

# Washington Principal

Association of Washington School Principals

SPRING 2015



## INNOVATION

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## FEATURE SECTION

# INNOVATION

*Finding new ways to achieve success requires creativity, collaboration and a lot of innovative thinking. This issue of Washington Principal spotlights an array of school leaders who have reached out to their school community to identify new methods of achieving school-wide success.*

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**Cover photo:** Undaunted by unfulfilled levy requests, Dearborn Park Principal Angela Sheffey-Bogan rallied her teachers, staff, students and families to develop a formula for success.

Photo by Chris Tumbusch

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 National Association of Secondary School Principals

# Letting Go of 'Right Side Up'

**Caroline Brumfield**

*Managing Editor*

**A**s an art major, I took several drawing classes in college. On one day of class early in my freshman year, the professor had us choose an illustration from a stack on his desk and take it back to our work stations. (Mine was a lady walking down the street with an umbrella.) He explained that we would be redrawing these illustrations as accurately as possible.

Many of us pulled out our pencil boxes quickly, confident that we'd be able to whip up a drawing that looked quite similar to the original. But before we could begin, the professor added an unexpected twist to the instructions: "You must turn the original upside down before you copy it."

Most of us looked around in quiet panic. Turning the illustrations upside down rendered them practically unrecognizable. Was that an arm? A bit of the woman's coat? These illustrations, which first looked so simple to copy, were now suddenly unfamiliar and new. We had to trust that the lines and scribbles we were copying would produce a work of art — not an embarrassing mess.

An uncomfortable hour later, the professor had us turn our papers right side up to see the results. While our renditions were a bit shaky, the final drawings were actually very accurate depictions of the originals.

The professor explained that we have a tendency to draw what we think we see, rather than what we actually see. (The human eye is round, right? Not at all, really, when you look at it closely.) Turning the original illustration upside down before copying it forced us to look at it with fresh eyes in order to yield more accurate results.

How often do we miss out on improvement and innovation simply because we are uncomfortable with looking at things in a new way, turning our perspective "upside down"? This issue of *Washington Principal* highlights several ways that administrators like you have let go of "right side up" in order to turn their schools into a work of art.

We hope you find these stories inspiring! ■



*Caroline Brumfield is the Marketing and Publications Manager for AWSP. She serves as Managing Editor for Washington Principal.*



**Transitions: Linda Thomas Retires after 17 Years**

After 17 years of working in virtually every core function or program of the association, Linda Thomas retired from AWSP on March 31.

Linda joined the association in 1998 and spent nearly 10 years managing the membership database and working with the elementary board (ESPAW). She went on to support the high school programs, Legislation Committee, State-Funded Intern Program, conference exhibitors and most recently, served as professional development coordinator.

Linda has four adult children and six grandchildren and will likely spend more of her retired time focusing on family and being a grandma. She also hopes to travel and stay active through her many hobbies, including hiking, biking and square dancing. Please join us in wishing Linda all the best in retirement!

**A Matter of Principals: An AWSP Podcast**

Principals are busy people — we know that. You know that. With that in mind, we created our podcast. If you're not familiar with podcasting, think of it like on-demand radio programming. No topic is too broad and no niche is too small: Podcasting has boomed over the last several years. Who podcasts? From NPR to ESPN and tech nerds to jokesters, there are tons of great podcasts out there just waiting to be discovered.



**Why Podcast?**

One of the things we like about the medium is it allows us to bring you conversations about practice, education news, and what's happening with your association, all in a format that you don't have to read or watch. Take us with you on your jog, listen to us on your commute, have us playing in your office as your drown in the sorrow that is your inbox.

**Did you know...?**

Nearly all of the state's 295 school districts have adopted the AWSP Leadership Framework as their guide for principal leadership. Designed to promote the growth of the principal, it directly aligns with Washington state evaluation criteria, rules and regulations. Hundreds of books, surveys, case studies, tools and best practices can be found online in AWSP's Leadership Framework Resource Library at [www.awsp.org/frameworkresources](http://www.awsp.org/frameworkresources).

**Save the Date for the 2015 Washington Educators' Conference!**



This year's Washington Educators' Conference, hosted by WASA, AWSP, OSPI, and WSASCD, will be held Oct. 25-26 at the brand new Bellevue Marriott.

This two-day event is for all educators in Washington state — superintendents, central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, other building-level administrators, teachers, and teacher-leaders. Hot education issues in Washington will be highlighted by national keynote speakers and in best-practice concurrent sessions.

Watch for details at [www.awsp.org/WEC](http://www.awsp.org/WEC).



**AWSP Welcomes Macy Bruhy to the Team!**

AWSP is pleased to introduce you to Macy Bruhy, who joined our team March 2. Macy has six years of business experience with an emphasis in marketing and communications. At AWSP, she coordinates both the State-Funded Intern Program and all of AWSP's professional development. Macy received her Bachelor of Arts degree

from Eastern Washington University in June of 2008 with a major in Business Administration/Marketing.

Macy spends as much time as she can with her family: her husband of three years, Skyler, and her one-year-old daughter, Hailey. She loves camping, fishing and spending time at the beach. Send Macy a "Welcome!" email at [macy@awsp.org](mailto:macy@awsp.org).

## 2015 Washington State Principals of the Year

### Elementary Principal of the Year



#### Taj Jensen

*Tillicum  
Elementary School,  
Clover Park District*

Jensen earned the honor for his work as a principal at Tillicum

Elementary, where he led from 2009-2014. Transforming the school was only one piece of the puzzle. By the end of his fifth year at Tillicum, he had shifted the community's values so that it saw education as a vehicle to better individuals and the community as a whole.

"Under Taj's leadership, Tillicum was named a School of Distinction for two years in a row and in 2014 received the Title I, Part A award, the only school in Pierce County to receive the award," said Clover Park School District Superintendent Debbie LeBeau. "We are very proud of Taj and his staff and this recognition is well deserved."

### Middle Level Principal of the Year



#### Anissa Bereano

*Highland Middle  
School, Bellevue  
Schools*

Bereano inherited a school in the first year of AYP

sanctions with a diverse population, 101 suspensions, 56 percent of students passing math, and 67 percent passing reading. Over her time at Highland, she's raised the math passage rate to 70 percent and brought reading up to 82 percent. Last year, the school only had 29 suspensions.

Dr. Patty Siegwath, executive director of Bellevue Schools, said of Bereano, "She is a phenomenal instructional leader who is innovative, collaborative, and committed. Her interpersonal skills are excellent. She communicates her genuine care for students and adults, while maintaining high expectations for behavior and performance."

### High School Principal of the Year



#### Lori Wyborney

*John R. Rogers  
High School,  
Spokane Public  
Schools*

While completing her fifth year as

principal at John R. Rogers High School, Wyborney's leadership has provided a strong vision and moral imperative for the Rogers staff to ensure a culture of college and career readiness focused on improving student outcomes in three goal areas. First, she has increased the number of graduates with a college-ready transcript. Secondly, the graduation rate increased from 60.4% in 2010 year prior to her arrival to 76% in 2011 to 81.6% for the class of 2014. And lastly, she created and implemented a school-wide literacy program for all content areas with the intent of increasing literacy for all students.

"She has been a tremendous motivator, affecting not just Rogers High School but all of Spokane Public Schools. I look forward to seeing the impact Ms. Wyborney will continue to have on the lives of students in the years to come," said Spokane Public Schools Superintendent Shelley K. Redinger, Ph.D.

Watch for articles about each of the three winners in the fall 2015 issue of Washington Principal. Learn more about each of the winners at [www.awsp.org/pressreleases](http://www.awsp.org/pressreleases).

### What Are You Doing in 2015-16?

If you will be changing positions for the 2015-16 school year, retiring, or leaving the field entirely, please let us know. This helps ensure continuous membership for the new school year. Simply fill out the Change of Status form located in the Membership section of the AWSP website.



### AWSP News You Can Use

In addition to the AWSP Podcast, be on the lookout each month for a few episodes of AWSP News You Can Use. We'd love to get some feedback on the format, length, and topics. The first episode includes:

- Legislative update
- Pro Dev news and needs
- TPEP tips
- Shared leadership
- Testing best practices
- AWSP facts
- Tech tip

What would you like to hear about in future episodes? Email your thoughts to [david@awsp.org](mailto:david@awsp.org) and [scott@awsp.org](mailto:scott@awsp.org).

### Ron Sisson Joins AWSP



Ron Sisson is joining AWSP after serving for 12 years as a principal in the North Thurston Public Schools.

He will be taking over as Director of Elementary Programs and Professional Development for Paula Quinn, who is retiring from the association in August. Sisson was principal at Seven Oaks Elementary for 10 years and most recently at Lakes Elementary. Prior to the principalship, Ron taught sixth-grade and seventh- and eighth-grade math and science. His is also a graduate of North Thurston High School in Lacey. Sisson holds a bachelor's degree in public health from Central Washington University and a master's degree in Education Leadership from City University.

# ASK A PRINCIPAL

## Small Change, Big Difference

Sometimes it's the little things that change our world in a big way. We asked our members, "What's one small change you've made at your school that has made a big difference for yourself, your students and/or your staff?" Here are some of the answers:



“ Our school was never ‘lost and found’ — just lost. Every winter break and at the end of the school year, we donated hundreds of coats, sweaters and sweatshirts. Students were never able to identify a lost item. This year every class kindergarten through 6th grade has a turquoise bin with the teacher’s name on the outside. Every recess one student is responsible for taking the bin outside; most teachers have the student bring the bin back in at the end of the last recess.

We’ve worked hard on a daily basis to let students know that the only choice they have if they take off their coat is to walk it to the bin. They’re good about reminding one another. By our fourth week of school, we didn’t have a ‘lost’ anymore.

It’s a work in progress, but so far, so good!”

**Janice Sauve, Principal**  
South Ridge Elementary, Ridgefield SD

“ My small change that has led to a big difference is moving all meetings, collaboration, and file sharing to Google Drive. All documents, presentations, attendance (with survey questions each time they take attendance), and parking lot documents are now in Google Drive.

A few of the unintended results we found:

- More people starting to have a voice
- Less monopolization
- Less amnesia when we can all go back to the folder, and see ‘you were told...’
- All 90 of my certified staff can operate their iPads, navigate Google Drive, create documents and participate. My most resistant are now becoming digital natives.
- More transparency — most are saying this is the most they have had in their career.
- Accountability — now, instead of my email box filling with collaboration reports, or trying to check in on simultaneous collaboration meetings, I can go to documents, folders, or department work, and “watch” live 10 meetings at once, to see who is involved, who didn’t show, etc.
- My connection to students is all Google Drive now as well. They all have an account and email. Now I can send emails, share presentations, talk with students, survey students, get input by grade etc., and the participation rates are up.”

**John H. Belcher, Principal**  
Mount Si High School, Snoqualmie Valley SD

“ As a new principal here at Hidden River, one small but significant change we made as a building leadership team was involving our entire staff, our parents, and our students in a process of discussing and coming to consensus on what our values are here at Hidden River, what type of school we want to become, and what our chief purpose is as a school.

The end result in only a few short months has been an unbelievable shift in our climate here and a laser-like and collaborative focus on what's best for students. According to our staff, many parents, and even students, there is a much different 'feel' when you walk in our building, people enjoy coming to work each day, and our staff is unbelievably excited and committed to figuring out how we can ensure that all students learn what's essential to be successful, both in middle school and beyond. We've certainly got a tremendous amount of work to do, but the collaborative efforts to involve all of our stakeholders has really laid a solid foundation for the journey that lies ahead.”

**Brett Wille, Principal**

*Hidden River Middle School, Monroe PS*



“ I printed copies of our TPEP framework with a blank column for notes, and have one for each teacher. (We're a Marzano district.)

I schedule a one hour block of 'classroom visits' twice a week into my calendar. I just grab the clipboard with the framework sheets on them and do at least four walkthroughs twice a week, adding notes and dates to the teachers' sheets. In this way I can track who I haven't been in to see lately and it's providing lots of information for their mid-year check conferences.”

**Marilyn Boerke, Principal**

*Serene Lake Elementary, Mukilteo SD*

## APPY Hour

AWSP's "tech experts" review a few of their favorite apps and websites of the quarter.



**Haiku Deck** *Simple. Easy. Beautiful.*

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**Available for:** iOS



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AWSP has launched a podcast, letting us deliver over engaging content that you can listen to anytime. Principals are busy people, so we know you'll love Overcast's Smart Speed feature, which picks up extra speed without distortion, dynamically shortening silences in talk shows. Conversations still sound so natural that you'll forget it's on — until you see how much extra time you've saved.

**Available for:** iOS

*Would you like to review an app, or do you have a cool app to share? Email [caroline@awsp.org](mailto:caroline@awsp.org).*

# The Fine Arts

## in the Era of Standards-Based Curriculum

### Rex Larson

Principal, Gause Elementary  
Washougal SD

**I have been** an educator long enough to fondly remember the days when my teaching partner, Mrs. Jackson, would say, “Hey Rex, why don’t you take my kids for science this week and I’ll take yours for art?”

Or after some friendly banter in the staff room during lunch, Mr. Stenerson would say, “My sixth-graders think they can whoop your sixth-graders in softball.” After which, a friendly, but very competitive game would take up the last hour of the school day. And finally, after spending a very wet afternoon doing field study at outdoor school, one of my students would exclaim, “Hey, my pockets are still dry!”

In the present day of high-stakes teaching and learning, we often don’t feel we have time for art or outdoor education, and the competitive softball game occurs during the last week of school when the staff vs. the outgoing grade level’s students play each other at the conclusion of their annual field day. Innovation can become an unfortunate casualty.

But I would like to propose that this does not have to be true today. An artist-in-residence program, which my school is able to provide to our K-5 students through our booster club’s support, can still occur and be connected to the Common Core state standards, especially in social studies and math.

The famous artist Picasso once said, “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.” At Gause Elementary School, we’re trying to solve that “problem” through innovative thinking. As a result, all of our K-5

“ The famous artist Picasso once said, ‘Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.’

students still have the opportunity to enjoy the chance to remain an artist and are exposed to enriching, age-appropriate lessons that allow them to explore and expand their own creativity and artistic intelligence.

Every fall our staff and booster club hold a very successful fundraiser, which we call our Sport-A-Thon. This fund-raiser provides the funding needed to provide Gause students an art experience with a professional artist-in-residence that allows the students to explore their creative side.

Practicing artists are invited in for a week to 10-day residency that immerses the students in a particular art medium. Our kindergarten and fifth graders learn about and use clay to make themed-based and self-portrait tiles and, in so doing, learn about shape and proportion as well as how they can transcribe a two-dimensional sketch to the more three-dimensional form of relief. The first graders explore drawing and how artists use shape and texture and then use their new understanding and appreciation of drawing to illustrate one of their own stories before publishing. Our second graders explore the elements of design and how they can be applied to math by using oil pastels. The third graders incorporate mask making into their Native American social studies unit, and lastly, our fourth graders learn about geometric shapes by working with fused glass as a way to create three-dimensional models.

Without the help and support of our committed parent volunteers who, along with our staff, feel that a child’s education cannot be complete without exposure to the fine arts, this school-wide program would not occur. Carly Hack, our artist-in-residence coordinator and a former teacher from the Bay Area says, “Through this program students are getting opportunities to explore art that they would not have otherwise gotten. It is a chance to put their right side of their brain to work. It gives them a chance to be creative and express themselves. This type of experience is critical in a child’s development.”

Providing a high stakes, high quality education to today’s students does not have to come at the expense or elimination of the fine arts or other programs that to some may seem unconnected to a standards based curriculum. It is possible to teach to the common core standards and use the fine arts to support and deepen student understanding, appreciation and application of them, and foster innovation. If Picasso was right when he said all children are artists, then our students deserve our best effort to help them stay that way for as long as they possibly can. ■



Rex Larson has served as principal at Gause Elementary since 1997. A long-time AWSP member, Rex is serving as president this year.



Students test their minimalist fishing vessels as part of the new Lincoln Middle School STEM program.

CAMERON GROW

# THE RIGHT WAY TO DO STEM? **YOUR WAY!**

**Scott Friedman**

*AWSP Fellow*

**Cameron Grow**

*Principal, Lincoln Middle School,  
Pullman SD*

**Pam Brantner**

*Principal, Sunnyside Elementary,  
Pullman SD*

**PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

*Creating a Culture, Aligning Curriculum,  
Improving Instruction, Engaging  
Communities*

*Continued on page 12*

**W**e hear all too often that to prepare students for their future, they must learn how to think critically, problem-solve, and exhibit a high-level of creativity.

Children are born with a natural curiosity and a willingness to engage in the unknown. They will play for hours with a single toy and work at trying to understand things that are going on around them. Many would have you believe that when children go to school, this creativity and curiosity is not enriched as students are taught how to take tests, respond to questions, and comply. Thinking critically is not encouraged and developing problem-solving skills is a second thought in our educational system.

## STEM EDUCATION

Due to this belief, business leaders, educators, industry experts, and others are talking about the importance of addressing this so-called learning gap in our schools today. If our educational system is to prepare the next generation to succeed in life, then we need to find multiple ways to enrich, engage, and allow students to develop and

enhance their skills around thinking critically, problem solving, and creativity. Many feel the vehicle to make this happen is through STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) education. STEM education is not about creating a generation of scientists, engineers, or mathematicians, but rather meeting the future skills all students will need to have to succeed in our every increasing global society.

Creating STEM programs in our schools is unique and personal. There is not one way to do STEM in a school. There is only a way that makes sense for the school and district.

To support the implementation of STEM in schools across the state, AWSP, along with partnerships with the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL),

Washington State University (WSU), the Pacific Science Center, and Washington State LASER, created a series of workshops that guides and supports schools through their implementation of STEM.

The STEM series has been a huge success, and this past summer, principals and teachers from Lincoln Middle School and Sunnyside Elementary in the Pullman School District attended the workshops. The intention was to create STEM experiences in their respective schools and create community connections that would allow their programs to grow.

Starting small was, and continues to be, the goal, but they are keeping an eye on expansion. What follows are their stories, as told by each principal.

## LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Principal Cameron Grow

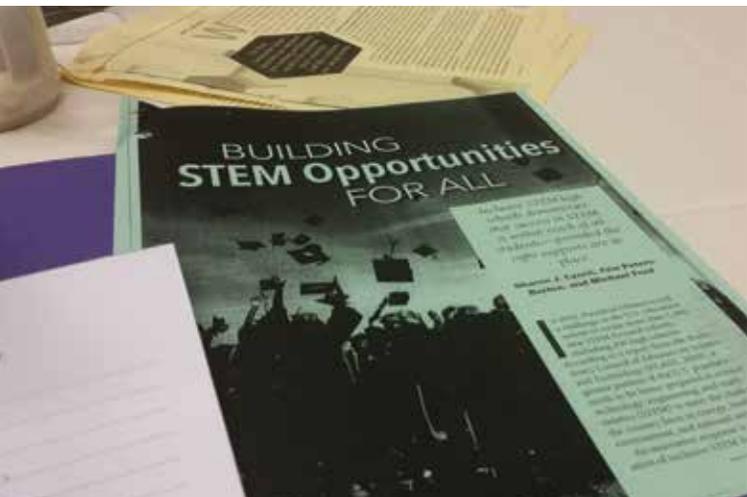
The STEM journey for Lincoln Middle School began with a retirement: A teacher who was retiring taught our wood shop class and we knew there would be some challenges in filling the same position. In conversations with our superintendent, Paul Sturm, and friends at Schweitzer Engineering in Pullman, we created a plan to bring STEM to Lincoln.

“Creating STEM programs in our schools is unique and personal. There is not one way to do STEM in a school.”

We initially needed to replace the class (which was a requirement for our eighth-graders) with something different. We knew we needed to engage kids,

but not in a traditional hammer-and-nails sort of way. The thought of creating something out of thin air was not something that could be done, however we knew that other schools in the state were seeing success with Project Lead the Way. After doing research, we sent our entire science team (four teachers) to the two-week summer training that year. This was some of the best professional development our teachers received during the beginning of this journey.

We decided all eighth-graders would be required to take the Gateway to Technology class. This would ensure that all students would receive instruction in engineering practices and robotics. We also knew that this was only the first step. The team wanted to expand the pathways in which students could receive STEM instruction throughout their time at the middle school. This topic, during collaboration time, was



CAMERON GROW

Just some of the materials from the AWSP-hosted STEM workshop.



Students are challenged to create a LEGO mini kit for 8-11 year-olds. Lincoln middle schoolers had to build LEGO figures using 15-20 pieces that would be included in the kits.

CAMERON GROW

worked on and planned out for LMS students. We began by incorporating a “designing” unit into all seventh-grade science classes. Within this unit, teams of students would begin to solve real world problems within the classroom and present the solutions using technology. This was a perfect lead into the Gateway to Technology class in the eighth-grade.

The opportunity presented itself to take the AWSP STEM training series and incorporate more staff members to create a STEM team within our staff. This training was essential in my understanding, as the principal, of why STEM is important for all students. I was able to take four staff members with me to the trainings

“ We are now to the point where we are doing school-wide design challenges to solve real world problems.

and we created a plan to present to our staff the importance of STEM at the middle school. I chose to take non-traditional subject area teachers to the training. This was important because everyone can play a role in this — no matter the subject taught. math, social studies, language arts, and science teachers have been to the training and created a much better understanding of what this can look like in grade levels.

We are now to the point where we are doing school-wide design challenges to solve real world problems. Teachers are incorporating the writing of the plans and summaries within their language arts classes. Teams are doing the research needed for the design within their social studies classes. Science and math classes are focusing on the specifics needed to solve the problems. Our technology classes are focused on the presentation skills that are essential when showing off the plans.

Our first engineering week will incorporate all of this school-wide. It will culminate with a Parent

Engineering night. Students will run through the process with their parents and then have them problem solve through the challenges together. This will give our parents an idea of what is happening in each of these classes, but also begin the community relationships that are so important. We plan to team with Washington State University and Schweitzer Engineering within the city of Pullman.

And to think all of this came about because of a retirement!

### **SUNNYSIDE ELEMENTARY** *Principal, Pam Brantner*

Imagine walking into a classroom buzzing with excitement. Students are actively engaged in their work, debating discoveries, solving problems, collaboratively planning, and communicating as a team. When my staff created a vision around STEM in our classes that is what they wanted to have happen. That is what is happening in the classrooms around our school.

*Continued on page 14*

For too long, the staff felt the need to provide students with a deeper understanding of math and science through a hands on approach where students were the designers, testers, and solvers of real world problems. Staff wanted the traditional barriers that separate the four disciplines and integrates them in such a way that students see the connection between subjects and the importance of them all.

So, at Sunnyside, our teachers have collaborated together to create multi-STEM activities that span multiple grade levels. Miss Barnett's third-grade and Mrs. Grant's fifth-grade classes worked together to create a protective device to support a shark being dropped from the height of 1.5 m. The students tested and modified their design to produce a fall slower than the previous trials. There were various types of parachutes that were created from triple to single chutes, and even chutes that opened in stages. Students were overheard sharing ideas and then modifying to find the best possible solution for the task at hand.

Mrs. Henriksen's second-grade and Mrs. Sewell's fourth-grade classes came together to build a fishing vessel that cost a minimal amount but would hold a large amount of fish. Students started the project off with a set budget (math calculating the cost of the materials), discussing prior science knowledge such as surface tension, and then finally engineering the boats. There was a vast array of diverse boats; some had hulls that had curves, others were flat bottomed and some looked like a large rectangle on water. Teams observed each other's work, and continually modified their design to haul in the biggest catch.

In first- and fifth-grade, the students will be working with ramps and rollers, creating rollercoasters. Both groups pose a challenge to their students to successfully build a rollercoaster that gets a "car" from point A to point B. The academics

“STEM is a new, exciting way to learn. The kids are excited to come to school and learn a variety of great information and how to use modern technology. It's a phenomenal concept.”

that go behind each grade-level project differ, but the enthusiasm and engagement is high within all groups.

The next step for Sunnyside is to work together as an entire school to carry a STEM project across all the grade levels. We have big hopes for this spring, and have a rocketry unit in our sights.

STEM is a new, exciting way to learn. The kids are excited to come to school and learn a variety of great information and how to use modern technology. It's a phenomenal concept. These STEM projects make learning a reality, as they are able to learn how to use it in real-life experiences.

The staff has also come to embrace the concept that there isn't a "right" way to do STEM, but rather the Sunnyside way to do STEM.

## CONCLUSION

Both Pam and Cameron would tell you that getting to this point has taken a lot of hard work, but to see staff connect across content areas and watch the excitement students have when working on STEM related activities makes it all worthwhile. They are extremely excited about what the future holds and can't wait to spread STEM to the other schools in their district. ■

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# Washington P-3 Leadership

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ADDRESS  
ACHIEVEMENT GAPS EARLY



#### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety, Planning with Data, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Managing Resources, Engaging Communities, Closing the Gap*

#### **Molly Branson Thayer**

*Program Director, Leadership and Professional Education, National P-3 Center, University of Washington*

#### **Kristie Kauerz**

*Director, National P-3 Center, Research Assistant Professor, University of Washington College of Education*

Increasingly, P-3 approaches and school leadership are identified as two of the most effective levers in closing the opportunity and achievement gaps that persist in Washington and across the country. In response, the College of Education at the University of Washington designed and launched the Washington P-3 Executive Leadership Institute in 2014, with the goal of building a cadre of pre-school through third grade leaders who are equipped to ensure Washington's young children

have a high-quality continuum of learning that begins at birth and extends through elementary school regardless of race, class, culture, or zip code. Funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, this innovative Institute is the first in the nation to address the growing need for administrators to navigate the complexities of system change, work effectively across organizational boundaries, and make a significant difference for the young students who need it most.

### P-3 EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

The time for elementary school administrators to have expertise about early learning and young children's academic and social-emotional development has never been more crucial. As Washington sees an increase in state-funded Pre-K (ECEAP, the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program), coupled with a large proportion of children entering kindergarten from an array of other early learning programs or with no preschool experience at all, elementary schools are pressed to meet an increasingly diverse set of student needs, and to more effectively understand and navigate the birth-to-five landscape. Accordingly, the Washington P-3 Executive Leadership Institute was strategically designed to co-enroll administrators from the birth-to-five field (e.g., ECEAP, Head Start, and other preschool or child care directors/program managers) with administrators from the K-12 field (e.g., elementary principals, assistant principals, and other district central office administrators). The Institute is a yearlong, credit-bearing course of study based on the *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches* (Kauerz & Coffman, 2013) that is delivered by both local and national experts.

More than an academic endeavor, the Institute supports administrators to put what they learn into action,

requiring each participant to complete an Action Research Project in their home community and in collaboration with cross-sector partners (i.e., school principals needed to identify and work with early learning partners). Participants design their projects based on their own strategic analyses of P-3 gaps in their current practices, using tools developed by the National P-3 Center at University of Washington.

“ Without doubt, families have profound influence on young children's learning and development, and an administrator sets the tone regarding the depth and breadth of the engagement of families in their child's elementary school.

This article features the Action Research Projects presented in two clustered themes, of five elementary principals from three Washington school districts in the 2014 cohort. It highlights the variety of strategies they undertook to bring greater coherence to the P-3 continuum,

to improve the quality of learning opportunities provided to young children in their home communities, and to close achievement gaps early.

### ENGAGED FAMILIES

Without doubt, families have profound influence on young children's learning and development, and an administrator sets the tone regarding the depth and breadth of the engagement of families in their child's elementary school. Comprehensive P-3 approaches require administrator support and attention to ensure that families are not just informed (e.g., via monthly newsletters) or merely involved (e.g., via one-time annual events), but rather are deeply engaged as active and full partners in helping their children develop, learn, thrive, and achieve. Meaningful engagement of families requires systematic, intentional, and focused attention from the entire school staff, starting with the principal.

#### ***Parent Academy: Seamless Learning Between School and Home***

##### **Edmonds School District, ESD 189**

Often, families experience a disconnect between their child's preschool experiences and entry into kindergarten and the K-12 system. To create a stronger link between Pre-K

*Continued on page 18*

and kindergarten, Chris Fulford, principal at Lynndale Elementary School in Edmonds School District, and his district colleague, Karen Schreiber, designed and piloted Parent Academy, an intentional opportunity for families to learn about literacy and mathematics expectations needed for success in kindergarten and beyond. Parent Academy is a series of sessions across the school year that provide interactive parent professional development so families are active learners as their children transition from pre-K to kindergarten. The school district already has in place two opportunities for parents of pre-K-age children to become better acquainted with the kindergarten transition process — one a parent/child program and the other a pre-K parent meeting. Parent Academy extends this school-family partnership by adding three sessions — one just prior to the start of kindergarten to inform families about grade level expectations in kindergarten and beyond; one in winter during which instructional coaches teach parents about the ongoing literacy and math skills kindergarteners need; and one in spring that focuses on the importance of summer skill building to reduce fade out. This systematic and sustained approach to building and supporting a continuous cycle of parent support before and across the kindergarten year represents a substantial reform effort to make children's early learning experiences more seamless and to ensure that families are fully engaged as partners in their child's success.

Chris Fulford is principal at Lynndale Elementary and Karen Schreiber is the district Early Learning Manager, both in Edmonds School District.



Chris Fulford

## TRANSITIONS, CONTINUITY & PATHWAYS

The transition from pre-school to kindergarten is one of the most oft-addressed issues when districts and communities work together on the P-3 continuum. Birth-to-five and K-12 systems must collaborate to create smooth transitions; if they do not, the transitions are more difficult and bumpy for everyone involved (i.e. the children, their families, the teachers, and the P-3 administrators). In fact, smooth transitions are important not only from pre-K to kindergarten, but also from grade to grade, starting at birth and extending up through third grade. A rich and rigorous continuum of learning that builds on each prior year, prepares children for what comes next, and adjusts academic demands accordingly is what every child should experience.

### ***Building Bridges: Creating Connections Between Public School Preschools, Community Preschool Providers, and Parents to Improve Access and Enhance the Quality of Early Learning for All***

#### **Enumclaw School District, ESD 121**

Despite a diversity of available programs, a vast number of preschool-age children in Enumclaw School District do not access preschool of any kind prior to kindergarten. Enumclaw is a rural community with a mix of early learning opportunities including private preschools and child care programs, a Special Education Developmental Preschool, and Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) housed at Southwood Elementary serving the entire school district. Susan Arbury, principal at Southwood, and April Schroeder's Action Research Project addressed the issue of children's limited participation in preschool offerings. First, they identified three possible reasons for children

not participating in one of the community's early learning programs: lack of money to pay for private preschool; lack of awareness of available services; or lack of programs that fill the income gap between ECEAP and private offerings. To address these discrepancies, Susan and April implemented several targeted strategies that focused on both early learning providers and families. For early learning providers, the district offered three seminars during the 2014-15 school year so that they could learn about kindergarten standards. For families, the district offered a *Ready for Kindergarten* project during which families learned kindergarten readiness activities. The district also extended its outreach and recruitment for ECEAP, resulting in increased enrollment and doubling the number of available slots. In addition, a tier of slots was created for families who do not qualify for ECEAP but still cannot pay for private preschool. With this multi-pronged approach, Susan and April meaningfully increased the number of children accessing high-quality preschool programs.

Susan Arbury is principal at Southwood Elementary School. April Schroeder operates a child care center in Enumclaw and is a member of the Enumclaw School Board.



Susan Arbury

### ***Effective Pre-K to Kindergarten Transitions***

#### **Highline School District, ESD 121**

Although transition is often thought to be something that happens for a child, the Highline School District team recognized that things needed to change not just at the child level, but at multiple levels throughout the system. A smooth transition into kindergarten matters not just for a child's initial days or months of elementary school, but has far-reaching implications for that child's academic and social/emotional success through eighth grade and

beyond. A team of leaders from Highline School District's central office; three elementary principals — Kathy Emerick, principal at Hilltop Elementary; Anne Reece, principal at White Center Heights Elementary; and Anna Griebel, principal at Sheridan Elementary; and two community-based early learning centers undertook interrelated Action Research Projects to support quality transition opportunities through four key areas of focus: district-wide efforts, school-based efforts, center-based efforts, and community-based efforts. Strategies included school board advocacy, increased access to early learning experiences, strengthened partnerships with providers and families, instituting common transition practices for principals to use with all students, and early identification of student needs. As a result, Highline School District increased communication with families, developed a community of practice among educators, and increased awareness of the importance of transition practices among system leaders. The district's research validated findings that transition opportunities are essential for both children and families to feel prepared for successful beginnings in the K-12 system, and their projects demonstrated that comprehensive P-3 approaches require intentional effort at multiple levels, engagement of multiple partners, and a system-wide dedication to common goals.

*Kathy Emerick and Anne Reece are principals at Hilltop Elementary and White Center Heights Elementary for Highline Public Schools. Anna M. Griebel is principal at Sheridan Elementary in Tacoma. Angelica Alvarez is an elected member of the Highline Public Schools Board of Directors. Jeannie Kelly is the director of child development at Easter Seals Angle Lake Child Development Center in SeaTac. Kellie Morrill is the P-3 Campus Director at*



Kathy Emerick



Anne Reece

*Educare of Greater Seattle, in partnership with White Center Heights Elementary. Jenniffer Reinig is an instructional leadership executive director for Highline Public Schools.*



Anna M. Griebel

## CONCLUSION

Research increasingly points to the important role of school administrators in creating and supporting environments and programs that meet the needs of young learners. As evidenced by this summary of Action Research Projects conducted by principals and their colleagues in the 2014 Washington P-3 Executive Leadership Institute, P-3 approaches require meaningful and intentional collaboration between the birth-to-five and K-12 fields. Further, P-3 approaches require both the birth-to-five and K-12 systems to change in order to create and sustain the kinds of learning experiences for children that make

a difference. Helping accomplished administrators navigate and mitigate the complexities of P-3 work is an innovative effort that holds great promise and has potential to close achievement gaps early. ■

*The Washington P-3 Executive Leadership Institute at the University of Washington is led by Molly Branson Thayer and guided by its faculty co-directors, Kristie Kauerz and Gail Joseph. For additional information on the Institute, visit <http://www.pce.uw.edu/certificates/p-3-executive-leadership.html>*

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CHRIS TUMBUSCH

# REINVENTING EDISON

## PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Engaging Communities, Closing the Gap*

### Andre Benito Mountain

*Assistant Principal, Edison Elementary, Tacoma PS*

Thomas Edison's teachers described him as a difficult student. His mother subsequently pulled him from school after only 12 weeks and engaged him in a broad, self-directed curriculum that would lead him to an approach to learning that would impact our lives today. His failures

fueled a relentless curiosity that led to discoveries and ultimately to success.

Edison School opened in 1892 in South Tacoma's Edison neighborhood as a 19-room schoolhouse. Today, a newly redesigned Edison Elementary faces challenges similar to those of its namesake in finding a niche and reinventing itself.

The school's leadership team began preparing for the 2014-2015 school year during the summer with an ambitious list of initiatives to reshape the contours of the school's culture. Starting a new school year at an elementary school comes with its own unique set of challenges, but this new beginning was especially significant because the school had a new principal,

new assistant principal, and one-third of the staff had been replaced.

Having arrived in Tacoma last summer from Augusta, Georgia, I was tasked with learning a new set of standards, evaluation guidelines, collective bargaining agreements, and adjusting to the culture of Edison Elementary, working closely with the new principal in reinventing Edison.

“ How do you move beyond the obstacles of the past and foster innovation? How do you reposition and reinvent an organization with the help of a talented mix of new and veteran teachers? ”

### Reinventing Instruction

Thomas Edison once said, “Discontent is the first necessity of progress.” In an effort to increase transparency, we developed a walk-through tool based upon the 5D+ Rubric from the University of Washington’s Center for Educational Leadership. The rubric guides teacher practices in five distinct dimensions: purpose; student engagement; curriculum and pedagogy; assessment for student learning; and classroom environment and culture. An additional dimension of professional collaboration and communication has been added to capture the work that teachers do in conjunction with their colleagues and the school community.

The principal and I conduct weekly walkthroughs of each grade level using the tool with embedded drop-down menus and look-fors that were provided by the faculty. Ultimately, they are held accountable

for providing quality instruction on a consistent basis. When the instruction does not meet the expectations that have been set, teachers are provided with support in the form of conferencing, modeling, additional resources, and an opportunity to observe other educators’ instructional practice. I use the term “practice” here with intentionality as it represents the mindset that is pervasive in law and medicine where expertise continues to develop overtime. The 5D+ rubric’s indicators provided a detailed guide for us and for our teachers on how to take their current levels of performance and, through practice, enhance them for the benefit of the students.

### Reinventing Culture

Perhaps the most important aspect of reinventing Edison involved reshaping the culture of the school. Edison’s student population is the most diverse that I’ve experienced during my 14 years in education. Thankfully, the principal asked me to serve as the school’s representative on the Tacoma Public School’s District Equity Team. The team holds quarterly meetings and guides school leaders in honoring the impact of culture and race on the work of schools. After attending a recent meeting, I administered an equity survey to determine where we were in our support of equity in the school. A brief discussion of the importance of culturally responsive teaching became the catalyst for making the efforts of a handful of teachers become larger part of the culture of the school. We were all interested in exploring how we could honor the broad spectrum of cultures represented at Edison. More importantly, how could we gain the support for diversity initiatives from the entire faculty and convey the relevance of culturally responsive teaching?

One step was to honor monthly observances such as Hispanic Heritage

Month and Native American History Month. In order for those observances to become part of our culture we were advised that the art projects students developed during these respective months should remain on display throughout the year.

My role as assistant principal allows me to work in tandem with the principal and the teachers in refining and supporting the vision of what Edison will be for its students. My understanding of culturally responsive school environments is informed by the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings and her article “Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,” which cites a continuum of behaviors that support this work (Ladson-Billings, 1995):

- The conceptions of self and others held by culturally relevant teachers.
- The manner in which social relations are structured by culturally relevant teachers.
- The conceptions of knowledge held by culturally relevant teachers.

### Conceptions of Self and Others: The Totem Pole Project

Teachers embrace the philosophy that all students are capable of success, regardless of socio-economic background, gender, or ethnicity. They are willing to take instructional risks, reflect on their practices, and make adjustments as needed.

As November approached, we sought to present students with a more historically accurate depiction of Native American people which honored their diversity and culture in the context of Native American Heritage Month. Fourth-grade teacher Brittney Voight used the totem pole as means to elicit reflective writings from students about the images they created to adorn the totem poles then presented the idea to the administration. Two centrally

*Continued on page 22*

located columns near the lobby of the school would be topped with wings created by local artist Elizabeth Reeves. Voight saw an opportunity to use the totem pole project to foster a sense of community in her class and collaboration between students whose interactions up to this point had been problematic. The totems represent a sense of community for the school, personal significance for the students, and a resounding acknowledgment of the Native people who make Tacoma their home, particularly the Puyallup Tribe.

“ The reinventing of an organization, particularly an elementary school, begins with the process of self-discovery.

### Social Relations: Maasai Warriors

At Edison, teachers are making a concerted effort to help students make text-to-self connections. Through read-alouds, videos, and cooperative activities, students have multiple opportunities to compare and contrast their lives with those of people whose culture, language, and background are markedly different from their own. First-grade teacher Amber Wirth immersed her class in a study of the Maasai warriors of Kenya and Tanzania. Students were introduced to the book *Maasai and I* by Virginia Kroll and made connections between their lives and the lives of the Maasai warriors using chart paper and graphic organizers.

Ms. Wirth's approach to instruction in this activity moves her students toward the highest levels of the revised Bloom's Pyramid into the realm of evaluating their paradigms and creating products that demonstrate their new learning.



An Edison fifth-grader shows off her Maasai warrior mask.

CHRIST TUMBUSCH

### Conceptions of Knowledge: African-American History Month

In preparation for our African-American History Month celebration, we met with staff and discussed ways to honor the month in a manner that was consistent with the original intent of the observance when it was devised by Carter G. Woodson in 1926. In short, Woodson's intent was that African-Americans would develop a sense of pride and knowledge of their history and that others would develop a better understanding of their unique historical contributions. The music teacher selected a play on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that would be cast with fifth-grade students. It would be a powerful culmination of a month-long celebration.

What would the other students do to explore African-American history? How could their learnings in this area support reading instruction, informational writing, mathematics and art? There were subsequent discussions with groups of teachers about next steps and ways to align the

activities with Common Core State Standards. Most importantly, we were seeking to create a context where the observance at Edison would not be limited to isolated recognition of certain individuals, but rather a more thematic exploration of the cultural complexity of African heritage. We chose a traditional African mask project as the nexus.

### Reinventing Ourselves

The reinventing of an organization, particularly an elementary school, begins with the process of self-discovery. That self-discovery and the degree to which it becomes pervasive is dependent upon how honest we are with ourselves in answering these two questions: Where are we on the continuum of excellence? What do we have the potential to become?

Along with a team of dedicated educators, I'm engaged in the daily process of creating an environment where students thrive, where parents are embraced, and where teachers enhance their practice. As we reinvent ourselves, we are reinventing Edison. ■

# Implementing a School Wide Progressive Discipline Model

**J.P. Frame, M.Ed.**

*Counselor, Kent-Meridian High School,  
Kent School District*

## PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety, Planning with Data, Improving Instruction, Engaging Communities*

**A**t Kent-Meridian High School (KMHS) in Kent, a change is taking place that could help our community transition into a true partnership with all stakeholders involved in the educational process.

KMHS serves 2,100 students in an urban center and is the most diverse high school in the state of Washington. To paint a clearer picture of this plurality it is important to note that KMHS's student body consists of 77% students of color with 71 different languages spoken from over 100 different countries.

While the cultural diversity of KMHS is celebrated daily by students and staff, there are diverse challenges as well. The transiency rate at KMHS is 40%; as well, 31% of students are provided ELL or Special Education services. Economically, 72% of our students receive free and reduced lunch. It has been well documented that high mobility and low incomes are often connected to low academic outcomes and increased behavioral challenges among students. The long-range goal to address these persistent

challenges is to implement a Positive Behavior Intervention Supports program (PBIS). PBIS is based on the academic model designed to assist students with primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions in specific subject areas such as reading or math; and, PBIS organizes interventions in the same manner.

“While the cultural diversity of KMHS is celebrated daily by students and staff, there are diverse challenges as well.”

tertiary interventions. Therefore, a Behavior Intervention Team was organized in a collaborative effort between KMHS's Behavior Interventionist Lizzie Munday, Dean of Students Mike Simmons, and myself. Together, the team worked to institute a process referred to as the



Counselor J.P. Frame meets with English teacher Rachel Raine to answer questions regarding implementation of the SWPDM.

School Wide Progressive Discipline Model® (SWPDM). This model serves as a framework for addressing low level student behaviors that do not warrant a trip to the office but negatively impact student learning.

SWPDM works through accountability of all the parties involved. Students are expected to perform in the classroom with reasonable expectations of effort, respect, preparedness, and timeliness. There will be times when there are particular students who are not meeting these standards and thus need to be held “accountable” through the SWPDM process. Teachers are also held accountable through expectations of procedure that they must follow within the framework such as consistent parent

*Continued on page 24*

communication. It is anticipated that once parents are provided consistent feedback regarding their child's behavioral challenges, they will intervene at home. If low-level negative behaviors persist, administrators and counselors are expected to provide of a mixture of solutions and consequences to deter further disruptive behavior.

“ The School Wide Progressive Discipline Model<sup>®</sup> is a series of steps triggering specific interventions to address behavior early and often.

The School Wide Progressive Discipline Model<sup>®</sup> is a series of steps triggering specific interventions to address behavior early and often. Each step

begins with a simple intervention referred to as a “verbal warning” which includes the identification of the unwanted behavior. The student is then left with the option of compliance or non-compliance. Non-compliance results in moving a step on the SWPDM.

At Step 1, the teacher and the student are expected to engage in a 1:1 conversation regarding their behavior, how to avoid having difficulties in the future, and review the SWPDM to ensure there is clear understanding of what consequences lie ahead. As time progresses a student may be issued another verbal warning and then progress to Step 2 in which a form letter is sent home to be returned the next day signed by the parent. Within the letter is a general explanation of SWPDM and a series of “conversation starters” for parents to use with their student at home. The process serves as a means of opening lines of communication between the parents and school.

At Step 3, students are assigned a lunch detention and phone call is made home. Teachers are accountable for making this call and it is the expectation before assigning the detention. The call is to inform the parent of the consequence and serve as an early intervention piece. At this point talking with the student has not worked, nor has sending a letter home. The goal is to bring the parents into a partnership with the school. Too often students are sent to the office for continued disruptive behaviors and the parents were never informed and given an opportunity to intervene. Additionally, a “For Your Information” note is entered into the online referral system and serves as an initial alert to the dean of students and behavior interventionist making them aware that action may need to be taken in the near future.

If a phone call home and lunch detention do not prove effective the student will then progress to Step 4. The teacher calls the parents and continues to provide anecdotal information regarding their student's performance. The consequence is now an after school detention. The teacher will email the school's behavior interventionist who would then meet with the student and serve as a non-adversarial third party having expertise in conferencing with students and mediation. The behavioral interventionist may share insights with teachers enabling them to understand student backgrounds that cannot be gleaned from limited opportunities provided in the classroom setting. Teachers may gain valuable insights into student perceptions of what is taking place in class which breaks down barriers to learning. As well, an explanation of why certain behaviors are not acceptable may be more palatable for students coming from a third party.

The final step, Step 5, results in a parent phone call to continue to rectify the behaviors in the classroom; two after school detentions are now



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assigned. The student is also referred to the Behavior Intervention Team (BIT) which consists of the behavior interventionist, counselor, dean, assistant principal, teacher and parent. These parties will then conference with the student to develop a plan for success. The purpose of the BIT meeting is to find solutions, not to expound upon the already identified negative behaviors.

Any intervention beyond Step 5 becomes the responsibility of administrators and counselors. There may be underlying circumstances behind the behaviors that require more intensive interventions that cannot be expected in the regular classroom setting. Teachers and students should be able to expect to conduct the daily routine of education without constant distractions from misbehaving students. The School Wide Progressive Discipline Model® provides teachers a standardized, step by step, toolkit to ensure appropriate actions are taken when a student's consistent low level behavior reaches a point that it becomes an inhibitor to the learning process.

Kent-Meridian High School is in the early stages of implementation of the SWPDM. It was presented to staff as a voluntary option at the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year; but, would not get off of the ground initially due to a computer glitch impacting student schedules and the general confusion that results from implementation of a new program. The data from September and October predicted a year in which behavior referrals would trend upward with September showing an 8% increase in referrals and October showing a 6% increase over the previous year. Not until November would SWPDM be implemented with some fidelity among staff. Truly conclusive data began to reflect the impact of SWPDM with a 9% drop in office referrals between November 2013 and November 2014. December, as well, would garner significant

improvement with a 14% decline in discipline referrals between the two school years. This trend accelerated in January with a 24% cut in office referrals in comparison to January of the previous year. February numbers proved to be equally promising with a 32% drop in office referrals.

As the data continues to trend downward staff commitment has increased from 33% to a rate of over 60%. Second year English teacher, Rachel Raine, shared how SWPDM has impacted her classroom:

*"Being a new teacher is stressful. There are so many things you need to develop and perfect in order for your class to run smoothly. I was constantly second-guessing myself throughout my first year. Is my discipline system working? Is it similar to other teachers' plans? Am I allowed to do this? Those questions, in a sense, were haunting me each time I sent someone down to the office."*

*SWPDM changes that and eliminates the uncertainty for teachers. The structure offered by this program, paired with the consistency that students see from all their teachers, makes this something that works. SWPDM holds my students accountable in the same way they are being held accountable in their other classes. Teachers, admin and staff are a united front. The kids see that and the kids respect that."*

The School Wide Progressive Discipline Model® is Kent-Meridian High School's first piece to the larger puzzle of PBIS implementation and could produce even more significant results once fully established. The motto of the KMHS is, "Whatever it takes...every day." As of this writing, it appears that the establishment of the School Wide Progressive Discipline Model® is working and this is exciting news for students, parents, and staff. ■

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# INNOVATION



# Excellence for All Students the Dearborn Way

**Angela Sheffey-Bogan**

*Principal, Dearborn Park International School,  
Seattle Public Schools*

## PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Planning with Data, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction, Managing Resources, Engaging Communities, Closing the Gap*

*Continued on page 28*

**M**ost people spend winter break sleeping in and catching up with family. Often times this popular break includes watching mindless TV. At Dearborn Park International School, though, the staff and I were hard at work completing our application to the City of Seattle's Families and Education Levy proposal.

This was our second try. We were devastated when we didn't get the grant this time. We tried a third time, spending days to write yet another

28-page grant narrative. And we also didn't get funded that year.

On April 5, 2014 I stood before the Seattle School Board to lobby for my school to become the district's next international school. A board member asked, "If you are the next International School, how will you ensure the program's sustainability? Schools in the north end solicit their PTA to pay for programs and positions?"

My respectful response was, "My school has applied and been turned down for the city levy three years in a row. At Dearborn Park we just get it done!"

That is the Dearborn way. We will always find a way to get stuff done.

I have been so proud to see Dearborn Park become an international school, and so proud of the community of students, families, educators, nonprofits, and neighbors that we have been building along the way. When asked about the factors that have helped make Dearborn successful, I started reflecting on the last five years of being a school leader. There are so many elements that we principals must juggle. But if I had to narrow it down to four, I would choose Vision, Innovation, Collaboration and Excellence, also known as V.I.C.E.!

Principal Angela Sheffey-Bogan takes a moment to review a student assignment.

CHRISTUMBUSCH



“ My school has applied and been turned down for the city levy three years in a row. At Dearborn Park we just get it done!”

## VISION

When I was hired in July 2010, I knew that I wanted to make some radical changes.

The school was doing OK, but it had a reputation of just being an OK school. I wanted it to be something that everyone would and could love. I wanted *everyone* to send their child to Dearborn Park Elementary School.

I talked with the parents, staff and students to find out what was important to them about their school. As a staff, the first order of business was to review the mission and vision. Once we agreed upon the appropriate wording, we launched into making it our own: *A diverse international population with high expectations and high academic achievement.*

Our continued belief is that if we are all on the same page, working toward the same goal, we will all get there together. Not everyone, however,

“ I also saw a need to bridge the gap between school and home. Many families did not feel welcome, either because of our atmosphere in the front office or past experiences they have had in schools.

held the same vision and values. This is OK. I often use the metaphor, “We are all in this boat together, and if your oar is not paddling forward then you may want to think of another way to get up the river. I will help you find an alternate route or means of

transportation but maybe a seat in this boat is not for you.”

There were definitely some who, over the next three years, found other ways to “get up the river” — they used their alternative ways to make a choice to “move on” and leave DPIS.

## INNOVATION

The method was to be a radical, innovative force when it came to instruction. I suggested the staff adjust to a departmentalized schedule. Each grade level would have two teachers, one teaching reading, writing and social studies and one teacher teaching math and science. Essentially students had two teachers. This helped improve teachers’ focus, professional development and parent/guardian access to the teacher.

This style of scheduling empowered the Teacher Leader model. Teachers who are natural mathematicians became a resource for their colleagues. The same thing happened in reading. This took some getting used to and ultimate trust in your teaching partner, but our teachers grew to love the innovative concept. Parents loved the concept too. If they needed to meet with a teacher regarding student performance, there were two teachers to choose from, the homeroom teacher or the team teacher. Communication with families skyrocketed to an unseen level, which

we measured by our spring family survey.

I also saw a need to bridge the gap between school and home. Many families did not feel welcome, either because of our atmosphere in the front office or past experiences they

have had in schools. They were unsure of their place in the school.

To address this, we created a Home/School Coordinator position — one of just a few in our school district. The job entailed planning family evening events based on academic achievement, ensuring families were aware of school events, and increasing attendance at these events. This position grew from an hourly position to a full-time position for the past four years. Each year, our building had to fight for the funding to secure this vital position. We have even had to change the position name in order to keep the same person, Rica Mosqueda, in the position. Rica is more than a “position”: She is a Relationship Builder. As a member of the community, she is essential to our school’s success.

Rica started with a huge shift. She came to me to ask about Family Information Nights. She had the idea to hone in on our top five languages at the school. She facilitated a Family Information Night in the target language for those families. Starting in 2010, we began to hold Family Information Nights the first seven Mondays of the school year. These nights have turned into a family gathering that provides an opportunity for families to come to our school to talk and meet each other, talk with the principal and other school personnel.

The main thing that sets these nights apart is that all of the discussion is in the target language and translated for the English speakers. This has been such a success that it has been recognized as a Promising Practice from National Network Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, in Baltimore, Maryland. It has been an extreme honor to be recognized for something that we feel is “just” one of the ways we meet the needs of our school community.

*Continued on page 30*

## COLLABORATION

You can't have innovation without strong collaboration with faculty, community, families and students.

Schedules were altered to allow a common planning time to review data; in addition we ran data teams that met during staff meeting time. All staff was only brought together during the first Wednesday of each month. PLCs (professional learning communities) were implemented. Teachers had the autonomy to pick a meeting time that worked best for them. PLCs met before or after school. One PLC met every Tuesday at 7 a.m. As a staff we talked about the importance of ongoing, consistent conversations around students. An all-day data collection session happened three times a year. Teachers

would bring their data spreadsheets that reviewed all student data, from assessment to social/emotional data and additional resources that were afforded to the student.

As per the CBA (collective bargaining agreement), teachers are asked to attend a 60-minute staff meeting every Wednesday. In collaboration with my building leadership team, I have released most of that time for my teachers to collaborate with their colleagues. We meet as a whole staff twice a month. We meet for a race and equity professional development on the first Wednesday and collaborative "share-out" the last Wednesday. What are we doing? What has worked? How do we know? What are we planning to try next? This professional development is led by my teacher leaders.

We had started building a strong community among the staff, and among the students and families. But I felt there was still something missing. I noticed that faculty was extremely accommodating to students and student needs but that our African-American males were still struggling when it came to our standardized assessments.

In discussion with a parent, I shared with her that I wanted to do something that would shift the mind-set of my staff. In collaboration with the parent and our District Race and Equity Department, we launched a Race & Equity Professional Development that occurred monthly for 90 minutes. Again, I adjusted our staff meetings; I "gave up" the first Wednesday Nuts & Bolts meeting as I felt this was much more important

Dearborn Park International School students celebrate Lunar New Year.

CHRISTUMBUSCH





Excellence for every child means every student, every classroom, every day! Our faculty must meet students and families where they are each day.

work that needed to be tackled as a team. The end result will be a school-wide charter written by our faculty that will be a sort of agreement on things we feel are important to identify to be a part of the DPIS Instructional Team. Our faculty charter will be completed by June 2015.

## EXCELLENCE

What does excellence entail?

It may mean being at the building at 6:30 a.m. leaving the building at 6 p.m., attending a child's sporting event on the weekend, finding shelter for a family that is unexpectedly homeless. It can mean and look like many things. What it does not mean is we give up on any child!

Excellence for EVERY child means every student, every classroom, every day! Our faculty must meet students and families where they are each day. We must teach, assess, and reteach. It is an ongoing cycle that is who we are. It does define us! We are educators, parents, nurturers and catalysts for excellence!

I know that nothing that happens is random. We are all placed in jobs, positions, and places for a reason. Our jobs are difficult, and none of us as principals are perfect. I've made my share of mistakes these past five years and learned from them.

We've had challenges and heartbreaks, like not getting the levy dollars that we so needed. But through having a common vision,



CHRIST TUMBUSCH

Sheffey-Bogan and her administrative team, teachers and staff are committed to engaging with students, families and the community.

being innovative and taking risks, fostering collaboration, and focusing on providing an excellent education

for every student, we have become a school, and a community, that we can all be proud of. ■



MELANIE ROSE

**Central Valley School District Interns**

*Back row, L to R:*  
Gretchen Newell, Matt Walter, Rob Bartlett.

*Front row, L to R:*  
Alison Walton, Jaime Mickelson, Alisha Alsaker.

*Not pictured:*  
Morgan Jones, Katie Louie Terrie.

# Painting a Picture for Quality Principal Internships

## *Two Districts' Innovative Approaches*

**PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**

*Planning with Data, Improving Instruction, Managing Resources*

**Dr. Teena McDonald**

*Clinical Assistant Professor and Program Coordinator, Washington State University*

**Dr. Terrie VanderWegen**

*Assistant Superintendent, Central Valley School District*

**Scott Munro**

*Executive Director, Elementary Education and Intern Program Facilitator, Evergreen School District*

**Dr. Kathleen Cowin**

*Principal Certification & Masters Program in Educational Leadership, Washington State University Tri-Cities*

Impressionist painter Dick Ensing says that every artist should, in their lifetime, work with at least one master who knows the craft. He takes on “interns,” either one-on-one or in a group, who are budding artists already with some skills, knowledge and attributes, helping the intern with their own individual needs for improving his or her artistry.

So what does this have to do with principal internships? This issue of *Washington Principal* is focused on innovation. Synonyms for innovation include change, upheaval, transformation, metamorphosis, and breakthrough. Any principal intern will concur these synonyms resonate with their lived experiences as they transition from the teaching ranks to administration. Having a “master” to help the intern develop critical skills is vital to the ultimate success of the intern as a future school administrator.

## THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR

Relationships between mentors and interns are vital to successful internship experiences and in learning to lead. Mentoring research focusing on developmental relationships (Allen & Eby, 2010; Mullen, 2005; Ragins & Kram, 2007) can inform the work of mentors, their interns, school district leaders, and university-based educational leadership faculty. Serving as a mentor for an aspiring principal candidate is a process which includes multiple roles for the mentor and the intern. Principal candidates need to understand their role as mentee, which may hold memories of other internship experiences — such as when they were a student teacher. It is this returning to novicedom that may be a new and challenging experience for both the principal candidate and mentor to realize, understand, and navigate. It is this experience of returning to be a novice that suggests a careful review of the foundational mentoring literature.

Ragins and Cotton (1999) suggest that “formal mentoring programs should mimic the development of informal relationships” (p. 546). Since principal candidates are assigned a mentor who will serve in multiple roles: mentor, teacher, coach and evaluator, it is important that mentors and mentees seek ways to explore the components of both formal and informal mentoring relationships. It is important for both mentors and mentees to learn how a mentoring relationship develops. Often difficulties associated with getting to know one another and learning how to work together in the roles of mentor and mentee may be minimized through clear understanding about the expectations of each role by the other.

“ Relationships between mentors and interns are vital to successful internship experiences and in learning to lead.

Often mentors enter into a mentoring relationship with an intern based on their own experiences of being a principal candidate. This method of learning by observing and studying what the mentor does, then having the intern try out what has been observed and studied, is integral to the learning cycle in an internship. Kram (1983; 1985a; 1985b; 1986) suggests the importance of beginning with clear expectations from the initial meetings between the mentor and mentee to enhance the development of the mentoring relationship.

In research conducted by Harris, Ballenger and Leonard (2004) it was found that aspiring principals often use the behaviors of their mentors as the “baseline for observing appropriate leadership behaviors in the field” (p. 169). This is an important finding for mentors

to consider in their day to day interactions with their interns.

Mullen and Cairns (2001) found that the idea of a supportive and developmental relationship needs to be balanced with strong academic preparation and practical internship experiences. So the need to be sure adequate time is given to the development of the relationship in the early stage seems key. The forces that are present in the work of the principalship often may be at odds with the idea that Daloz (1986) put forward suggesting the importance of nurturing in the mentoring role: where nurturing includes holding a tension between providing both support and challenge at the same time.

## ASSESSING INTERNS

Scott Munro and Dr. Terrie VanderWegen oversee two of the state’s leading principal intern programs. Munro serves as both executive director of elementary education and the intern program for the Evergreen School District. Dr. Terrie VanderWegen, an assistant superintendent in the Central Valley School District, has also developed an intern assistance program. Both districts go through an extensive selection process, education program, and provides intentional thought and discussion with candidates to select new principal leaders.

In Central Valley, potential intern candidates start the process by having a discussion with their principal who will agree to serve as their mentor. This is followed up by an informal conversation with the assistant superintendent to discuss the district requirements for the internship. Applications for acceptance into the program are required by the end of January. Formal interviews with a committee of current administrators take place in early February with acceptance into the district intern program by mid-February.

*Continued on page 34*

Evergreen also requires an application and interview before being approved for a district internship. Applicants are required to use the Association of Washington School Principals/Office of Superintendent of Instruction (AWSP/OSPI) intern grant application and turn it in to a group of district leaders representing elementary, middle and high school. Those leaders then sit in on the interview process, asking the intern questions to help determine if the candidate is ready for the internship. The interview process is not intended to be a gatekeeper, but rather a springboard for an ultimately successful internship.

“ The other big key to intern acceptance is making sure the intern’s principal is in support of the candidate completing an internship with her or him.

Sometimes the districts need to inform a potential intern that he or she is not quite ready for an internship. In Evergreen, leaders help these candidates develop a leadership work plan, to be completed the following school year. Scott says the most common reason for developing a plan and having a candidate wait a year is that the candidate hasn’t yet assumed enough leadership roles in his or her building.

The other big key to intern acceptance is making sure the intern’s principal is in support of the candidate completing an internship with her or him. “In our view, internships are most successful with the support of the principal and his or her administrative team. We want to know our principals have their interns’ best interests at heart and that they will have leadership

conversations with them on a regular basis,” said Munro.

Once the intern receives the green light from each of the districts, then the support processes begin. Each district works with the intern’s university preparation program to augment the intern’s experiences through a formal set of trainings, guest speakers, one on one conversations, and debriefing time as an intern team.

Central Valley’s program provides a rich experience. In addition to their academic preparation, the district has several other program participation requirements, including attendance at the August leadership institute and June administrative “wrap up” meeting; attendance at monthly K-12 principal meetings; participation in school level and district level committees; and attendance at monthly program overview meetings. Embedded within each session are conversations about the 21 research-based leadership responsibilities reported in “School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results”. In collaboration with McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning), Central Valley has partnered for six years focusing on their Balanced Leadership Framework. At each monthly meeting the principal interns discuss the projects they are working on and how their knowledge of the 21 responsibilities of leadership has facilitated this work. In January, interns are asked to provide written reflection on their work as an intern and a meeting is scheduled to discuss what additional leadership responsibilities they need to participate in to ensure that they have a comprehensive leadership experience.

“Having a principal intern in our program is a personal and professional investment for our district,” said VanderWegen. “When they finish their internship, we want each intern to feel as if they are ready

for a leadership role in a variety of different job settings.”

One of VanderWegen’s interns, Alison Walton, appreciates the time dedicated to interns in her district.

“As interns, Terrie cares about our success, and she cares about us as individuals too. In our intern program, we have time set aside for us to meet and learn from key district leaders — including human resources, finance, and special education,” she said. “We also have time to meet with [Terrie] individually. Based on my goals and our conversations, she has encouraged me to take on challenging leadership roles and been an advocate for me during my entire internship experience.”

Munro’s approach at Evergreen is to provide monthly meetings where he invites guest speakers, (including the superintendent and others from the district) provides a safe environment for interns to debrief their experiences and issues, and provides direct instruction on key leadership components that Evergreen expects from their leaders. This additional support helps interns broaden their perspectives of the job and helps them find their niche in the system.

## PRINCIPAL MENTORING

Not all interns have the luxury of mentoring with a “master” principal. Although state law requires interns to work with a principal who has at least three years of experience, that is the only qualification necessary. The yearly results of the AWSP intern survey completed by all interns who receive the intern grant shows a wide range of experiences for interns across the state. Some share how it was perfect and how they worked with an “awesome mentor;” others have had completely opposite experiences.

Interns with positive experiences expressed similar sentiments including “my supervising principal involved me in many challenging



EVERGREEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Evergreen School District intern Dave Williams (Heritage High School), along with Scott Munro, executive director, elementary education, intern Damen Hermens (Covington Middle School) and Mike Merlino, ESD chief operating officer.

activities” and “my district embraces interns at the district level as well and I felt very supported and was fully involved.”

“ If your district does not have a formal system in place for assisting interns, now might be the time to pick up a brush and paint in a progressive pipeline program for your principal interns.

Those with less positive experiences cited common issues ranging from the mindset of the mentor to the quality of tasks assigned (“I wish I would have been given less menial tasks — I had lunch duty”); and the desire for more time (“I wish I would have had more time spent in the office side-by-side with my mentor principal”).

The value of the programs that Terrie and Scott have developed is that they provide an additional procedural safeguard to make sure interns have successful experiences. If they feel the intern needs more experience in certain areas, they broker experiences and situations to help the intern have a richer experience.

As a university supervisor, when meeting with the intern’s supervising principal, I ask the principal to remember back to what made their own internship worthwhile. Once they share how their mentor principal took time to listen and give counsel; provided opportunities for growth and experience; and challenged them with difficult conundrums to solve, I then remind him or her how important it is that he or she be the type of mentor they had or would have liked to have had.

“They need a leader who is well versed in cognitive coaching and a mentor who understands how to talk out loud about their thinking, practices, and leadership,” said VanderWegen, noting that mentors need to value shared leadership and should be able to hand over a project to the intern when the intern is ready for the challenge.

These two districts and others in Washington recognize the value of working together with university programs by building powerful support systems for interns in their districts to augment internship experiences, thus building a strong leadership pipeline for future administrative positions in theirs and others’ districts.

If your district does not have a formal system in place for assisting interns, now might be the time to pick up a brush and paint in a progressive

pipeline program for your principal interns. And if you are an individual principal who mentors an intern, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing that intern get their first position and call back for advice. It happens all the time when the intern works with a “master.” ■

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# The Gold Standard

## Auburn's Teacher Leadership Academy Shines Bright

### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Planning with Data, Aligning Curriculum, Improving Instruction*

### Vicki Alonzo

*Public Information & Grants, Auburn SD*

The number one goal in Auburn's strategic plan is student achievement. It is the blueprint for continuous improvement and a filter for how we allocate our time, talent and resources.

One strategy of the plan was to implement professional learning communities (PLCs), giving teachers time to collaborate to improve practice. Another strategy was to build leadership capacity across the district. Superintendent Dr. Kip Herren saw how these two strategies were linked and that building teachers' instructional leadership would empower them to positively influence colleagues' teaching practice through PLCs and, at the same time, distributing leadership across the district.

Principals are expected to be visionaries, managers, instructional leaders and evaluators. They are accountable for requirements imposed by the state and federal government and must be responsive to multiple stakeholders including central office, parents, staff and the community at large. To make systemic change to address student achievement, principals needed help.

Partnering with the Center for Strengthening the Teaching Profession (CSTP) from Tacoma, Herren and Associate Superintendent Rod Luke worked with CSTP staff to develop the Auburn Teacher Leadership Academy (ATLA).

There are five specific teacher leadership framework skills the program focuses on: working with adults; communication; collaboration; knowledge of content and pedagogy; and systems thinking.

The program provides 75 hours of professional learning, beginning with a four-day summer institute to kick off the academy. Throughout the school year, academy participants are released for eight full-day academy sessions about once a month. Two teachers from each elementary and three teachers from each secondary school participate, resulting in a cohort of 50 teachers participating each year.

“Principals are expected to be visionaries, managers, instructional leaders and evaluators.”

To ensure the professional learning experience for the cohort is targeted and meaningful, participants complete a comprehensive pre-assessment aligned to the leadership framework skills. The curriculum for the summer institute is custom-designed based on the results of the self-assessments. Following each of the eight full-day sessions, participants complete a short survey and provide feedback. CSTP and Auburn leaders meet monthly to review the surveys using the results and feedback to develop the content for the next session.

At the conclusion of the year-long academy, participants complete the post-assessment. All academy participants reported growth on all five of the specific leadership skills targeted through the academy, such as their ability to lead data-driven dialogue and developing norms of collaboration.

Greg Brown, Mt. Baker Middle School principal, said “ATLA has helped add another layer to the shared leadership model we all strive for. With almost 1,000 students and 100 staff, it takes many layers of leadership to reach success.”

“The program has helped teachers see the layer that best suits them and gives them the confidence it takes to step up and take charge in those areas,” said Brown.

ATLA is entering its fifth year with more than 250 teachers from kindergarten through 12th grade completing the program. During this time, the Auburn School District has realized unprecedented growth in student achievement. For the fourth consecutive year, ASD students in grades three through five have outperformed the state in reading and math. Auburn also has outperformed in reading and math for low-income, special education and English language learners.

The academy pre- and post-assessments reveal ATLA positively impacts teacher leaders, their colleagues and students. The greatest change was in the area of working with adult learners. On the pre-assessment, only 26 percent of teachers rated



AUBURN SCHOOL DISTRICT

themselves as “refining” (defined as very strong in the skills) or “proficient” (defined as solid in the skills). On the post-assessment, 74 percent rated themselves as “refining” or “proficient.”

Katie Taylor, director of teacher leadership and learning for CSTP, said, “Auburn is the gold standard for how teacher leadership should be developed.” This program allows teachers to lead in sharing best practices, helping and supporting each other.

The program has taught teachers to collaborate effectively through PLCs. “Teachers take ownership for the students they have,” Taylor said. The program is focused, systemic and comprehensive.

The impacts for buildings have been fundamental.

Nola Wilson, assistant principal at Auburn Riverside High School, was on the committee that developed the ATLA program. She sees numerous benefits and results of ATLA in her building.

“A lot of times teachers who are natural leaders are tapped to become administrators, even though their love is teaching. This program allows them to be leaders in the building and still teach,” she said.

At Auburn Riverside, ATLA trained teachers are in the fold for decision-making on building professional development and are key in PLC facilitation.

“Four administrators cannot provide the leadership for effective PLCs with a building our size,” said Wilson. “The ATLA teachers are trained in leading PLCs in a structured way, are familiar with analyzing data and know how to effectively share best practices.”

Another key component of the ATLA program is the availability of mini-grants to the participants. The \$500 mini-grants are available to pay teachers to bring back what they have learned in ATLA to their buildings. Participants choose the medium, whether it be writing about what they have learned, presenting to their building or departments, or leading a book study.

Luke, the district’s administrator who oversees the program, said “It’s hard to measure, but it is very apparent there’s been a shift in our culture district-wide since ATLA began.”

Teachers are empowered and student achievement is rising.

Ilalko Elementary Principal Tim Carstens summed up the impacts of ATLA on his building: “It is a program that benefits students in ways that have not been possible until now. By empowering teachers to work effectively with other adult professionals, they impact students beyond their own classrooms. While teachers work within their buildings, the strategies they employ are breaking down the invisible walls that have existed between and among buildings. Through the work of ATLA, students, teachers, families

and principals see the benefits of collaboration and understanding of the complex dynamics of adult learners.”

For more information about ATLA, contact Rod Luke, associate superintendent for technology and learning, at 253.931.4940 or [rluke@auburn.wednet.edu](mailto:rluke@auburn.wednet.edu). ■

#### SNAPSHOT: *Auburn School District*

- 15,277 students
- 22 schools
- 56 percent free and reduced lunch
- 65 plus languages and dialects
- 2014 recipient of the Road Map Collective Impact Award for increasing equity and eliminating opportunity gaps
- 2014-15 Chinook Elementary named State Title I Distinguished School and Evergreen Heights Elementary named National Title I Distinguished School
- Eight Washington State Achievement Awards, five Washington Schools of Distinction Awards, one innovative school designation (2013-14 school year)
- Superintendent Dr. Kip Herren, 2014 Washington State Superintendent of the Year by the Washington Association of School Administrators

Source: Auburn School District. To learn more visit: [www.auburn.wednet.edu](http://www.auburn.wednet.edu)





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Popsicle sticks for marking sites.



Tiny scissors.



Plastic scratcher can be used for digging.

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Some other almost-free options I found along the way: plastic picnic knife for separating items, old cassette tape boxes for collecting and storing specimens, paper plates as an examination platform, coffee filters for separating liquids.

Using readily available and inexpensive tools to encourage and nurture the exploration of our natural environment is an effective approach to learning. It's especially valuable when the student is alongside their teacher using the same tools. Dr. Aleya once said, "A good teacher is one who explains a concept; a better teacher is one who asks questions about the concept; and the best teacher is one who demonstrates the concept then solicits the questions from the students."

With this STEM field study kit, every student can have their own personal set of tools to investigate the natural environment. Even better: They can

take them home at the end of the school year and continue to explore the out of doors wherever they go. ■



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## RANDOM ACTS OF ROYALTY



The Royal [Random] Court is introduced to Central Valley High.

MERCEDES KISSINGER-SMITH

## PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety, Closing the Gap*

**A**fter 22 years of coordinating student activities and teaching student leadership, the ritual of complaints has become its own finely tuned machine. I can tell you with each month and each activity what suggestions I will get, what frustrations I will hear and how I will respond to them. After 22 years of coordinating student activities and teaching student leadership, I was blindsided and schooled by my kids.

After 22 homecomings, after crowning 22 queens and kings, after defining and redefining criteria for 22 nominations and elections, the cry of “it is just a popularity contest” was deafening. This year, it changed, and IT WAS AWESOME.

At Central Valley, our leadership classes are introduced to the Simon Sinek TED Talk, “Start with Why.” From there, every event or program at CV starts with a title and a **why**. Why are we doing this? Why is it important? Why do we care? Why do the students care? This focus on the why helps us find focus and purpose. Often events change completely in a year just because the why changes. We start our process on the first day of school. Enter the topic of homecoming royalty:

**Leanne Donley***Central Valley High, Central Valley SD*

Why do we do royalty?

*Because we always do.*

Why do we choose a queen?

*Because we always have.*

Why do we make such a big deal out of it?

*Because it has always been that way.*

From the back of the room came a small questioning voice, “Why are we OK with that answer?”

*Because we don't know what else to do.*

“What if our why was to give anyone the chance to be royalty?”

Brilliance.

**Commence CVHS Random Royalty**

The plan was laid out to all students: Any student who didn't want to participate or be eligible was asked to opt out through their advisory teacher. All other kids were entered — more than 1,900 students. A bin for each grade and each gender was made with all students' names in the appropriate bin: 9th-grade girl bin, 9th-grade boy bin and

so on. Randomly, we drew 18 girls and 18 boys from each grade. Our next step was to narrow and create hype.

You can see our list of activities. It really could be anything:

<b>RANDOM ROYALTY</b> The Steps:	
1. Pick 18 of each gender for each grade.	
2. Hold a random draw.	
<b>Underclassmen</b>	<b>Seniors</b>
RPS competition down to 3 for each gender	RPS competition down to 6 for each gender
What's under the box at assembly to choose 1	What's under the box at assembly to choose 3
This is the prince/princess for each class.	
At game, pick an envelope to choose Queen/King.	
Remaining two of each gender are Princes/Princesses.	

### Other Ideas for Randomness

- Mark gigantic dice and highest roll wins.
- Balloons on the ground during assembly. One balloon is has royalty card. Competitors run to balloons and pop them until one finds the royalty card. Run this for each gender and each grade.
- Pick a balloon. Blow it up. The one that actually blows up (because the others have a hole) is royalty.
- Give flashlights. The flashlight that has working batteries is your royalty.

But the crucial elements are not the activities. Absolutely required is the involvement of the entire student body. With each selection, we built excitement. Announcements made during Advisory. Video selection on social media. Open invitation to the selection activities during lunches and advisory. All of our selection activities were held in our most common areas. Also essential, a school must make sure that the selection process is 100% random. No skill required. No extra help given. One hundred percent by chance.

Now, our school had a tradition of selecting queens and kings, but that was all. Many schools have highly selective processes that work. Ours didn't. As we heard a few complaints from the crew that would usually be nominated, we heard hundreds of comments in support of our process.

Marceline was a second-language speaker. She hadn't found a way to be a part of the school. At the football game, Marceline had 30 of her friends, smack-dab in the middle of the student sections cheering our team and her on. As we loaded in the cars to begin the crowing process, she said, "We have never been to a football game before. This is awesome."

Thomas, a self-proclaimed rebel, stopped me after coronation. "Can I go home now?" I felt a bit defeated. "You bet, you can. Thanks for coming."

He walked away. A few steps later, he turned around, and I noticed he still had on his crown and sash, "Hey, Mrs. D... this was really cool. Thanks." By the time he got home, he had taken a selfie with his crown and sash. The caption, 'A surprisingly fun time.'

Social media was abuzz with pictures of kids and their royalty friends. Our King and Queen were celebrities throughout the rest of the game. Random kids wanted random pictures with our random royalty. Finally, as I got home opened my email, I had two emails. One was from a parent critical of the process. Her email ended with, "While I still think nominating good kids is the best way, I loved seeing kids happy for other kids. I think it was classy and inclusive. A real winner." Even better, from a parent of a winner, "She came home so excited. She is an average kid and average kids get ignored. As she kissed me good night, she said, 'I finally feel like people see me.' She is royalty today."

This tells it all. This created an inclusive air of acceptance and excitement. This met our 'why.' The small voice from the back of the room that quietly said, "What if our why was to give anyone the chance to be royalty?" was now a booming cheer.

Our principal, Mike Hittle, was very supportive of the new selection process. "I love the idea of the random picking for the homecoming royalty," he said. "It eliminates the popularity contest and gives everyone an even chance for selection. I believe this will have a positive impact on our school's culture and climate."

My freshman prince summed it up perfectly, "Anyone can be a prince. I feel like a prince. My job now is to make sure, every day, someone feels like royalty because of me."

Randomly, random royalty was a rousing success. ■



Random selection took the politics out of choosing school royalty — but put the fun back in.



# LEADERSHIP

## CLEAR A PATHWAY TO ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS

**Vicki Bates**

*Director of Principal Support  
and Middle Level Programs, AWSP*



### PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Planning with Data, Aligning  
Curriculum, Improving Instruction,  
Closing the Gap*

Lakeridge teacher Lynn Simpson celebrates a breakthrough moment with a fourth-grader.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

In March, Superintendent Randy Dorn celebrated at Lakeridge Elementary School (Renton School District) when he announced, “Four Struggling Schools Dramatically Improve Learning.” After being designated in 2011 as one of the state’s chronically lowest performing schools and in need of “required action,” Lakeridge received additional resources, assistance and focus. Time in Lakeridge classrooms and conversations with Principal Jessica Calabrese reveal a story of leadership that’s critical to understanding the truly dramatic changes that have been realized for students at the school and that can be transferred to any school setting.

### A Dramatic New Trajectory of Achievement

Improving student outcomes in mathematics was the initial focus for improvement given only one in four students were demonstrating proficiency on the Measurements of Student Progress (MSP) at grades 3 and 5. Staff and students have realized impressive gains over the last three years: MSP scores have increased 33.5 points at grade 3 and 43.5 points at grade 4. At grade 5, where students have been at the

school the longest, mathematics scores on the MSP have climbed nearly 60 points. Students’ increased math performance has not been realized through an online math product or intricate multi-tiered model of student movement to different classrooms when they struggled to achieve, but rather through intensive focus on improving core classroom teaching and learning processes focused on giving students a strong grasp of math concepts.

Once mathematics practices and student performance were on the move, staff expanded their focus to include reading as well. While reading scores were not as low to begin with as math, students performed about 10 to 15 points behind the district average at grade 3, but lost ground through the elementary grades as comprehension became more critical. By last spring, scores at grades 3 and 4 were above and at the district average, respectively. At grade 5, reading scores on the MSP have risen 40 points in three years.

### A Pathway to Achievement for Students

When Principal Calabrese was hired in spring of 2011, she found a school absent a focus on student

learning. As such, critical elements necessary for achievement were lacking — staff collaboration, curricular alignment, and classroom rigor. Sadly, these conditions are often correlated with schools like Lakeridge, a setting characterized by high rates of childhood trauma — children separated from parent(s), homelessness, high mobility, domestic violence, and high poverty (88% qualify for free/reduced meals). Additionally, significant challenges persist as a result of immigration given children’s history of housing in refugee camps, inconsistent school enrollment, second and third language learning.

New structures and processes addressed elements of culture and safety necessary for the adults and students in the school to achieve at high levels. Principal Calabrese used Rick DuFour’s article, “Work Together: But Only If You Want To,” to underscore how school structures and cultures could enable staff to work interdependently to improve professional practice, primarily through a focus on a guaranteed and viable curriculum. Her vision was one through which professionals necessarily supported each other’s effectiveness and insured that variability of students’ experience classroom to classroom did not impact each child’s success. Additionally, full implementation of Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (PBIS) was a focus in year one. (Beginning in 2012-13, staff expanded their focus to implement the Positive Discipline program through work with Sound Discipline and have reached their goal of matching the national median of one office referral per day three out of the last four months.)

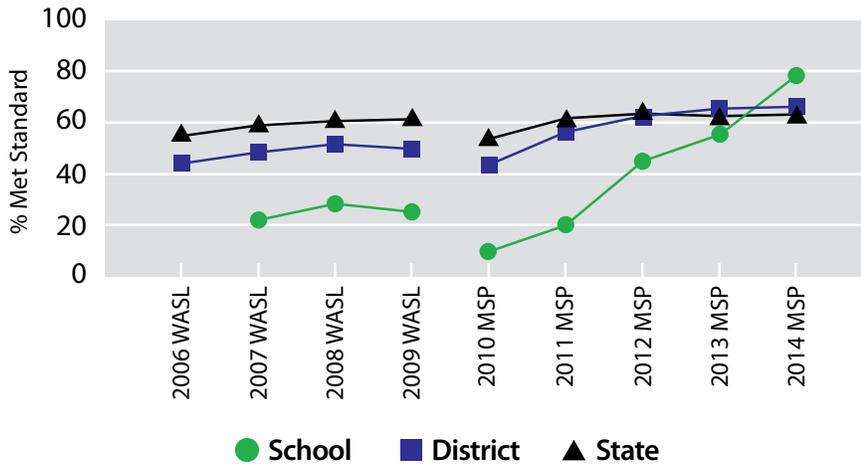
To address the curricular and instructional changes necessary to improve student learning, Lakeridge partnered with University of Washington mathematics educators to bring Cognitively Guided



Principal Jessica Calabrese collaborates with Lakeridge fifth-graders in order to better understand their thinking about fractions.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

## LAKERIDGE ELEMENTARY — 5TH GRADE MATH TREND



Instruction into classroom practice. Through a job-embedded professional development model, staff learn to use student discourse to position students as competent, to orient students toward one another, and to increase engagement. In monthly math labs, teams of teachers in grade-level bands develop a shared vision of instruction through collective experimentation. Each lab involves digging into content, learning common instructional practices, planning and teaching together. These repeated cycles develop a culture of public practice and focused reflection on student thinking. The work in labs is further linked to the classroom through participative coaching by the instructional coach and principal.

“You can’t look good and get better at the same time.”

Concurrently, grade-level PLCs meet twice a week — once around reading and once around math — to continue aligning curriculum and practices, receive coaching, and examine student data. With the reminder from Calabrese that, “we chase the data that we examine,” PLCs use formative data as their leverage

point, closely monitoring student progress by standard to determine the effectiveness of instruction and to identify ongoing individual student needs.

### What Leadership Looks Like

“You can’t look good and get better at the same time.” Calabrese embraces this spirit and communicates this mantra to staff as a leader for improvement at her school. She takes risks, trying on new instructional strategies alongside staff, even as a former middle school administrator who came to Lakeridge as a first-time elementary principal when reform work began four years ago. Calabrese identifies these critical roles in her work as a leader:

- **Positions self as a learner:** Learns and tries content, instructional activities, and practices right alongside teachers; gets on the carpet and listens to student thinking.
- **Actively participates in each Math/Literacy Lab:** Co-plans and co-teaches instructional activities; communicates the importance of this work; sets the tone for willingness to take risks.
- **Attends weekly PLC meetings and is in classrooms often:** Gains ongoing information about how kids are doing in a formative

## 2013-2014 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE: LAKERIDGE ELEMENTARY

Enrollment (October Headcount)	428
Percent Low Income	88.2%
Percent English Language Learners (ELL)	32.7%
Percent in Special Education	15.2%
Percent Students of Color (non-white)	91.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	12.4%
Black	59.1%
Hispanic	12.1%

Source: OSPI

way; analyzes evidence of student learning and learns with teachers from the data.

- **Meets weekly with instructional coaches:** Knows what’s happening across the building; develops shared goals for teachers and support; allocates time and resources.
- **Balances pressure and support:** Constantly monitors for and balances pressure and support, openly using this concept with staff as a frame for discussing her actions or staff needs.

Dr. James A. Banks writes on Equity Pedagogy [Multiculturalism’s Five Dimensions, 1998], “By equity pedagogy, I simply mean that teachers change their methods to enable kids from diverse racial groups and both genders to achieve.” Principal Calabrese and the staff of Lakeridge Elementary School provide a strong model for schooling that enables diverse groups of students to achieve. ■



Our quarterly profile of educational leadership in Washington state.

## 2015 Assistant Principal of the Year

# Gail Danner



JEFF SCHMITT

Gail Danner is the 2015 Washington State Assistant Principal of the Year, as awarded by AWSP and the Washington Association of Secondary School Principals (WASSP). She was presented with the award in March. This spring, she will travel to Washington D.C. with

other state honorees to be recognized and participate in the selection of the National Assistant Principal of the Year Award. This October, Gov. Jay Inslee will honor Danner for her state award at the Washington Educators' Conference in Bellevue.

### What made you decide to go into education?

When I was in college and thinking about a career, as most students do, I explored a bit. When I landed in education there were a few things that really called to me and felt right. First in my heart was the opportunity to work with kids. Seeing students growing, trying to puzzle out how to help them reach their potential, being a part of creating a positive experience, finding ways to laugh with them every day, were key factors in choosing education as a career. The second thing that comes to mind is the great people that work in education. People that work in schools are smart, caring, positive and great to work with. They come together for the purpose of building students' futures. The team-building nature and collegiality that is a natural fit for educators really called to me and makes coming to work each day a blessing. Another thing that I have always loved about being a teacher, and now an assistant

principal, is the variety and extent of the experiences and challenges each day. I use every part of my brain and toolkit. There is always something new to surprise me, whether it is a leap in understanding on the part of the students, a new way to build a lesson that a fellow teacher shared, or a new state requirement that our teachers need us to disseminate for them. Also, the cyclical challenges such as staffing, evaluation, getting the year off to a good start — there are multiple opportunities to try new things, and to try to improve. And built into each day of working are frequent opportunities to laugh with students and staff.

“ The biggest challenge facing principals today is the volume of work.”

### What made you pursue administration?

As I got deeper into my teaching career, I began to take on the occasional leadership role, and found that I liked being part of the planning and heading up of the school events and programs. I enjoyed sharing in figuring out how to best serve the people and the goals of our learning community. It seemed natural then

### About the NASSP Assistant Principal of the Year

- The NASSP National Assistant Principal of the Year program recognizes outstanding middle level and high school assistant principals.
- In April, all state winners were honored at the 2015 NASSP Assistant Principal of the Year Symposium, during which they will also visit Capitol Hill to meet with their elected officials.
- To learn more about the award and the application process, visit <https://nasspawards.org/apoy/>.

to pursue administration and carry out that leadership in a more directed way. Although it was hard to leave the classroom for many reasons, I enjoy my current administrative role very much.

“ Although it was hard to leave the classroom for many reasons, I enjoy my current administrative role very much.”

**What’s the best part about being an assistant principal? The most challenging?**

The best part of being an assistant principal is the opportunity to work with everyone — fellow administrators, our office staffers and support people, teachers, paraeducators, students, parents, community members. The most challenging is how to best serve each and all of them to the best of my ability. I love the variety of the challenge — the packed calendar, the to-do list that is never the same, the regular daily tasks to support the smooth running of the school and the annual major events and new initiatives that take weeks of planning and preparation, the excitement of seeing things go well. What keeps me awake at night sometimes is the challenge of figuring out what is best for the short term and long term for our stakeholders and how to best make that happen. Most issues and situations are complex and multilayered, and can sometimes have competing interests. Addressing the issues and gleaning how best to support the organization moving forward in the service of students can be extremely challenging and sometimes requires a great deal of courage.

*Continued on page 48*

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### What are the biggest challenges facing principals today?

The biggest challenge facing principals today is the volume of work. Each day is overflowing with things that are critical to the success of students and staff. The challenge of prioritizing the work and maximizing every opportunity to do it well is ongoing and pervasive. It is extremely challenging and it can be frustrating to find time to think about everything that needs to be done, let alone accomplish it in a way that best supports the learning community. We are committed to maximizing our efforts and using every available moment in the best way we can to serve the learning community.

“ If something needs doing, do it with your whole heart, no matter what it is. Try to say ‘yes’ more than you say ‘no.’ ”

### What do you view as some of the strengths and opportunities of education reform?

The strengths and opportunities of education reform derive from the process of focusing on what is best practice and creating ways to leverage that across each aspect of our role as educators. For example, the TPEP initiative has taken three outstanding frameworks for excellence in teaching and learning, and given us the structure to have meaningful dialogue in support of continued growth as individual educators and as part of a learning community. Additionally, the ongoing redevelopment and enhancement of content and learning standards has been important for as long as schools have existed. With each new generation, preparing them for the challenges of employment and citizenship calls us to constantly

reflect on what students need to learn to be successful in post-secondary life. CCSS and NGSS present us with the current blueprint for student success and provide for us the opportunity to work together around common standards to support students. The challenge is that it takes time to learn and grow with and for the new standards, and my hope is that we stay the course for long enough so that our learning community has the opportunity to reach mastery. The challenge also comes from integrating and developing new ideas, studying current trends, and infusing existing programs that are already serving students and staff.

### What advice would you give to a new assistant principal?

Three things pop quickly to mind: First, people before things; the people who need you are more important than the tasks on the to-do list. Second: Be present in the moment — embrace each task — no job is

too big or too small. If something needs doing, do it with your whole heart, no matter what it is. Try to say “yes” more than you say “no.” And, practically speaking, three: Develop a calendar/note taking/filing system that works for you — don’t be shy about asking lots of people what works for them and trying things out until you find your way that fits you best. There is so much going on, and the information and detail required of us demands a systems approach that works for you, one that you feel comfortable with and can manage.

### What do you do to unwind and step away?

I like to spend time outdoors with friends and family. Mountain biking, hiking, swimming, running and camping all call to me at various times of the year. ■

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# Inspiring Innovation

## IN A SEA OF SAMENESS

**Gary Kipp**

*AWSP Executive Director*

**We find** ourselves in interesting times. Futurists and economists are calling for high school graduates entering the workforce to come with problem-solving creativity and ingenuity — divergent thinkers to tackle the problems we can't yet envision.

Simultaneously, the pressures on those in the education system seem to be encouraging sameness. TPEP requires calibration, so all evaluators think the same. New graduation requirements have been fashioned to make students more the same than different — all college- and career-ready. Every subject must be taught for the same amount of time as all the others.

In an environment of sameness, how do we foster creativity and innovation? The answer may lie in the groups we form.

“ In an environment of sameness, how do we foster creativity and innovation? The answer may lie in the groups we form.

Recently, I had a chance to leaf through the July/August issue of Scientific American's magazine *MIND*. This issue was full of great research on how our minds work. One of the articles, "Creativity is Collective," summarizes research on how groups



actually foster creativity, countering a commonly held notion that creativity is best nurtured in isolated individuals. When reading this I immediately thought of teachers' and principals' Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). I also thought of the proliferation of project-based learning activities that are exciting groups of students across our state.

The authors of this article expand on three fun facts uncovered in their research and their review of others' research. These facts can inform principals as they nurture creative groups in their schools.

First: Groups play an essential role in creativity — not only in generating and shaping novel products themselves but also in ensuring

their appreciation and impact. Teachers in strong PLCs will attest to the importance of bouncing their ideas off the group and the sense of accomplishment when the results are shared in the group.

Second, researchers found that a sense of shared social identity provides the motivation for people to stick to a creative project and see it to completion. Look no further than the Seattle Seahawks, an episode of "Glee," or any activity in your school to see how important a sense of shared identity is to the effort adults and kids put into the group's creative endeavors. This is exactly why t-shirt screen printing is such a booming business.

*Continued on page 50*

And finally, the researchers said that people's perceptions of creativity depend on whether the creator is "one of us" or "one of them." This is obviously connected to the second point. This phenomenon is the reason it is easier to be a high school principal in a district with only one high school, not two. Watch this fact play out in the next presidential election.

These three facts led me to think of questions all principals should ask themselves, including:

- 1) How many groups do I have in my school? I bet the real answer is at least double what you can think of off the top of your head. The school itself is a group that has a social identity and schools are full of smaller groups. What about Mr. Poindexter's second period class? What about DECA? What about the third-grade PLC? The list is longer than you think.
- 2) What am I doing to foster, encourage, and support the teacher and student groups in my school to be creative, solve problems, and innovate? There are multiple criteria (possibly all of them) in the AWSP Framework that are impacted by the answer to this question.

Schools can be awash in sameness, or they can be petri dishes of innovation. Where would you rather spend your time as a student or teacher?

Principals play a central role in fostering creativity at school, whether it's nurturing and supporting student groups or leading teacher leaders of professional learning communities. What can you do to encourage innovation and ensure creativity thrives in your building? ■



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.

# Humor me!

Created by **David Ford**, Principal, Tenino Elementary, Tenino SD. Download these cartoons at [www.awsp.org/cartoons](http://www.awsp.org/cartoons).



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