whys” and “hows” of choices, possibilities, and connections.

This nonjudgmental approach applied over time, enlarges the frame, developing the teacher’s ever-increasing capacity for expert thinking and practice. The ultimate aim of the coaching stance is to develop a teacher’s internal resources for self-coaching so that



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A teacher works with a student at Browns Point Elementary (Tacoma PS).

with time and practice, an increasingly sophisticated inner voice guides professional self-talk. In planning for action, supervisor questions guide the teacher's exploration of goals, success criteria and reasonable timelines for action.

### Creating a Learning Culture

A developmental and customized approach requires that supervisors consider which data are collected and shared, which aspects of specific standards drive the learning and how frequently they engage with their teachers. In addition, flexible supervi-

sors navigate strategically across the continuum, choosing the most appropriate stances for promoting a teacher's growth. This flexibility is another aspect of customization in learning-focused conversations. The ability to continually anticipate, monitor and flex stance across the Continuum of Interaction is a vital component in developing and maintaining learning-focused supervisory relationships.

If the goal is to increase teachers' capacities for self-direction, supervisory exchanges must offer opportunities to think, reflect and problem-solve within the flow of the real work of learning to teach.

Given the changing context that surrounds schools, it is essential that the first line support system for teachers is one that nurtures their growth and development as individual practitioners and as collaborative colleagues.

The test of supervisors' effectiveness is the degree of influence that their behavior has on teachers' commitment

to their own growth: their knowledge and skill, improvements in classroom practice and the level of engagement and success for students. As the actions of individual teachers combine with the actions of their colleagues, a school's learning culture emerges.

Shaping this learning culture is the prime work of instructional leaders. Learning-focused supervision is an effective and necessary vehicle for doing so. ■

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## From Common Core Standards to Curriculum

**By Jay McTighe and Grant Wiggins**

In this article, we explore five big ideas about the Common Core State Standards and their translation into a curriculum. As with most big ideas, these Standards are in some ways obvious but may also be counter-intuitive and prone to misunderstanding. We highlight potential misconceptions in working with the Standards, and offer recommendations for designing a coherent curriculum and assessment system for realizing their promise.

# Big idea #

# 1

The Common Core Standards have new emphases and require a careful reading.

**In our travels** around the country since the Common Core Standards were released, we sometimes hear comments such as, “Oh, here we go again;” “Same old wine in a new bottle;” or “We already do all of this.” Such reactions are not surprising given the fact that we have been here before. A focus on Standards is not new. However, it is a misconception to assume that these Standards merely require minor tweaks to our curriculum and instructional practices. In fact, the authors of the Mathematics Standards anticipated this reaction and caution against it: “These Standards are not intended to be new names for old ways of doing business.” Merely trying to retrofit the Standards to typical teaching and testing practices will undermine the effort.

A related misconception in working with the Common Core is evident when teachers turn immediately to the grade level Standards listed for their grade or course to plan their teaching. Such an action is reasonable; after all, isn't that what they are supposed to teach? While understandable, we advise against zeroing in on the grade-level Standards before a careful examination of the goals and structure of the overall documents.

To invoke a construction analogy: Think of the grade level standards as building materials. As a construction supervisor, we wouldn't simply drop off materials and tools at a worksite and have the workers “go at it.” Instead, we would begin with a blueprint—an overall vision of the desired building to guide its construc-

tion. Without an overall end in mind, teachers can create wonderful individual rooms that won't necessarily fit together within and across floors or achieve the intended results.

The Common Core Standards have been developed with long-term outcomes in mind (e.g., College and Career Anchor Standards in English Language Arts), and their components are intended to work together (e.g., Content and Practice Standards in mathematics). This point is highlighted

in a recently released publication, Publishers' Criteria for the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (July 2012):

“The Standards' refers to all elements of the design—the wording of domain headings, cluster headings, and individual statements; the text of the grade level introductions and high school category descriptions; the placement of the standards for mathematical practice at each grade level. The pieces are designed to fit together, and the standards document fits them together, presenting a coherent whole where the connections within grades and the flows of ideas across grades...”

It is imperative that educators understand the intent and structure of the Standards in order to work with them most effectively. Accordingly,

we recommend that schools set the expectation and schedule the time for staff to read and discuss the Standards, beginning with the “front matter,” not the grade-level Standards. We also recommend that staff reading and discussion be guided by an essential question: What are the new distinctions in these Standards and what do they mean for our practice? Since the Standards are complex texts and demand a “close” reading, we recommend that staff carefully examine the table of contents and the organizational structure; the headers (e.g., Design Considerations; What is Not Covered, etc.), the components (e.g., Anchor Standards and Foundational Skills for ELA; Standards for Mathematical Practice), and the Appendices (ELA).

Merely trying to retrofit the Standards to typical teaching and testing practices will undermine the effort.

Following a thorough reading of these introductory sections, discuss the changing instructional emphases called for by the Standards and their implications. For example, the ELA Standards demand

a greater balance between reading informational and literary texts, and stress the use of text-based evidence to support argumentation in writing and speaking. The Mathematics Standards accentuate the focus on a smaller set of conceptually larger ideas that spiral across the grades (as opposed to simply “covering” numerous skills) with an emphasis on meaningful application using the Practices. We cannot overemphasize the value of taking the time to collaboratively examine the Standards in this way. Failure to understand the Standards and adjust practices accordingly will likely result in “same old, same old” teaching with only superficial connections to the grade level Standards. In that case, their promise to enhance student performance will not be realized.

*Continued on page 18*

# Big idea #

# 2

## Standards are not curriculum

**A Standard is** an outcome, not a claim about how to achieve an outcome (i.e. a curriculum). Thus, the Introduction to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Mathematics states: “These Standards do not dictate curriculum or teaching methods” A similar reminder is found in the ELA Standards: “The Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach. For instance, the use of play with young children is not specified by the Standards, but it is welcome as a valuable activity in its own right and as a way to help students meet the expectations in this

document... The Standards must therefore be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum consistent with the expectations laid out in this document.”

Indeed, these statements highlight the intent of any set of Standards; i.e., they focus on outcomes, not curriculum or instruction. The implication is clear—educators must translate the Standards into an engaging and effective curriculum. So, what is the proper relationship between the Standards and curriculum? Consider another analogy with home building and renovation: The standards are like the

building code. Architects and builders must attend to them but they are *not* the purpose of the design. The house to be built or renovated is designed to meet the needs of the client in a functional and pleasing manner —while also meeting the building code along the way.

Similarly, while curriculum and instruction must address established Standards, we always want to keep the long-term educational ends in mind – the development of important capabilities in the learner as a result of engaging and effective work. In other words, a curriculum works with the Standards to frame optimal learning experiences. To shift analogies, the Standards are more like the ingredients in a recipe than the final meal; they are more like the rules of the game rather than a strategy for succeeding at the game.

So then, what is a curriculum? In research for our initial book, *Understanding by Design*<sup>®</sup> (Wiggins and McTighe, 1998), we uncovered 83 different definitions or connotations for the word, curriculum, in the educational literature! Such a variety of meanings confer an unhelpful ambiguity on the challenge of moving from Standards to curriculum. Worse, most definitions focus on inputs, not outputs—what will be “covered” rather than a plan for what learners should be able to accomplish with learned content. This is a core misunderstanding in our field. Marching through a list of topics or skills cannot be a “guaranteed and viable” way to ever yield the sophisticated outcomes that the Standards envision.

The ELA Standards underscore this idea clearly by framing everything around “anchor standards,” all of which highlight complex abilities and performances that students should master for college and workplace readiness. The Mathematics Standards’ emphasis on the need to weave the Content and Practice Standards together in a curriculum makes the same point.

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# Big idea #

# 3

## Standards need to be “unpacked”

**As suggested** above, the first step in translating the Common Core Standards into engaging and outcome-focused curriculum involves a careful reading of the documents in order to insure clarity about the end results and an understanding of how the pieces fit together. This idea is not new. Over the years, we have suggested various ways of unpacking standards in conjunction with our work with the *Understanding by Design* framework®. (See, for example, Wiggins and McTighe 2011, 2012).

When working with the Common Core, we recommend that educators “unpack” them into four broad categories— 1) Long-term Transfer Goals, 2) Overarching Understandings, 3) Overarching Essential Questions, and 4) a set of recurring Cornerstone Tasks.

The first category, Transfer Goals, identifies the effective uses of content understanding, knowledge, and skill that we seek in the long run; i.e., what we want students to be able to do when they confront new challenges—both in and outside of school. They reflect the ultimate goals, the reason we teach specific knowledge and skills. Unlike earlier generations of standards where transfer goals were implicit at best, the Common Core Standards have made them more overt. Indeed, the College and Career Anchor Standards in ELA specify long-term transfer goals, while the Mathematics Standards strongly suggest a goal such as, *Students will be able to use the mathematics they know to solve “messy,” never-seen-before problems using effective mathematical reasoning.*

The second and third unpacking categories—overarching Understandings and Essential Questions—are like two sides of a coin. The Understandings state what skilled performers will

need in order to effectively transfer their learning to new situations, while explorations of the Essential Questions engage learners in making meaning and deepening their understandings.

The term *overarching* conveys the idea that these understandings and questions are not limited to a single grade or topic. On the contrary, it is expected that they be addressed across the grades with application to varied topics, problems, texts and contexts.

The fourth category, Cornerstone Tasks, are curriculum-embedded tasks that are intended to engage students in applying their knowledge and skills in an authentic and relevant context. Like a cornerstone anchors a building, these tasks are meant to anchor the curriculum around the most important performances that we want learners to be able to do (on their own) with acquired content knowledge and skills. Since these tasks are set in realistic contexts, they offer

the natural vehicle for integrating the so-called 21st century skills (e.g., creativity, technology use, teamwork) with subject area content knowledge and skills. They honor the intent of the Standards, within and across subject areas, instead of emphasizing only the content measured more narrowly on external accountability tests.

These rich tasks can be used as meaningful learning experiences as well as for formative and summative purposes.

Cornerstone tasks are designed to recur across the grades, progressing

When working with the Common Core, we recommend that educators “unpack” them into four broad categories— 1) Long-term Transfer Goals, 2) Overarching Understandings, 3) Overarching Essential Questions, and 4) a set of recurring Cornerstone Tasks.

from simpler to more sophisticated; from those that are heavily scaffolded toward ones requiring autonomous performance. Accordingly, they enable both educators *and* learners to track performance and document the fact that students are getting progressively better at *using* content knowledge and skills in worthy performances. Like the game in athletics or the play in theater, teachers teach toward these tasks without apology.

The four categories that we recommend are initially unpacked at the “macro,” or program, level to establish the equivalent of a curriculum blueprint. More specific course and grade level curriculum maps are then derived backward from them, just as rooms in a building are constructed using the architect’s blueprint as a guide. Practically speaking, this macro level work is best undertaken at the state, regional or district levels by teams of content experts and experienced teachers. Currently two states, Massachusetts

*Continued on page 20*

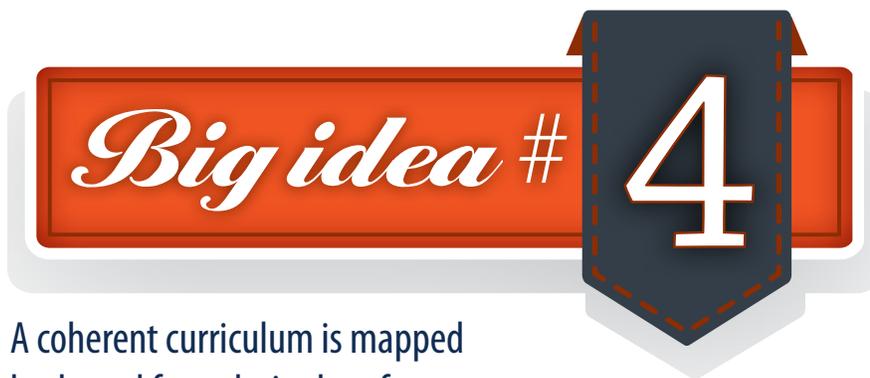
and Pennsylvania, have assembled teams of content experts to unpack their Common Core state standards in this very manner, and the Next Generation Arts Standards, presently in development, are using this same construct to frame the Standards from the start!

While we strongly advocate this type of unpacking and have witnessed its benefits, we have also seen the process become way too narrow and granular when applied at the “micro”

level. Thus, we concur with the important cautionary note offered by the Kansas Department of Education about a misapplication of Standards unpacking:

*“Unpacking’ often results in a checklist of discrete skills and a fostering of skill-and-drill instruction that can fragment and isolate student learning in such a way that conceptual understanding, higher order thinking, cohesion, and synergy are made more difficult. Too often, the process of ‘unpacking’ is engaged in an attempt to isolate the specific founda-*

*tional or prerequisite skills necessary to be successful with the ideas conveyed by the overall standard and is a common precursor to test preparation and reductive teaching. Although this process may be important work in some instances and can certainly be enlightening, it also poses substantial problems if those completing the work never take the time to examine the synergy that can be created when those foundational or prerequisite skills are reassembled into a cohesive whole. Metaphorically speaking, ‘unpacking’ often leads educators to concentrate on the trees at the expense of the forest.”*



## A coherent curriculum is mapped backward from desired performances

**The key to** avoiding an overly-discrete and fragmented curriculum is to design backward from complex performances that require content. A return to the linguistic roots of “curriculum” reveals the wisdom in this outcome focused view. The Latin meaning of the term is a “course to be run.” This original connotation helpfully suggests that we should think of a curriculum as the pathway toward a destination. As mentioned above, our conception is that curriculum should be framed and developed in terms of worthy outputs; i.e., desired performances by the learner, not simply as a listing of content inputs.

This is not a new idea. Ralph Tyler made this very point more than 60 years ago (Tyler, 1949). He proposed a curriculum development method

involving a matrix of content and process components that would guide teachers in meshing these two elements into effective performance-based learning. As Tyler points out, the “purpose of a statement of objectives is to indicate the kinds of changes in the student to be brought about... Hence it is clear that a statement of objectives in terms of content headings... is not a satisfactory basis for guiding the further development of the curriculum.” Indeed, the Mathematics Standards recommend just such an approach:

The initial question for curriculum development must be goal focused: Having learned key content, what will students be able to do with it?

*“The Standards for Mathematical Practice describe ways in which developing student practitioners of the discipline of mathematics increasingly ought to engage with the subject matter as they grow in mathematical maturity and expertise throughout the elementary, middle and high school years. Designers of curricula, assessments, and professional development should all attend to the need to connect the mathematical practices to mathematical content in mathematics instruction.”*

Thus, the first question for curriculum

writers is not: *What will we teach and when should we teach it?* Rather the initial question for curriculum development must be goal focused: *Having learned key content, what will students be able to do with it?*

Our long-standing contention applies unequivocally to the Common Core Standards as well as to other Standards: The ultimate aim of a curriculum is independent transfer; i.e., for students to be able to employ their learning, autonomously and thoughtfully, to varied complex situations, inside and outside of school. Lacking the capacity to independently apply their learning, a student will be neither college nor workplace ready.

The ELA Standards make this point plainly in their characterization of the capacities of the literate individual:

*"They demonstrate independence. Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, and they can construct effective arguments and convey intricate or multifaceted information... Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. Likewise, students are able independently to discern a speaker's key points, request clarification, and ask relevant questions... Without prompting, they demonstrate command of standard English and acquire and use a wide-ranging vocabulary. More broadly, they become self-directed learners, effectively seeking out and using resources to assist them, including teachers, peers, and print and digital reference materials."*

These points underscore a potential misunderstanding resulting from a superficial reading of the Standards documents (especially in Mathematics). One could simply parcel out lists of discrete grade-level standards and topics along a calendar while completely ignoring the long-term goal of transfer. A curriculum envisioned and enacted as a set of maps of content and skill coverage will simply not, by itself, develop a student's increasingly autonomous capacity to use learned



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content effectively to address complex tasks and problems. Such traditional scope-and-sequencing of curriculum reinforces a "coverage" mentality and reveals a misconception; i.e., that teaching bits of content in a logical and specified order will somehow add up to the desired achievements called for in the Standards.

A related misconception is evident when teachers assume that the Standards prescribe the instructional sequence and pacing. Not so! To assume that the layout of the documents imply an instructional chronology is as flawed as thinking that since a dictionary is helpfully organized from A to Z, that vocabulary should therefore be taught in alphabetical order.

While the grade-level Standards are certainly not arbitrary and reflect natural long-term "learning progressions," a rigid sequence within each grade level was never intended. The authors of the Common Core Mathe-

matics Standards explicitly call attention to this misconception and warn against it:

*"For example, just because topic A appears before topic B in the standards for a given grade, it does not necessarily mean that topic A must be taught before topic B. A teacher might prefer to teach topic B before topic A, or might choose to highlight connections by teaching topic A and topic B at the same time. Or, a teacher might prefer to teach a topic of his or her own choosing that leads, as a byproduct, to students reaching the standards for topics A and B."*

The implications of these points are critical not only for curriculum mapping but for the very nature of instructional practice. Consider this advice from a nonacademic source – the United States Soccer Coaches Federation. In *Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in The U.S.*, the Federation recommends a change in the soccer "curriculum" of practice:

*Continued on page 22*

*“When conducting training sessions, there needs to be a greater reliance on game oriented training that is player-centered and enables players to explore and arrive at solutions while they play. This is in contrast to the ‘coach centered’ training that has been the mainstay of coaching methodology over the years. ‘Game centered training’ implies that the primary training environment is the game as opposed to training players in ‘drill’ type environments. This is not to say that there is not a time for a more ‘direct’ approach to coaching. At times, players need more guidance and direction as they are developing. However, if the goal is to develop creative players who have the abilities to solve problems, and interpret game situations by themselves, a ‘guided discovery’ approach needs to be employed.” (pp.62-64)*

We propose that this recommendation applies equally to teachers of

academics as to coaches of soccer. In other words, if we want students to be able to apply their learning via autonomous performance, we need to design our curriculum backward from that goal. Metaphorically speaking, then, educators need to ask, what is the “game” we expect students to be able to play with skill and flexibility? In other words, we need clarity and consensus about the point of content learning—*independent* transfer. Then, we can build the curriculum pathway backward with those worthy performances in mind.

To design a school curriculum backward from the goal of autonomous transfer requires a deliberate and transparent plan for helping the student rely less and less on teacher handholding and scaffolds. After all, transfer is about independent performance in context. You can only be said to have fully understood and applied your learning if you can do it without

someone telling you what to do. In the real world, no teacher is there to direct and remind you about which lesson to plug in here or what strategy fits there; transfer is about intelligently and effectively drawing from your repertoire, independently, to handle new situations on your own. Accordingly, we should see an increase, by design, in problem- and project-based learning, small-group inquiries, Socratic Seminars, and independent studies as learners progress through the curriculum across the grades.

Our point here is straightforward: if a curriculum simply marches through lists of content knowledge and skills without attending to the concomitant goal of cultivating independent performance, high-schoolers will remain as dependent on teacher directions and step-by-step guidance as 4th graders currently are. The resulting graduates will be unprepared for the demands of college and the workplace.



## Standards come alive through assessments

**A prevalent** misconception about standards in general is that they simply specify learning goals to be achieved. A more complete and accurate conception, in line with the colloquial meaning of the term, recognizes that standards also refer to the desired *qualities* of student work and the degree of rigor that must be assessed and achieved.

Think about what we mean when we talk about “high standards” in athletics, music or business: we refer

to the quality of outcomes, not the inputs. We ask if work is up to standard, not whether we “covered” such standards as teachers. In this sense, the standards are at their core a set of criteria for building and testing local *assessment*. They tell where we must look and what we must look for to determine if student work is up to standard. Such information is crucial to guide local assessments and insure that these are validly anchored against national standards.

Ironically (and unfortunately), this important point is not made in the main body of the ELA Common Core Standards but in Appendices B and C. These Appendices are arguably the most important sections of the ELA Standards because there the authors describe the degree of text difficulty that students must be able to handle, the features that need to be evident in student writing, and the kinds of performance tasks that will provide the needed evidence. Accompanying samples of scored work illustrate the

qualities of performance that must be attained to meet the Standards.

This performance-based conception of Standards lies at the heart of what is needed to translate the Common Core into a robust curriculum and assessment system. The curriculum and related instruction must be

level Standard in isolation, one by one.

We think that this view is due in part to the layout of grade-level Standards and to the look and feel of traditional standardized tests, in which very discrete objectives are the subject of most test items. This confuses means and ends; it conflates the “drill”

In sum, moving from Standards to curriculum requires careful reading and thoughtful interpretation to avoid the predictable misunderstandings noted above, while building the curriculum backward from worthy tasks offers the pathway to the performances envisioned by the Common Core.

*designed backward* from an analysis of standards-based assessments; i.e., worthy performance tasks anchored by rigorous rubrics and annotated work samples. We predict that the alternative – a curriculum mapped in a typical scope and sequence based on grade-level content specifications—will encourage a curriculum of disconnected “coverage” and make it more likely that people will simply retrofit the new language to the old way of doing business.

Thus, our proposal reflects the essence of backward design: Conceptualize and construct the curriculum back from sophisticated “cornerstone” tasks, reflecting the performances that the Common Core Standards demand of graduates. Indeed, the whole point of Anchor Standards in ELA and the Practices in Mathematics is to establish the genres of performance (e.g., argumentation in writing and speaking, and solving problems set in real-world contexts) that must recur across the grades in order to develop the capacities needed for success in higher education and the workplace.

Our recommendation to construct curriculum around assessments may lead to a related misunderstanding; i.e., that we need to assess each grade-

with the “game.” The authors of the Common Core E/LA Standards wisely anticipated this misconception and they caution against it: “While the Standards delineate specific expectations in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, each standard need not be a separate focus for instruction and assessment. Often, several standards can be addressed by a single rich task.”

In sum, moving from Standards to curriculum requires careful reading and thoughtful interpretation to avoid the predictable misunderstandings noted above, while building the curriculum backward from worthy tasks offers the pathway to the performances envisioned by the Common Core. ■

*Editor’s Note: This article first appeared in the Spring 2013 Wisconsin ASCD “Highlighter” magazine. It is reprinted here with permission.*

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Singer and songwriter Vicci Martinez (right) considers Claudia Turner to be one of the most influential teachers in her life. Turner taught Martinez to overcome her fears as a performer in middle school choir.



CASEY MADISON/TACOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Great teaching

*lasts long after the bell rings*

The power of video: How real-life stories helped soothe labor strife, pass a bond and heal a community.

By **Dan Voelpel**

Public Information Director  
Tacoma Public Schools

**C**an the power of personal stories—intimate stories of teachers who inspired their students—heal emotional wounds from a teachers’ strike and garner community support for public schools?

Tacoma Public Schools sure hoped so.

During the fall of 2011, Tacoma teachers went on strike. The high-profile labor dispute—the first strike in Tacoma since the 1970s—heightened the usual tension between administration and labor. And it split the Tacoma community—some who angrily blamed the teachers for walking out on their students after school started and some who blamed the district administration.

After the strike ended and through the ensuing year, the Tacoma Education Association and the Tacoma Public Schools administration changed leadership—a new union president and a new superintendent. Both sides wanted a fresh start.

At the same time, Tacoma Public Schools knew it was coming up on a watershed moment in the 2012-2013 school year. The district had not passed a voter-approved construction bond issue since 2001. Two attempts to pass bond issues failed miserably in 2006 (just 57 percent support) and 2009 (a woeful 48 percent support). Coming off of a divisive labor dispute, everyone knew winning the necessary 60-percent voter support of a massive \$500 million bond issue would be an uphill battle—especially since the previous all-time record for voter support was just 62 percent in 1984.

## Making a pitch to the community

Beyond just helping the Tacoma community feel good about buildings, we needed the people of Tacoma to feel good about the district in general—and our teachers, specifically. We needed to put the labor strife to rest. In addition, the secondary aim was demonstrating to our teachers that the district truly believes in them and the important work they do every day with our students. Even though the administration reiterated this message sincerely time and again during labor negotiations, it doubted that its teachers believed it.

During the summer of 2012, the Public Information Office devised an approach: What if we invited graduates of Tacoma Public Schools to tell short stories about teachers who inspired them to pursue a passion, helped them succeed academically or otherwise steered them toward a vocation?

We reached out to the Tacoma Education Association leadership to see if they wanted to partner on the project. They did.

We then put out the word via our social media networks that we were hunting for the stories of graduates. We also knew we wanted to kick off the video Public Service Announcement series with a high-profile graduate, which would ensure greater public visibility for the effort – so we reached out to the agent for Vicci Martinez, a Stadium High School graduate and musician who made the finals of the hit TV show “The Voice.” Martinez agreed to participate.

We set up a two-day, multiple-camera studio shoot at the KBTC studios of Bates Technical College. Our two district videographers shot the footage and edited the graduate stories into a series of 10 60-second videos. In some cases, we arranged to secretly bring in the teachers highlighted in the graduates’ stories and include them in the videos, which created touching moments.

We also knew we needed to wrap the Public Service Announcements in a cohesive, feel-good message. Our team brainstormed ideas together and exchanged late-night taglines. We settled on the message: “Great teaching lasts long after the bell rings.”

In the months before the bond issue election, we began to release the videos one per week – highlighted one at a time on our home page.

## Going viral

We generated media coverage. Both Pierce County TV and TV Tacoma, which operate their own government TV channels, agreed to air our spots. We aired them on our own KTPS TV cable channel throughout Tacoma. We cut two of the public service announcement videos to 30 seconds, which allowed local cable television providers – Comcast and Click Network – to

CASEY MADISON/TACOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Former NFL player Eric Boles in Tacoma's KBTC studio for the taping of the “Great Teaching” PSA series created by Tacoma Public Schools.

work the videos into their regular PSA cycle between commercial TV programs. We posted the videos on our YouTube channel and on our school district Facebook page.

We arranged to participate in Comcast’s “Newsmakers” video TV show – a four-minute episode that Comcast airs periodically on its regional network – to describe and show off our Public Service Announcement series.

Through our YouTube channel alone, the videos have received an average of more than 700 recorded views. On Facebook, the videos generated a tremendous amount of positive community comments and helped shed a warm light on our district and our teachers.

Ultimately, Tacoma’s capital bond issue passed on Feb. 12 with an unprecedented level of support—a 70.71 percent “Yes” vote. ■

*Editor’s note: The Tacoma Public Information Office garnered top awards for communications effectiveness with its “Great Teaching” PSA series from the Washington School Public Relations Association and the National School Public Relations Association.*

**The videos may be viewed at:  
[youtube.com/user/ktpsvideo](https://www.youtube.com/user/ktpsvideo)  
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BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

2014 Assistant Principal of the Year Ann Buswell with her principal Jeff Coulter and staff.

# Ann Buswell

## Is a key driver of success at Bellingham's Whatcom Middle School

**By Linda Farmer, APR**  
*Managing Editor*

**No one likes** to play the heavy. Carrying out unpleasant tasks (such as disciplining middle-schoolers) could drain the joy and warmth right out of an administrator. Not Ann Buswell. As a long-time assistant principal at Whatcom Middle School, she consistently displays passion, energy and excitement when it comes to her students. Her methods have paid off: disciplinary referrals and failing grades are at their lowest level in the past 10 years.

Buswell is the Washington State 2014 Assistant Principal of the Year. The award is bestowed by the Association of Washington Middle Level Principals (AWMLP), a governing board of the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP). The honor alternates yearly between a middle level principal and a high school principal. This year it's the middle level's turn.

She consistently displays passion, energy and excitement when it comes to her students.

Being an assistant principal is more than handling discipline, of course. Buswell's principal, Jeff Coulter, credits her with "helping to lead the transformation of Whatcom as a typical junior high to a vibrant middle school known for its exceptional instructional practices and positive school culture."

Buswell was chosen Assistant Principal of the Year for her role in Whatcom's instructional and structural metamorphosis during the past 10 years. Instructionally, Buswell helped make the switch from content area teachers working independently to teaching teams that share the same group of students along with dedicated collab-

oration time. The reorganization took place in the 2003-2004 school year and has since created a culture of professional exploration and collaboration, not to mention a new climate of trust.

Structurally, Buswell's "composed and selfless response" to the fire that devastated Whatcom's building in 2009 allowed the school to rebuild—both physically and emotionally—with teamed learning in mind. Buswell's interest in national best practices surrounding middle schools fueled unique instructional spaces in the building that fit the school's new learning philosophy.

"Kids learn and change when working with Ann on discipline issues," said Don Rash, AWSP's director of middle level programs. "But her impact is larger than that. Whatcom wouldn't be where it is today without Ann's strong leadership."

Buswell has served as assistant principal at Whatcom Middle School since 1997. Previously she taught at Shuksan Middle School as a sixth grade core teacher from 1990-1997. She earned a bachelor's in English from the

University of Northern Iowa, and both a teaching certificate and a master's in school administration from Western Washington University.

Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee will honor Buswell for her Assistant Principal of the Year award at the Washington Educators' Conference in Seattle in October 2013. She also will be recognized in spring 2014 in Washington D.C. as part of the pool of candidates for the National Assistant Principal of the Year Award.

See a list of past winners and learn more about the award at [www.awsp.org](http://www.awsp.org) under the About tab. ■

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# Retreat Setting Powers New ‘Dare to Dream’ Academies

AWSP learning centers and Washington Student Leadership team up to provide week-long, intensive, live-in high-school credit courses for at-risk migrant youth

By **Martin E. Fortin, Jr.**

Director of Learning Centers

**O**ur principals’ association has a long and proud history of leading learning in a retreat setting. The retreat setting is powerful. It gives participants time and opportunity to reflect, to wonder, to ask, to question, and to answer in a safe learning environment.



Under the direction of noted CWU Astronomy professor Bruce Palmquist, science students observe the nature of the sun and its spots on the observatory roof of Lind Hall.

During students’ intense time with us, we can offer invitation and opportunity rather than demand it. And it is momentary—the actual retreat experience is short-lived. It allows participants to be free to live in that moment and play, learn, think and explore relationships. Retreats remove people from their everyday surroundings and foster the development of a most memorable community. As meals and

laughter are shared, there is a witness to one another’s learning and growth.

## Science Field School

Staff wondered if the retreat model could be applied to traditional academic coursework. The answer was a resounding “yes.” In 2011, we partnered with the White Pass School District to offer a one-semester credit field-based science class using the natural setting at Chewelah Peak Learning Center. By pairing natural resource professionals with certified science teachers, we developed a quality course of study for high school students that maintained their interest even during 14-hour days.

## Health & Fitness Course

Given our success, we sought and received accreditation through the Northwest Accreditation Commission as a supplemental program through 2017. Last summer, we rolled out the next offering—a Health and Fitness course at the Cispus Learning Center. Also worth one semester credit, this course focused on backpacking and hiking, an activity you can carry with you for life.

Meanwhile, Washington Student Leadership Director Susan Fortin had hired Vincent Perez to lead a new student leadership initiative for our state’s underserved Latino youth. During the course of his work, Vince connected with Helen Malagon, Lupe Ledesma and Sylvia Reyna of the Office of

Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (OSPI) Migrant and Bilingual Education program. It turned out they were looking for a way to provide credit courses to at-risk migrant youth. This was the beginning of a new and unique partnership between OSPI and AWSP.

## Dare to Dream Academies

After months of hard work, AWSP, OSPI and four universities (Central, Washington State, Eastern and the University of Washington) announced the Dare to Dream Academies. In June 2013, high school migrant students went to the university of their choice for a week-long intensive course in either science, math or leadership, each worth one semester’s credit.

The students had a complete college experience. In addition to 14-hour intensive days in class or labs, students lived in the dorms, ate college food and



Science students learn to check the voltage on a wind generator device in a UW lab. Assisted by the Mathematics, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) staff, they designed and developed an ideal turbine. The teams then competed against each other to determine which design could pull the heaviest sled of weights.



VINCENT PEREZ

Math students attend trials in the baseball bat lab at WSU where the design specifications of all the professional bats in the United States are tested and certified.

had access to college-student mentors and professional staff who helped them with academics, assisted them in planning for a course of study or a job after high school, and other life issues.



VINCENT PEREZ

After extracting a cell sample from their cheek in a WSU lab, science students learn the technique to "Capture their Genetic Essence" by fingerprinting their own DNA.

Each day certified teachers from our accredited program observed the lessons and documented the content using tools from Common Core sources. Each night they read the notes and journals from the students' academic day. They made comments, and then consulted with the lecturers to help ensure the learning atmosphere was positive and productive.

### Retreat setting again proves successful

The retreat setting—this time on a college campus—proved successful again. Three hundred and thirty one students representing 64 different schools successfully completed a

course of study. Informal polling on the first day found that more than half of the participants were discouraged learners who had very little expectation to graduate from high school. Gradually they discovered that they were capable of handling tough academic subject matter and that they could be successful students. Most went home believing that they are capable learners and had a new outlook for their high school career. Indeed, many verbalized the goal to someday

return to the very same campus as university students.

This is just the beginning of a long partnership that will help all students discover the pathway to academic success. Learn more about the Dare to Dream Academies and the other credit bearing coursework for high school students in Washington state by contacting Marty Fortin, [fortin@awsp.org](mailto:fortin@awsp.org) or 360.497.7131. ■

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# Closing the Gap

Two members of the AWSP Diversity Task Force attended the Closing the Opportunity Gap conference in June 2013 at the University of Washington Tacoma, Center for Strong Schools. They sent these reports:

## By Niki Arnold-Smith

*Principal, Eastgate Elementary,  
Kennewick School District*

**T**his conference featured speakers who offered ways to fairly and safely include students of color in as many educational opportunities as possible. The classes focused on discipline and ways to handle and prevent discipline concerns so that students were excluded from school as little as possible.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) 101, by Dr. Lori Lynass showed us how monitoring and tracking behavioral data could help with the prevention or reoccurrence of these concerns by restructuring school plans as needed. PBIS is a pro-active, systems level approach to promote success of all students. It defines social expectations across all settings and engages family and community in the school.

At another session, a representative from the League of Education Voters Foundation showed how their goal is to close the achievement gap by keeping more students in school through the reduction (or elimination) of suspensions and expulsions at all grade levels. Their data showed that in 2011, white students in Washington graduated from high school at a rate roughly 15 percent higher than students of color. Their proposal is to collect student level data and ensure that it is publicly accessible; to end indefinite expulsions; and, to propose policies and procedures through the state legislature to keep students in school.

John Lenssen spoke about culturally responsive practices in school behavior programs and how this relates to PBIS. This session supported the positive discipline outlined in my first session and tied in Geneva Gay's Culturally Responsive Teaching. It explained how culturally responsiveness could help to prevent school exclusion for many students.

I had the opportunity to attend a final session on Sustained Positive Interactions with Youth with Behavioral challenges. This was presented by Dr. Gregory Benner, executive director of the Center for Strong Schools at UW Tacoma. The session emphasized that we should set clear and positive expectations for our students throughout the school and model what these expectations would look like. For example, show the student exactly what walking in the hallway should look like. The emphasis was also on catching the students doing the right things and focusing on these behaviors. As stated, "when we focus on misbehavior, we typically get more of it."

Gregory Benner, Ph.D., Executive Director and founder of the Center for Strong Schools at UW Tacoma, was a speaker at the Closing the Gap Conference held there in June 2013.

CODY CHAR/UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA





CODY CHAR/UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TACOMA

Timmie Foster, founder of Foster Enterprise, speaks at the Closing the Gap Conference held in June 2013 at the University of Washington Tacoma.

## By Karen Remy-Anderson

*Principal, River Ridge High,  
North Thurston Public Schools*

**A** highlight of the conference for me was a workshop titled, “Brotherhood: Enhancing Male Students of Color.” During this session I learned about three programs designed to teach young men of color the goal setting and leadership skills necessary to excel academically and personally. These programs featured partnerships between Tacoma Public Schools, the City of Tacoma, Tacoma Urban League, the YMCA, and Highline Community College.

The first program was initiated by the City of Tacoma and the Tacoma Urban League in partnership with Tacoma middle schools. The Male Involvement Program, offered to students during the school day, provides mentorship from males of color to middle school aged males of color.

Through the use of relevant curriculum, group discussion, and practical application opportunities students learn problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, and how to engage in positive peer interactions. Students are taught about respectful communication and appropriate ways of behaving. They learn about being men of moral character and ultimately, what it means to be a man of responsibility.

The second program, the YMCA’s Brotherhood program, which runs through the school year and continues into the summer, is a mentoring program based on 3-Cs: Consistency, a Caring Adult and Compassion. Through the use of group activities, guest speakers, and a structured curric-

ulum the program develops leaders by teaching students about leaving a positive legacy, promoting a sense of belonging, and creating a vision for their future.

Rashad Norris, Director of Outreach at Highline Community College shared information about the annual Black and Brown Summit hosted by the community college. The summit brings together keynote speakers and multiple breakout sessions to include topics on post-secondary education opportunities, race and sports, and male privilege with a focus on the privileges and relationships among race and masculinity. The intended audience for this summit is young men of color with the purpose of empowering and motivating them to excel academically and personally.

I highly recommend that school administrators attend this conference, if offered again in the upcoming year. It offers us the opportunity

to consider alternate reactions to student misbehavior. The conference also allowed me to reflect on the consequences of suspension and expulsion and how much these could impact students and families. ■

Students are taught about respectful communication and appropriate ways of behaving. They learn about being men of moral character and ultimately, what it means to be a man of responsibility.



# From Anecdote to Evidence

Investment in training students as leaders increases engagement and translates to success.

**By Susan Fortin**

Washington Student Leadership Director

and **Vincent Perez**

Latino Outreach Coordinator

**A**necdotal stories of school and student success fill our professional tanks at AWSP's Washington Student Leadership office.

Examples include:

- The La Cima (The Summit) summer camp experience that resulted in an averted suicide for an undocumented student and a new college trajectory for a student who had previously never seen herself as “a leader.”
- At a ¡La Chispa! (The Spark!) workshop a middle school student received counsel from a high school role model on avoiding gang involvement.

There are hundreds of amazing stories like these in Washington schools. More likely thousands. The challenge is to take the stories and go a step further to look at the role of principal leaders and student leaders and their collective impact on school improvement.

Here's the question we sought to answer: “Can school involvement in an AWSP student leadership program be translated to measurable results that become evidence of school success in any of the AWSP Leadership Framework criteria?” The registration flyer or field trip roster for students

to attend a leadership training is simply an *artifact*. The *evidence* is seen when you can specifically answer the questions, “What is the impact of participation? What difference has it made in our school?”

Three principals who used our Latino Student Leadership services (*artifacts*) now have *evidence* that can be squarely linked to the criteria in the AWSP Leadership Framework. The table on the next page shows what that looks like.

Providing opportunities for students to engage in meaningful leadership experiences has always been a benefit to schools. Students learn new ideas for improved school climate and new ways to create a sense of family within the school. Students learn organizational skills that help them turn ideas into action. And, students have always used evaluation to improve on projects in the future.

I challenge you to have your students take their leadership work one step further. Have them evaluate their projects and participation (*artifacts*) and see what results have occurred. These results are the evidence that can be linked to the AWSP Leadership Framework.

Taking that extra step shows that principal leaders and student leaders can work together for the success of all students. ■

Franklin Pierce High School Principal Jennifer Shaw helps a student with a presentation he will give later in the evening to a parents' meeting.



CHRISTUMBUSCH

School	Criteria	Artifacts	Evidence
<b>Central Valley High School</b> Central Valley SD <b>Mike Hittle</b> , Principal	Closing the Gap Creating a Culture	Annually sends students to La Cima Leadership Camp.  Hosted and provided high school Latino leaders as role models for the middle level ¡La Chispa! Leadership conference.	Following camp, the LaCima delegates had administrative support to form a MECHA club.  TPEP evidence compiled by Principal Hittle compared GPAs and number of Fs for 8 MECHA members. For the group, GPAs increased (+.17) and Fs decreased from 7 to 3 (-4) in a two-semester comparison during the time these students were actively involved in MECHA leadership activities.  Visibility and success of MECHA club, led to the creation of Students of Color club, which has allowed other ethnic groups a place to validate their identity and culture in a school that is 85% White.

**“I believe these students have gained a sense of belonging and pride in being at CV.”**  
*Principal Mike Hittle*

School	Criteria	Artifacts	Evidence
<b>Franklin Pierce High School</b> Franklin Pierce SD <b>Jennifer Shaw</b> , Principal	Engaging the Community Creating a Culture Closing the Gap	Hosted a Latino student leadership day in a dual-language format that included feeder middle school and freshman delegates supported by Latino role models in grades 11-12. The event included a dinner and program for parents and families.  Sent delegation to La Cima leadership camp.	As a result of concerns expressed by parents, a new position was created for Spanish speaking parents to communicate with teachers and school officials.  In 2012, 10 parents attended the dinner/program as part of the Latino student leadership event. Parent participation increased to 32 in 2013. (+12)  In 2010, 60% of Hispanic students who started as seniors graduated. In 2013 that rate jumped to 90%.  Shaw commented, “Although many initiatives have contributed to this increase the intentional leadership training of our Latino students has resulted in their increased engagement in school. Our Latino students are becoming more involved in ASB, Link Crew and other clubs.”

**“Having Dan work with our Latino students and parents is creating meaningful change in our building.”**  
*Principal Jennifer Shaw*

School	Criteria	Artifacts	Evidence
<b>Mt. Baker Middle School</b> Auburn SD <b>Greg Brown</b> , Principal	Engaging the Community Creating a Culture Closing the Gap	Upon accepting the principalship at Mt. Baker in August 2011, Brown met with 15 Latino parents at their request. They expressed concerns regarding school connection to Latino students and their families.  Brown hosted a ¡La Chispa! leadership workshop for 100 Latino students at Mt. Baker.	Students’ sense of connection through that one-day program led to the development of an after-school ¡La Chispa! club. 20-25 students consistently attended optional weekly meetings where they participated in activities focused on personal leadership and academic identity.  The original group of 15 concerned Latino parents are all currently involved as school volunteers, have joined the PTA and are advocating at feeder elementary schools for student placement at Mt. Baker.  In September 2011, less than 1% of Latino students were involved in a club or activity. Today, 50% of Latino students are involved in a club or activity.

**“La Chispa inspired 25 usually reserved Latino students to perform a cultural dance in front of the entire student body last year. It was awesome!”**  
*Principal Greg Brown*

Our quarterly profile of educational leadership in Washington state.

## Mary Alice Heuschel

Chief of Staff | Office of Governor Jay Inslee

*Mary Alice Heuschel, Ed.D., became Gov. Jay Inslee's Chief of Staff for the state of Washington in January 2013. The first educator to be appointed as Chief of Staff, Heuschel spent her 30-year career in education most recently serving for seven years as superintendent of the Renton School District, and six years as the Deputy State Superintendent at the Office of*

*Superintendent of Public Instruction. The previous 17 years included positions as assistant superintendent, principal, assessment specialist and a classroom teacher in regular and special education in various states, in Europe with the Department of Defense and at West Point Military Academy. Heuschel is a native of Rhode Island and a graduate of Wheelock*



*College in Boston. She earned her doctorate in educational leadership at Seattle Pacific University.*

### **Life as a school superintendent is quite hectic. How does your new hectic compare to the old hectic in Renton?**

The definition of hectic is “constantly busy and hurried.” This is often characterized by continual activity and the lack of any time to rest or relax. The pace of a school superintendent is definitely “constantly busy and is usually characterized by continual activity.” An important responsibility as a superintendent is to balance work responsibilities and personal time so you do have time to rest and relax. That has become especially important as Chief of Staff. The scope of work is dramatically increased. My new hectic is comparable, just multiplied by a factor of 10. In the Chief of Staff role, the pace is intense; the issues requiring my attention are significant and often complex. The focus required to minimize the “hectic” and bring structure, assurance and confidence to the office is essential.

### **Are there any lessons you learned as a school administrator that have come in handy in your new job?**

Definitely. Lessons in leadership absolutely apply. We know how important it is to communicate a vision, set

expectations, identify measurable goals and establish teamwork internally and externally to be successful. Similarly, the lessons learned in developing a strong strategic planning framework to use in our schools as a tool for working together collectively have been put to good use in establishing a continuous improvement model for the state. The recent launch of Results Washington ([www.results.wa.gov](http://www.results.wa.gov)) reflects this type of collaborative framework. It identifies Governor Inslee’s vision for our state and the mission for his administration based on his mission of “*Building a Working Washington, the Washington Way.*”

### **What are the Governor’s priorities for education?**

The Governor expects every child to receive a world-class education that prepares him or her for a healthy and productive life, including success in a job or career, in the community and as a lifelong learner. He has broken his education goals into two topics: access and success. Both include priorities for early learning, K-12 and post-secondary programs. The Governor expects all Washingtonians to have access to education opportunities that prepare them to transition from high

quality early learning experiences to elementary, middle and high school to post-secondary, career and lifelong learning opportunities. Washington’s education system must provide innovative, high-quality skills and tools for every student to attain 21st century skills to succeed in school, a job, career and in the community. Learn more at [www.results.wa.gov](http://www.results.wa.gov).

### **What can principals do to help education initiatives move forward this legislative session?**

Principals, and all education leaders, can and should take an active role in communicating with elected officials. Locally, all districts have Representatives and Senators that represent the school and/or district. Each of those legislators should know who you are. Invite them to your school so they can see what is happening in their local classrooms and better understand the challenges and opportunities in the education system. Make sure they can reach you to ask your opinion on education issues as they contemplate policy and budget decisions. Do not wait for them to contact you regarding education policy under consideration. You are the experts and should provide legislators with your

professional opinion and perspective. Understanding how busy principals are, AWSP offers excellent summaries, analysis of education policies and initiatives and information about how to reach legislators in Olympia. If you are a principal and have never been in touch with a Senator or Representative, I encourage you to start by making contact with AWSP for advice and information about the laws around use of personal time and equipment. All principals should engage in the legislative process. Let your voice be heard.

### What do you see as the biggest challenge for principals in the coming years?

In addition to the vast array of challenges in all schools to address the diverse learning needs of students, and the adults responsible for their education, the changing landscape of “reform and accountability” is one of the biggest challenges. Implementing Common Core and the important work of understanding the Smarter Balanced Assessment system, staying current with the progress of Next Generation Science standards and that assessment, and the TPEP implementation are all huge initiatives that must be done well in our state.

There are three important components that are critical in this work:

1. Advocating for appropriate funding for training and implementation.
2. Being accountable for the appropriate use of funding (including assuring the use of research-proven approaches to professional development and student support to increase achievement) and accurate reporting of results so we can increase the confidence of the public and elected officials.
3. Implementation of each component with fidelity.

Educators understand the importance of multiple measures, the likely changes in overall state assessment results when new assessments are implemented, and the (sometimes unique) challenges

locally to a community of learners. We must, collectively, increase our efforts and effectiveness of communicating and explaining results with integrity, not excuses. Educators are working harder than ever – it’s time we get the message across that we are meeting diverse learning needs in classrooms every day with creativity, innovation and effectiveness. We are increasing expectations of performance – for ourselves and our students, and we are willing to be accountable at every level in the system.

### Do you have a motto or personal philosophy?

When you limit your expectations, you limit your potential. Be open to opportunities, be willing to risk and contemplate sacrifice today for a better tomorrow.

### What books/magazines are on your nightstand/e-reader?

I have to honestly answer that my evening reading includes state agency

director briefings, audit reports and legislative policy proposals/agency request legislation. While that likely doesn’t sound super exciting to many, it is packed with new ideas, challenging problems to solve and abundant learning opportunities.

### What is one piece of advice you’d like to leave with Washington principals?

Consider the following course of action:

- Pay attention to what is happening locally, state and nationally
- Explore your potential as a leader... risk
- Broaden your scope... expand your “ken”
- Go the extra mile... it’s never crowded
- Contribute in every way you can... get involved! ■



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**Mike Hubert**, Director, Guidance & Counseling Secondary Education and School Improvement

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**Annalee Braley**, Membership Services Support/Middle Level Programs Coordinator

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#### *Bi-County 2B*

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#### *Northeast Panorama 1B*

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#### *High School/College Relations*

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*Columbia Valley 1B*

*Central Washington 1B/2B*

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### AWSP STAFF

**Scott Seaman**, Director of Principal Support and High School Programs

**Linda Thomas**, Legislation, Intern, HS Programs and Conference Exhibitor Coordinator

# The Power of Habit

Paying attention to our own routines and patterns will shape the work of our staff

**By Gary Kipp**

*AWSP Executive Director*

**I had lunch** recently with one of my mentors and a dear friend, John Pehrson. John is a former Boeing executive and served three years on the board of AWSP's foundation.

John is an octogenarian. For John, that is a combination of octane and genius. I admire his analytical mind and the seemingly endless energy he has to devote to important civic issues. He just finished working with other Seattle community leaders analyzing and commenting on Seattle School District's strategic plan. He is also a leader in other Seattle initiatives.

After lunch, John gave me a book he had just read. Written by New York Times business reporter Charles Duhigg, it's called "The Power of Habit: Why we do what we do in life and business."

There is much for principals to learn in this book. It includes great examples of the power of creating change, both personally and organizationally, by generating the right habits. Think Michael Phelps, Howard Schultz and Martin Luther King.

John talked about Duhigg's analysis of how Paul O'Neil transformed Alcoa in a most unexpected way by creating the habit in each employee of putting safety first. He relentlessly made

this habit pervasive throughout the company. And, with that habit in place, he used it to focus on other initiatives.

Our talk turned to habits being established in schools today that have the power to transform education. A significant habit for principals is to

If we are serious about reforming (a word I have great reservations about using) education, we will do it by creating universal and effective habits for the educators in the system.

make sure that teachers are watching each other teach, then to ensure that they're having professional conversations about teaching strategies and the results. Creating the habit of conversations about teaching is similar to O'Neil's efforts to make conversations about safety front and center at Alcoa.

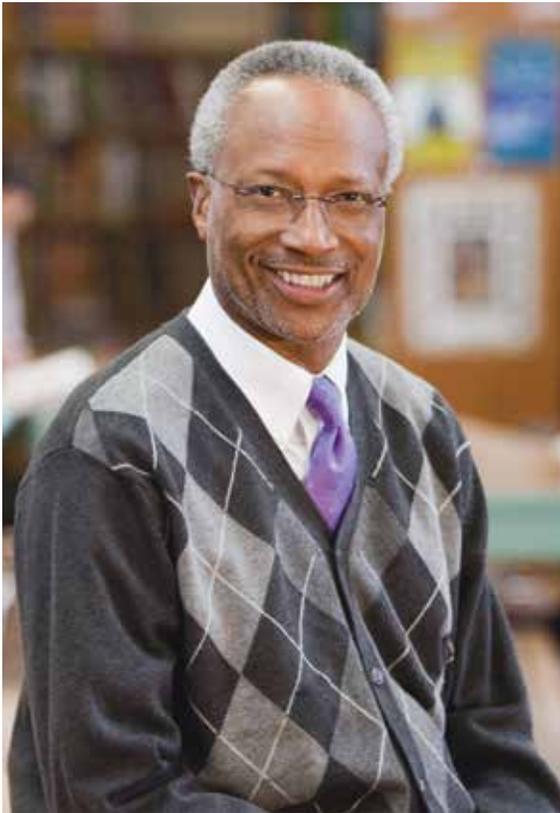
There has been much written about the power of reflection in producing growth in personal and organizational effectiveness. Many of those who contributed to the new teacher and principal evaluation expectations in Washington believed this and tried to create a system that would make it more likely.

Unfortunately, a side effect of one of the new regulations is that principals' calendars are so crammed full of time spent complying with the regulation, that there is little time available to work on nurturing habits of teachers in the school to observe each other and reflect together. With principals having nearly the same requirements for evaluating teachers on focused evaluations as they do for teachers on comprehensive evaluations, the time needed for the evaluation process has more than doubled for many.

If we are serious about reforming (a word I have great reservations about using) education, we will do it by creating universal and effective habits for the educators in the system. Leading the establishment of those habits has never been more critical and possibly never been more difficult. Time is at a premium for all of us. It is important, however, that we spend the time to create habits for ourselves that result in impactful habits of our staff. Duhigg's book is a great place to start. ■



*Gary Kipp has served as AWSP's executive director since 2003. He has more than 40 years experience as a teacher, assistant principal, principal and assistant superintendent.*



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