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Two High School Cultures: One for Males; One for Females

by Gene Bottoms



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A gender gap exists within our high schools. Male students are falling progressively behind relative to their female counterparts. It's a disturbing trend — an expanding crisis — demanding attention from educators, parents and students. It's a tale of two high school cultures, one male and the other female.

Over the past three decades, our general culture has made Herculean strides in lifting the status of women by providing greater career, social and, in particular, educational opportunities. But are we neglecting something — the other half, the male half, of the population?

Statistical evidence verifies this tale of two high schools. In 2002, both African-American and white males had mean reading achievement scores 10 points below female students at *HSTW* schools. Sixty-four percent of male students in *HSTW* schools in 2002 reported planning post-secondary study. That sounds not so bad except when compared with the percentage of female students — 79 percent.

You have to question why this disparity of ambition between male and female students exists. I asked this question of a former high school principal, considered one of the outstanding principals in his state, and as he reflected, he said that for many years we've been very conscientious in trying to close the achievement gap, particularly in mathematics and science, between the young women and the young men. But he said, "As I think back, I cannot remember a single initiative over the past decade where we made a special effort to orient and encourage the young men in a similar way."

Traditionally, male students have outperformed females in mathematics and science; various programs have been implemented to raise the performance levels for female students.

Indeed, at *HSTW* sites, more females than males are taking four years of mathematics — defined as Algebra I and higher. Additionally, females are more likely to take at least three science credits with two credits equating college-preparatory-level science courses.

On an array of literacy indicators, the female high school student has a richer, more challenging and more engaging set of learning experiences than male students. More female students complete college-preparatory honors English courses, and report doing a major research paper once a semester, making an oral presentation monthly, completing weekly writing assignments, revising writing assignments at least monthly and analyzing literature weekly.

Further, more female students than males are required to use literacy skills for learning subject matter content in other classes. Females are more likely to engage in reading and writing in their career/technical classes, doing research and preparing a written plan for projects in career/technical classes, and using word processing to complete assignments. Why do significantly fewer male students report having these literacy experiences in their English classes and across the curriculum? Do we have a high school culture expecting less from male students in quantity and quality of literacy efforts?

The Three “Rs”: Respect, Rules — and Results

Success in persuading male students to embrace the college-preparatory curriculum is possible, as the experience of Ruth Ann Phillips, a retired English teacher from Sussex Technical High School in Delaware, shows.

“Much of my personal success with male students came from simply letting them know from the first day that I respected them, and I expected them to show respect for their classmates and for me. I told them that I knew they were smart and insightful from the comments they made in class, so I wouldn’t accept anything but good work from them.”

“I immediately made my expectations clear. I told them that the class wasn’t going to be easy, but I knew that everyone of them had the ability to do everything I would ask them to do. I also told them that I was hired to make sure they could accomplish challenging tasks, and I was there to help them succeed.”

“I made classroom rules clear to both the students and their parents. Both groups read and signed a document outlining classroom procedures and I assured them that I would follow those rules.”

“Homework was a difficult issue because many of the students thought they could simply pass without doing this work. All English teachers decided that we would count homework as 20 percent of the students’ grade and even more importantly, we would *not accept late homework*. When other teachers began to follow the same policy, we had very few students who did not do assigned work.”

Lower achievement for male students is especially evident in reading and language arts. Without competency in reading and language, all other areas of learning are compromised.

Something is not working for males in the American High School, but there is no direct research on gender and literacy, and not much in the way of support for boys’ literacy. There are literacy programs for adults, for students of English as a second language, for women, and for prison inmates.

What are the factors that make this a tale of two high school cultures? It has always been true that peer pressure is a factor. Ten to 20 percent more female than male students in the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment report it was very important to take college preparatory classes, be accepted by a college or university, be recognized for academic success, graduate from high school, and pursue postsecondary studies.

Male students report having more friends believing getting good grades and graduating from high school is not so important. What is it about current high school culture and how the high school is organized that continues to support this type of peer culture for male students?

Traditionally, young women have a tendency to want to do well and to please. Therefore, they tend to reach out for help in their studies from each other and their parents and teachers. For young men, on the other hand, to ask for help is to telegraph weakness to their peers. Can high schools do anything to reverse this tradition?

There are actions schools can take to increase reaching achievement for males:

- Enroll males in college-preparatory level English courses and provide them with extra help to meet the standards.
- Stress that non-fiction reading *is* reading. Magazines, technical manuals, newspapers, websites, biographies and science books are all acceptable and valuable reading materials.
- Form a male book club. Ask each member to write a book review at least once a month to share with the group; post on the school’s website and in classrooms.
- Find novels of interest to males that support curriculum topics, such as *Raider* by Susan Gates.
- Motivate adults (parents, teachers, media center specialists, booksellers and publishers) to examine the role gender plays in the book choices we give male students.
- Reach males directly with books recommended by other male students.
- Have at least one male author do a book signing at the school.

Why do we continue to fail to create a supportive peer culture for high academic performance among male students? What are the root causes of these differences and what can we do about it? Conventional wisdom says that female students have always put more value on academics than males. But the percentage disparity between males and females points to deeper underlying issues.

In the 2002 survey only 41 percent of the male students said they tried their best at school, compared with 67 percent of the female students. Is there something amiss in how the contemporary high school interacts with young men? In fact, 47 percent of the young women said they are often in classes where teachers use small groups as an instructional strategy versus 33 percent for males.

Show Male Students the Value of Hard Work

There several approaches high schools and teachers can take to persuade their male students that putting forth the effort for hard work is worth it:

- Have male students who are currently taking remedial courses in the local community college visit their former high schools. Have them discuss the courses they wish they had taken in high school and how they would have benefited had they studied harder.
- Have persons from various fields of endeavor return to school and talk with students. Of particular value to male students is having males in established careers come talk to male students about what it takes to succeed in the world of work.

Some male students need to be “shown the money,” i.e. have demonstrated to them that hard work in high school — taking tough courses and working to excel in them — ultimately pays off with a good-paying job.

Help Males Develop Effective Study Habits

Male high school students need assistance in developing good study skills. Among these practices are:

- **Study Teams** — These can be organized by common needs, common assignments or shared classes. Teams can meet regularly during class and can also be encouraged to hold group study sessions outside of class.
- **Daily Check In** — Teachers can regularly check with each of their male students on how the student’s studying process is proceeding. Students answer the question “What’s on the Agenda today?” This daily checking is especially important during the first nine weeks of the ninth grade to help students begin to answer the question on their own and develop independent study habits. It also helps teachers remain aware of study skills that can be emphasized with respect to specific assignments.
- **Agenda/Planners** — Assists teachers in recording all assignments, tracking appointments and recording grades.
- **Oral Presentations** — Having male students present information they have learned to others in class or to an outside audience will encourage them to dig deeper for information. If students can explain a topic clearly to others, then it is truly mastered.

Twenty-one percent more male students are in classrooms with low expectations than are female students. In other words, 51 percent of male students in 2002 were in high schools in which none or only one of the following five high expectation factors were in practice:

- Their teachers often indicate the amount and quality of work necessary to earn a grade of A or B at the beginning of the project or unit;
- Their teachers were frequently available for, during, or after school to help them with their studies;
- They usually spent one or more hours on homework each day;
- they often revise their essays or other written work several times to improve their quality; and
- They often work hard to meet high standards on assignments.

In comparison, only 30 percent of the female students were in such classrooms. It appears that many schools have created a structure that treats male students with acutely low expectations and many faculties do not accept responsibility for raising male student achievement to a higher standard.

This is clearly emphasized by the fact that 27 percent of the female students completed all parts of the *HSTW* recommended curriculum but only 22 percent of the male students completed it.

General Ideas for Improving Male Student Achievement

Healthy Schools, in its publication, *Using the National Healthy School Standard to Raise Boys' Achievement*, summarizes a number of actions schools can take to generally encourage male students to value academic accomplishment and realize success in obtaining it. Among its top recommendations:

- Employ cross-curricular literacy initiatives with regular reviews of their impact.
- Encourage effective teaching practices. These include testing a variety of teaching and learning styles to assess which are most effective.
- Give male students a voice — a means of expressing themselves on how and what they are taught.
- Schools can also put into place specific performance targets on a subject-by-subject and a whole school basis with specific attention paid to gender differences in student performance.
- Schools need to encourage greater family involvement, particularly involvement of male parents and grandparents in school-related activities and homework.
- Male students need to become involved in school activities outside of academics and sports such as student government and clubs.

It is important that every faculty look at this issue to seek out root causes, to reach some conclusions and to initiate a set of actions that will continue to push the young men forward — while also accelerating and changing the outlook and viewpoints of young men. It is imperative that male students see high school achievement as important. It is important that they see taking the most challenging courses as significant to their future. It is important they learn to network collectively and study cooperatively to meet higher standards. It is important that school faculties examine long-standing practices and beliefs and change those resulting in more males being placed in lower-level classes with lower-level expectations.

Tips for Getting Students to Do Their Best on the *HSTW* Assessment

by Karen Anthony

With the 2004 Assessment quickly approaching, many schools will be looking for ways to prepare and motivate students about the importance of the assessment. Getting students to do their best requires creating a culture in which high expectations are present and students realize the importance of giving their best effort. A culture of high expectations supports high achievement and encourages students to do well. A culture of low expectations promotes student apathy and mediocrity.

Every year, some *HSTW* site coordinators worry that their students are not adequately motivated to do their best on the *HSTW* Assessment. However, many schools are successful in administering the *HSTW* Assessment to large numbers of students and motivating them to give their best effort. These schools have adopted the *HSTW* goals as their own and expect all students to do their best. They recognize that the assessment is a key part of their school improvement efforts, and they use similar strategies for getting students to take the assessment seriously.

■ Take a positive approach to the assessment and stress its importance.

When the majority of faculty members believe that the *HSTW* Assessment plays a key part in their school improvement efforts, they relay that message to their students. Billie Smith, Site Coordinator at Choctaw High School in Choctaw, Oklahoma, explains to students that their results make a difference in school policies and programs. She takes a no-nonsense approach to administering the assessment, and tells her students, “I expect you to give 100 percent.” She even shows them a previous assessment report to let them see the outcome of their efforts. The students get her message loud and clear.

Janet Smalley, of Walhalla High School in Walhalla, South Carolina, believes that “If you have a culture of high expectations within your high school, then you set up an environment where any assessment is important and failure is not acceptable.” Walhalla’s administration, faculty and staff members have taken active roles in using assessment data to determine their weaknesses and their strengths. Because they value the assessment, the assistant principals and guidance staff take the lead in administering it. “We want to send the message that if it’s important enough for students to give

us their time and effort, it’s worth giving our time as well,” Smalley said.

■ Inform students about the assessment in advance and get parents involved.

At Talawanda High School, in Oxford, Ohio, assessment coordinators hand-deliver letters to **randomly-selected students** informing them of their “selection” and inviting them to participate in the assessment. Their goal is to make the students feel that it is both an honor and a privilege to participate, and they have a responsibility to do their best.

Some schools involve parents by sending letters to parents of seniors. Others include information and reminders about the assessment in their parent newsletters and on school calendars. Other sites ask students and parents to sign an agreement that the students will participate and the students pledge to give their best effort.

■ Prepare students for open-ended items.

Teachers can also help students practice for the type of questions on the *HSTW* Assessment, which is referenced to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). As many as 40 percent of students do not even attempt to answer some of the open-ended reading questions. In mathematics and science, the percent-

age of omitted responses can be as high as 70 percent on some items. Janet Smalley of Walhalla High School noted that Walhalla’s teachers have made an effort to incorporate more open-ended items on their exams to better prepare students. “We need to make sure they have the strategies they need to succeed,” she explained.

■ Follow the *HSTW* Assessment guidelines and procedures.

HSTW provides guidelines for selecting students and requires all sites to follow these guidelines. When sites test all seniors or use a random sampling process, as explained in the guidelines, they get a more accurate picture of student achievement and instructional and curriculum practices linked to achievement.

■ Organize a quality test-taking environment.

Schools should test over a period of two or three days, preferably in the morning when students are fresh. Students perform best in a quiet and distraction-free setting. Sometimes, special arrangements can be made with local businesses or community colleges to use an off-site location for testing. Removing students from the distractions of the high school setting helps them perform better and makes them feel that it is a privilege and honor to be selected.

■ **Motivate students to do their best on the assessment.**

Talawanda High School holds an academic pep rally, including remarks from school and district officials, explaining the importance of the assessment and thanking students for doing their best. The coordinators provide breakfast before the rally, and entertain students with a speaker/musician who sparks their enthusiasm and promotes positive feelings about their part in the assessment. In 2002, this school had 100 percent full completion of the assessment from all 100 students tested. The students received special recognition in the local newspaper.

Birdville High School in North Richland Hills, Texas, which tested for the first time in 2003, asked a local restaurant to donate breakfast for its students on the days of testing.

■ **Promote the Award of Educational Achievement.**

HSTW gives the Award of Educational Achievement each year to career/technical students who meet the required curriculum goals and meet all three performance goals in reading, mathematics and science. Many schools, such as Taconic High School in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, highlight the *HSTW* Award of Educational Achievement during its Awards Night and present students with a certificate

from SREB. Charlie Anderson, Taconic's *HSTW* site coordinator explains, "The award recognizes our CTE students who might not otherwise be rewarded for their achievements." The award reinforces the message that hard work and persistence pay off for all students, whether they are career- or college-bound after high school.

For more information about the *HSTW* Assessment, please contact Catherine Dunham or Karen Anthony at (404) 875-9211 or visit our Web site at www.sreb.org.

A Different Culture for the Senior Year: Postsecondary Study

If one successful education track is good, two is better — and finishing two simultaneously is better still, as a profile recently published in *The Greenville News* vividly illustrates.

Featured is student Danielle Smith, a true-to-life example of student achievement. Ms. Smith, like many other high school seniors, is looking forward to graduation this year. Unlike other high school seniors, however, she is also looking forward to college graduation — at the same time. According to the *News* story, Ms. Smith will graduate from Greenville Tech Charter High School even as she completes her associate's degree in human services at Greenville Tech, adjacent to the high school. She is extraordinary in another way as well: Ms. Smith is only 16.

"I walk over there and the reaction I get is, 'Ooh, she's really young,' or, 'Why do you wear the same thing every day?' because of my Charter uniform. I'm pretty proud of it... I have lots of friends over there (at the college), and they all support me," she told *The Greenville News*.

While exceptional students unquestionably have the internal drive to achieve, they can't do it without exceptional guidance from parents, teachers and school administrators. This is doubtless true in the case of Ms. Smith, whose principal at Charter is

Fred Crawford, formerly a principal at a *HSTW* site. SREB has long advocated cooperation between high schools and colleges as a means of advancing student achievement — and Ms. Smith's story of success shows it works. Following graduation both at Greenville Tech and at Greenville Tech Charter High School, she plans to complete her bachelor's at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

"It's pretty much my first and only choice right now. I want to get my bachelor's in social work, and I hear they have a really good program. I'll be considered a transfer student... so I won't have to apply as a college freshman," Ms. Smith says.

Like many students who excel, Ms. Smith's accomplishments are not limited to academics. She is student body president at Charter; she also serves as president of the National Honor Society and vice president of the Junior Civitans. Leadership and achievement frequently go hand-in-hand, observes Charter senior English teacher Mary Brantley.

"Her main attribute is that she's so positive; she has such a good influence on others. With her attitude, they follow, and that's very helpful in the classroom." She says.

School Leadership Is about Building a Positive School Culture

by David Hill

Scene 1 **Time: 11:47 a.m.**
Date: March 27
Location: Southwater High School

An old newspaper lies on the floor, an empty soft drink can sits on a coffee table, several teachers sit around a table grading papers and talking, while others sit on a sofa taking a break from the battle. The teacher lounge at Southwater High School is filled with teachers who have third period planning. Conversations today are no different from the conversations yesterday or tomorrow. The characters and names may change, but the words spoken carry the same messages.

One teacher says to no one in particular, “Who does this new principal think she is telling us we have to look at our failure rate. If the kids would come to school, maybe more of them would pass.”

Another adds, “Well, get used to it, every principal we’ve had complains about failure rate. You just have to wait them out. They don’t stay long.”

Still another adds, “Coach came by today and wants me to let Jimmy turn in his paper that was due last week. The team can’t do without Jimmy. If I don’t let him turn it in, I know the assistant principal will be down to see me.”

A fourth teacher jumps in as if on cue, “Yea, I remember four or five years ago a star basketball player who had all the colleges looking at her. She didn’t like me and wasn’t doing well in my class. I passed her to avoid the hassle. I knew that if I didn’t, the administration would be all over me.”

One of the group adds as he moves toward the door, “I’ve got to go. That committee that’s looking at SAT scores is meeting this period. I don’t know how many times we’ve had committees like that and nothing ever happens. Our students just don’t care and aren’t going to do any better.”

Scene 2 **Time: 11:47 a.m.**
Date: March 27
Location: Westwater High School

The faculty workroom at Westwater is crowded as always during third period. Some teachers are pulling books from the shelves of the professional library, others are looking over an article the principal placed in their mail boxes, still others talk quietly as they begin to grade papers and design handouts for lessons. As they engage in conversation, an observer finds it to be very different from the faculty conversation at nearby Southwater. Let’s listen.

“The principal has asked us to take a look at the failure rate in Algebra I again,” one teacher commented. “We’ve implemented all of the proposals from last year’s taskforce and things have improved, but we still have a way to go. I have several ideas to share on how other schools are working to lower failures in Algebra I. I think some of these ideas will work with our kids.”

Another teacher said, “Don’t you have Jimmy in your class? I was talking with his coach who told me Jimmy is beginning to ask questions and seek help in the after-school athlete study hall. We both agreed Jimmy is beginning to realize hard work in class pays off.”

A veteran teacher jumps into the conversation and adds, “I remember several years ago when we first started the study hall for athletes. Once the kids realized we were serious about academics coming first, they really started working hard. We knew they could do it, and they found they could. We saw a dramatic improvement in the SAT scores of athletes and when we started following their progress in college, we found that most of them did well. Many responded on the post-graduation survey that the study habits they learned here at Westwater really made a difference in college.”

Another teacher who had been intently reading called across the room, “This article that was placed in our mailboxes is great. It lays out the pros and cons of homework. I think we’ll have a lively discussion on this at next week’s faculty meeting. I’m on the taskforce that is working on the homework protocol — we’re focusing on how to create really meaningful homework assignments. Our students have had some great ideas.”

These two schools, Southwater and Westwater, are both in the same school district only four miles apart. Their student populations are very similar; they have similar curriculum; and their teachers are hired from the same applicant pool. Yet, the two schools are very different. What takes place each day in the two schools varies greatly and so do the results. One school has much higher achievement, better student and staff attendance, fewer discipline problems, greater parent involvement, and when teacher vacancies occur, many more people want to join this school's staff.

What makes these two schools so different? By conducting several days of classroom observations, talking to students and staff in the halls and listening to what is said, and just as importantly, to what is not said — observers would find that each school has its own unique culture. Not climate, but culture — an invisible, all powerful force that determines what is and is not done in the school. School culture consists of rules — written and unwritten; norms — spoken and unspoken; traditions that dictate how things are done; and expectations for adult and student performance. Nothing is said or done in the school that is not influenced by the culture. It permeates the minute details of everyday life in the school and is deeply seated and difficult to change — it comes from years of doing things “the way things are done here.”

For a long time, we tried to explain schools in terms of climate, but climate connotes cleanliness and safety and not the deeply held beliefs about students, teaching and learning. Culture encompasses climate, but is much larger in scope. School culture is about relationships and expectations and how these are shaped by belief systems.

Listen to the stories in a school. They tell us much about the culture. Scene 2, Westwater High School, has stories about reaching goals, solving challenging problems together, working as a school community, organizational learning and high expectations. Scene 1, Southwater High School, has very different stories — stories about working around the principal, war stories about the failures and foibles of staff and students, and stories about low expectations.

Culture is learned, practiced and communicated in various ways. When acts are repeated over and over again they become rituals and traditions which teach newcomers what is valued by the school. Ceremonies send powerful messages about what and who are important, and symbols quickly remind participants what the school's focus is.

Examples of *healthy* rituals, ceremonies, symbols and traditions:

- a faculty retreat to start each school year helps the faculty focus on goals and plans for the year;
- an academic pep rally at the beginning of the year with freshmen receiving a standing ovation from upperclassmen as they march into the pep rally;
- a welcome from veteran teachers to orient new teachers;
- quality student work displayed around the school; and
- the vision statement and motivational quotations posted in classrooms and hallways.

Examples of *unhealthy* rituals, ceremonies, symbols and traditions:

- seniors hazing freshmen;
- announcements and displays that only honor athletes;
- school leaders who attend only athletic events;
- a “senior skip day” each spring; and
- academic awards going only to the top students.

Positive norms can include:

- sharing information with colleagues;
- helping new teachers;
- encouraging each other to try new classroom practices; and
- linking student achievement data, budget, school improvement plans and professional development.

Negative norms can include:

- letting new teachers learn in the “school of hard knocks” like we did;
- “I’m not sharing this activity. It makes me look good, so I’m keeping it to myself;”
- “I was here when the principal got here, and I’ll still be here when he leaves;” and
- never trusting administrators or those teachers in the “inner circle.”

How do school leaders build a positive culture? The most important role a leader plays is to lead in the creation and maintenance of the school's culture. The school leaders' task is to identify the positive and negative norms in their schools; then, the leaders must foster those norms that are positive. Negative norms are very destructive and make it difficult for schools to improve, so leaders must constantly analyze the culture looking for what needs to be weeded out.

When school leaders focus their work on constantly cultivating the school culture, much like gardeners work constantly to cultivate gardens, schools change and improve. Teacher turnover is reduced, student and staff attendance improves, discipline problems decline, student achievement goes up and the community's satisfaction with the school increases.

Middle Grades Teachers and Principals Hold Different Views

by Catherine Dunham

Data from a survey administered to principals across the middle grades network during 2001 and 2002 illustrate several problems related to school culture that make it much more difficult to effectively lead change. The most prominent culturally-rooted problem identified by school principals is a chronic case of low expectations. SREB has a clear mission for middle grades schools — prepare all students for college-preparatory coursework in high school.

When asked about the obstacles that block their efforts to raise expectations and academic standards for all students, principals rated teacher beliefs that students cannot meet high standards as the most serious problem. Data collected from teachers in these same schools illustrate that the leaders' perceptions are accurate. Almost three out of five teachers surveyed report that fewer than 40 percent of their students will be ready for college-preparatory courses in ninth grade, and only 34 percent believe the most important goal of a middle grades school is to prepare all students to be successful in a college-preparatory high school program of study.

A lack of consensus between principals and teachers regarding the school's mission only enhances a culture of low expectations. While 64 percent of principals report that goals and priorities for their school are clear, only 41 percent of the teachers surveyed agree. Effective leaders build shared ownership for a common vision among all constituents.

Low morale among teachers and students was the second most prominent problem identified by school principals — only about 30 percent of the principals reported that morale among either group is high. When morale is low, effort, energy and commitment drop as well. Perhaps this is why only 18 percent of principals reported that teachers were able to motivate students to learn.

A culture of low expectations and low morale will not improve until teachers believe they have unconditional support from school leaders for raising standards and improving instructional practices. Currently only 32 percent of the teachers reported that principals encourage them to revise lesson plans to teach more rigorous content to all students. In contrast, 57 percent of the principals reported encouraging them to do this. In addition, only 24 percent of teachers report that the principal consults with them before making decisions that affect their teaching.

The willingness to dedicate time to change comes from perceived support for learning goals and a shared sense of purpose. The sharp contrasts in opinion illustrated by data collected from teachers and principals indicate this is not often the case. Principals can work to build this sense of community by sharing the responsibility for leadership and analysis of student data, and providing teachers with the training and resources they need to effectively implement new teaching strategies and content.

Assessing Your School's Culture: Is It Healthy or Unhealthy?

by Deborah Fite

Principals can use a variety of strategies to look for evidence of the presence or absence of a healthy school culture. These strategies include the school walk-through, conversations with students and faculty, classroom observations and observations at faculty meetings. By applying such strategies to the following six indicators of a healthy school culture, the principal will not only know about the “health” of the school, but will have some clues about what to do if the culture is not what it ought to be. For each of these indicators, here are some things to look for.

One indicator of a healthy school culture is the habit of celebrating success. In a school with a healthy culture, classroom bulletin boards contain positive messages complimenting students for working hard or achieving a difficult goal. In a school with an unhealthy culture, these bulletin boards contain uninspired typed announcements, an outdated calendar or possibly nothing at all. At school-wide and grade-level assemblies, students hear positive messages about their ability to reach high goals while in schools with unhealthy cultures they routinely are subjected to lectures about problems.

Schools with a healthy culture have a sense of shared purpose. In these schools teachers are able to articulate the goals in the school improvement plan. Conversations with students reveal that they know and can describe what is expected of them to produce high-quality work. Everyone on the staff knows the mission of the school and accepts it as valid and worthwhile. In a school with an unhealthy culture, teachers and students are unable to explain the goals of the school. Here there is no consensus among teachers on what constitutes quality work, and students are unaware of what it takes to earn an “A” or a “B” in their courses.

Schools with healthy cultures have group norms of continuous improvement. That is to say, teachers in departments and teams work to achieve instructional goals and are not satisfied until the goals are met. They track progress toward reaching the goals with formal and informal discussions of student progress. In schools with unhealthy cultures, teachers focus on getting through the day instead of reaching a goal connected to student achievement. They have almost no knowledge about the effectiveness of their instructional methods because there is little

collegial discussion about or evaluation of student progress.

In a healthy school culture everyone at the school shares responsibility for student learning. Classroom observations in a school with a healthy culture will reveal constant interaction between teachers and students as they work. There are numerous instances of students asking for and receiving assistance. In addition, teachers offer assistance without having to be asked because they know their students and can anticipate their needs. Paraprofessionals are seen working with students on tasks directed by the classroom teacher. School principals protect instructional time by keeping classroom interruptions to a minimum. In schools with unhealthy cultures the principal will frequently see teachers sitting at their desks while students work independently. Conversations with students will reveal that when they need help, they do not know how to get it. Paraprofessionals are behind the scenes doing clerical tasks for teachers. There are numerous interruptions via the intercom for tasks that could be handled in a less intrusive way.

Schools with healthy cultures exhibit collaborative relationships on educational issues. As teachers interact with each other between classes and in team or departmental meetings, they are comfortable with each other and their conversations tend to be about teaching and learning. The tone of their conversations is pleasant and positive. They are able to disagree on educational issues in a professional manner and often achieve consensus on issues that matter most for their students. At faculty meetings they appear relaxed and participate in the decision-making process whenever possible. Schools with unhealthy cultures exhibit relationships that are tense and strained. Teachers complain about issues, such as student misbehavior or lack of effort, but show little interest in learning how to address them. They may form factions based on who wants an issue addressed in a particular way. At faculty meetings the teachers sit in cliques or “keep a low profile” and do not participate in decision-making even when asked to do so.

Schools with healthy cultures focus on professional development and sharing strategies. Teachers frequently share ideas, resources and strategies with each other and are eager to help their colleagues succeed. There is evidence of interest in exploring new, not yet proven techniques and a willingness to take risks on behalf of students. Most teach-

ers view professional development activities as a tool for continuous growth and take an active role in planning and participating in it. In a school with an unhealthy culture teachers appear disinterested in learning new strategies. Most view professional development activities as a chore to be endured and make no effort to learn from them. Teachers tend to stay in their classrooms unless compelled to participate in team or department meetings.

If, after assessing your school's culture, you find that it is less than desirable, here are some things you can do:

■ **First, decide which practice has the greatest potential to improve your school's culture.** Is it the lack of a shared purpose? Is it the lack of shared responsibility for student learning? Whatever it is, this will be the focus of your efforts to improve your school's culture.

■ **Second, compile strategies addressing the issue with your faculty.** For example, to achieve a greater sense of shared purpose, spend time at faculty meetings discussing the mission of the school and the goals in the school improvement plan. Ask selected teachers to describe how they address these goals in their classrooms and make them meaningful for students. If no one on the staff is currently addressing the goals, ask them to think of ways to address them in their classrooms.

■ **Third, focus your professional development activities on a few high-priority strategies that will have a positive effect on your school's culture.** By focusing on a few things you want everyone to believe in, to act on and work toward, there will be no question in people's minds what they are to do.¹

Establishing a Peer Observation Protocol

by Gay Burden

Hitchcock High School in Texas is in its second year of Comprehensive School Reform efforts based on the *High Schools That Work (HSTW)* initiative. The superintendent, school board and principal made a huge district investment by sending a team of nine, including principal Eric Mitchell, to the *HSTW* national workshop *Meeting the Challenge of Quality Teaching*. This team spent the entire time focusing on one instructional strategy in order to become "demonstration classroom" teachers.

Next, the team focused efforts on establishing a peer observation protocol. Using the "Facilitator's Guide to Looking at Teaching and Learning through Peer Observation," developed by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the faculty spent an entire day of staff development establishing a Peer Observation Protocol. They reviewed the value of peer observations — teachers are more committed; teachers are more effective; students make greater academic gains; schools are stronger academically; and schools show academic results more quickly. Following a day of discussion, sharing and consensus building, the protocol that gives peer observations structure was completed — the guidelines, peer observation process and follow-up steps were established with teacher input. This semester, each teacher is expected to observe three peers, initiated by demonstration classroom teachers, using the protocol developed for the school.

During the staff development training, teachers voiced their concerns about moving from isolation to a professional learning community and time constraints were a concern of many. The principal has expectations that each teacher will give up one planning period per month to observe another teacher with the principal covering a class here and there as necessary.

The peer observation protocol established by the faculty at Hitchcock High School is an example of changing the school culture. We take our hats off to Hitchcock High School as it celebrates small steps to develop a school culture that inspires educators to learn and grow, take risks and develop a professional learning community.

¹ These ideas are based on the work of Terrance Deal and Kent Peterson from their book titled *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999.

Making the First Day Count

We're all familiar with the scene from the classic Western: the sheriff rides down the dusty main street and declares "I'm going to clean up this town."

In this case, the role of sheriff was played by Deborah H. Williams and the wild frontier town by Annapolis High School in Maryland, an institution with a long history of discipline issues.

A former *High Schools That Work* School Improvement Consultant, Ms. Williams wasted no time in establishing a new, positive school culture at Annapolis High as its new principal.

High noon arrived at 7:17 a.m. on Aug. 27 — first day of the new term.

Teachers noted the change at once by what they didn't see on the first day of this school year — students wondering through the building.

"You know where you're going?" asked Ms. Williams of several students found loitering in a hallway. The students responded in the affirmative and were quickly sent on their way, but not before a friendly admonition. "OK. Next time, be timely," the new principal told the group.

"This is totally different for us," remarked Spanish teacher Lynn Kolarik. "I think the word is out that discipline is going to be much tighter."

The students got the message — if somewhat reluctantly — that a new school culture based on discipline and learning had been established. Annapolis junior Greg Hintz certainly noted the shift in the wind at his school on opening day.

"It was kind of boring today," he told *The Baltimore Sun*. "We were all learning things the first day. Before, it was just coming and getting books and stuff," said Hintz.

New rules — strictly enforced — were in evidence as Ms. Williams walked the halls, ensuring everyone was in his or her place and ready to learn. Students inappropriately dressed or found where they didn't belong were quickly set straight.

The new principal's no-nonsense but constructive practices earned the principal high marks. District Superintendent Eric J. Smith told the *Sun* Ms. Williams would be a strong leader, noting the importance laying the down the law early.

"You really establish yourself in the first 30 minutes of the school," he said.

The first day of the new order at Annapolis High ended with Ms. Williams wishing her students a pleasant rest of the day — and a warning.

"Those of you observed sleeping in class today, be reminded that this is not tolerated behavior. Have a great day. We'll see you tomorrow. On time."

A Culture Of Success: It's The "Principal" Of The Thing

by Dexter Mills

Simply put — culture is “how we do things around here.” If an organizational culture is not healthy, it can destroy good ideas and leaders. Conversely, if it is healthy, it can actually thrive in the face of real adversity and develop even better leaders and ideas.

Schools have a definable culture that can be healthy or unhealthy. Some educators who have been in the profession for many years say that they can walk into a building and “feel” the culture. What does that really mean? Do they mean the school is or isn't inviting? Do they mean the office staff is or isn't friendly? Do they “feel” that the teachers and students are happy or unhappy? Could it mean that they sense the quality of the academic culture by merely walking into a building? Whatever it means, one thing is certain — effective schools are keenly aware of their culture — a culture where hard work is expected and celebrated.

For example, when was the last time you had an academic pep rally? Have you ever taken out a full-page newspaper advertisement emphasizing the academic success stories of your students? What about leading a monthly “professional conversations with the principal” or having a discussion with teachers where ONLY academic topics are discussed? How about “pizza with the principal” where students are randomly chosen to have lunch with the principal and discuss the who, what, where, when and how of academic challenges within the school?

The principal plays a major role in school culture. As a matter of fact, like it or not, whatever culture exists in a school is a direct reflection of the principal's belief system. The principal is either satisfied with the culture or “actively” working to change it.

How could one go about the task of determining a school culture and what are some questions to ask? The questions below are a starting point for an analysis and transformation of your school's culture.¹

Questions for Reading and Assessing a School Culture

- Do we, as a school, celebrate our academic successes? If so, how?
- How would we describe our school to a friend or colleague in terms of academic achievement?
- Do we, as a faculty, communicate a quality standard that all students must meet before their work is accepted?
- How would our teachers complete this — “I believe my job as a teacher is to...”? What would their answers be?
- Are there rituals and/or ceremonies where we honor student achievement? If so, are we satisfied that the recognition level is appropriate?
- What symbols are prominently displayed in our building that recognize and/or encourage academic achievement?

Suggestions for Transforming a School Culture

- Design rituals, traditions and ceremonies that celebrate successes of students, teachers and the school multiple times and for multiple audiences during the school year. Keep in mind that some current rituals, traditions and ceremonies may need a formal “grave-side service.”
- “Inspect what you expect” on a regular basis and provide feedback to all parties who “have a need to know.” No one would go bowling if a sheet was draped across the lane and the bowler could not see what pins had been knocked down or which ones were not. Where would you aim the next bowling ball?
- Resurrect the positive history of the school and tell the stories associated with it. As an annual event begin storytelling by faculty members and be sure the stories include the “trials and tribulations” associated with student and teacher successes.
- Adopt or develop a slogan, phrase, song or poem which is easily memorized that portrays the “positive and the possible” as it relates to the school's new culture.
- “Walk the walk as you talk the talk.” The principal's behavior, verbally and non-verbally, sets the tone for school culture. Every interaction is a message to the many stakeholders.

¹ Many of the ideas expressed in this article come from the work of Terrance Deal and Kent Peterson. Both books — referenced below — are must reads for leaders serious about shaping a school's culture.

Deal, Terrance and Peterson, Kent. *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999; and Deal, Terrance and Peterson, Kent. *The Shaping School Culture Fieldbook*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2002.

Recognizing Students' Efforts Can Contribute To a Positive School Culture

by Gary Keller

Base recognition on a genuine effort to do quality work, whether it is in the form of a scholarly project, craftsmanship in a career/technical course, the performing arts or service to your school. School principals can write a formal letter to those who have excelled at the highest levels. Abraham Lincoln stated, "Everybody likes a compliment." Take the time to tell someone they are working hard and doing a terrific job.

The long-time movie mogul, Samuel Goldwyn stated, "When someone does something good, applaud! You'll make two people happy." There is nothing that feels better than to be recognized for hard work and effort. For school professionals, there is nothing more important than to recognize those students who have excelled. All too often the only communication students or parents receive from schools is negative. Be assured that if a positive note goes home, it will be filed immediately on the refrigerator!

How can schools recognize students? Which efforts should be recognized and who would be responsible to manage the recognitions? There is an old saying, "Happy people are productive people." Most educators will agree that a common student trait is the craving to be appreciated by others. In positive school cultures, educators recognize those who display effort toward excellence.

What is your school mascot — a wildcat? A tiger? Do you use something like a wildcat paw or tiger paw as a symbol for your school? A quick and easy way to recognize students, parents, staff members and community supporters is by sending a postcard. A few seconds is all it takes to fill out this simple, pre-printed card for immediate recognition for excellence.

When parents volunteer for school service, recognize them with a postcard. When your local pizza maker donates free pizzas for student celebrations, recognize them with a postcard of thanks. If the history teacher had an extraordinary lesson this morning, send a postcard of congratulations. The ability to recognize good things in schools can easily be accomplished by printing a large supply of postcards each year, giving them to teachers to recognize students and the rest for the administrative team and others who may want them.

When recognition is not immediate, unlike in the postcard shown, an organized structure is the best way to be consistent with all students and recipients of recognition. Schools need to find ways to recognize students who may not be the brightest or the best athletes. Following is a list of areas in which a school may recognize an individual(s), the award of recognition and who might recognize the individual.

A Big Pat on the Back!

Dear Rick,

Your senior project showed comprehensive preparation, planning and execution. You clearly took the time and devoted the effort required to produce a superior, quality piece.

Congratulation and keep up the good effort!

Mr. Smith

School Recognition Program		
Recognition For	How Recognized	Recognized By
Success Students: A-B-Cs with no discipline referrals	Success Discount Card for reduced movie tickets, food or videos	Parents, parent organization and the businesses sponsoring card
All As	School spirit T-shirt or early release one day	Teachers, administrators, class officers and parents
A/B Honor Roll	Free video rental, pizza or burger	Teachers, administrators, class officers and parents
Best Class Project	Class prize and whole school display and school newsletter article	Individual class teacher
Up Two (one class up two grades or two classes up one grade)	Free burgers and fries, free bowling, skating, etc.	Administration, parents and teachers
Perfect Attendance	One Friday early release from school	Administration and parents
Perfect Discipline	Letter of distinction	Administration
Department Student of the Month	Free lunch away from school	Teacher of the student's choice and joined by the lunch bunch
Local, regional state winners in academic or career and technical education areas	Monthly recognition in newsletters and public announcements at school	Individual academic or career/technical instructor and administrator
Co-curricular clubs with local, regional or state-recognized students	School newsletter articles and public announcements at school	Administration and club sponsor
Team GPA of the season	Banner in the halls or cafeteria with all team members' names	Athletic director, coach and administration
Scholar Athlete	Certificate and possible certificate for All-State and all-American	Athletic director, administration and coach
Clubs/Activity Scholars	Certificate and possible state and national recognition	Activity director and administration
Performing Arts Scholars	Certificate, state and national recognition where appropriate	Activity director and administration
Teacher of the Month	Gift certificate for teacher and family for local dining	Administration
Parent Volunteers	Coffee and dessert gathering	Administration and secretarial staff
Parent Volunteer of the Month/Year	Gift certificate for individual and family local dining	Administration
Community Partner of the Month/Year	Season passes to activities of the school	Administration

The organization of such a program depends on extra help from those external to the school, parents and the business community. Teachers and administrators can call on parent organizations to help solicit the prizes to help manage the program and award them to those who have excelled. The Josten Renaissance program, sponsored by Jostens Company, is an example of an

effort promoting excellence in schools from elementary to high school. More information can be found on its Web site. Each school can design its own program and use the grading period, month, semester or any designated period of time for rewards. Some awards may be for the year while others are for shorter periods of time.

One Urban Principal's Approach to Creating a Positive School Culture

by Linda Dove

Ten years ago when William Shepherd became principal of Southside High School, his assignment was to unite the students, parents and teachers. He smiles when he remembers how successfully and quickly he completed the task. By the end of the first year, parents, students and teachers were united with a common goal — to get rid of him. The summer after his first year, Shepherd took 20 teachers to the *High Schools That Work* annual staff development conference in Nashville. As Shepherd tells it, that was the beginning of a new era at Southside High School. Upon returning to Southside, this group was a team eager to share what they had learned with the rest of the faculty.

Building a positive school culture is a difficult yet essential step in creating a process for higher student achievement. We all know that a positive link exists between school culture and student achievement. Upon his appointment in 1992, Shepherd was determined to develop a school culture centered on advancing student achievement. The school's motto, "Communication, Cooperation and Collaboration Leading to High Standards of Excellence," reflects the key features of the school culture that now exists at Southside High School.

Shepherd emphasized the following:

First, administrators and teachers must share a common purpose and value continuous improvement.

He believes that teachers must have a voice in those decisions that affect them, and they must have a commitment to what they are being asked to do. This means setting aside time to listen to teachers and heeding their advice. He admits there are times "you have to listen to things you don't want to hear; however, I wanted teachers to know that if they had an idea and it's good for kids, I'm all for it." Teachers appreciated the autonomy that Shepherd provided. One teacher commented, "He allows you to be creative." Another said, "He provides you with the autonomy to try new things. He wants you to learn, but he knows you are human and will make mistakes. He knows that we learn through our mistakes."

Second, teachers and administrators must accept responsibility for student achievement. Shepherd constantly reinforced the belief that students are the school's first customer. Teachers readily tell a visitor to the school that students are the number one focus at Southside. Shepherd kept this belief at the forefront. At every opportunity, he reminded teachers that "the parents have sent us the best they have. Now it is up to us to make them want to learn." Every decision was based on what was best for the students.

Third, Shepherd believes that a caring relationship is essential to creating a culture of higher achievement.

He had a personal goal to make contact with 200 students every day. On the morning of the first Georgia High School Graduation Test, he shook the hand of every student as they prepared to take the test. Every two weeks, he had lunch with 20 randomly selected students in his conference room. **During this time he listened to students' requests, complaints and concerns about their classes, school policies and practices, and their lives in general.** He made students' concerns, complaints and ideas for getting students to achieve at a higher level topics for discussion at monthly faculty meetings. Shepherd also wrote personal notes to students congratulating them on their achievement, recognizing progress or providing encouraging words. He modeled what he expected from his teachers by communicating the beliefs and values about what really counts in a school.

A school culture is a culmination of all the daily interactions that occur at a school. Principals play a key role in shaping the values communicated through these interactions. To create a positive school culture, principals must work toward creating a learning community with a shared purpose and common values that accepts responsibility for student achievement and that builds a caring relationship of respect among administrators, faculty and students.

From 1993 to 2003 William Shepherd was principal at Southside Comprehensive High School, Atlanta, Georgia. He is now a part-time school improvement consultant at several HSTW sites and assists principals in creating a positive school culture to advance student achievement.

How School Culture Impacts Implementation of the *HSTW* Design

by Susan Henson

H*STW* is based on the belief that getting students to work harder will increase achievement when combined with a culture of high expectations. This happens when teachers believe that preparing students with the academic knowledge and skills needed to enter college without taking remedial courses or enter and advance in the workplace is the primary goal of their school.

HSTW provides a framework of goals, practices and conditions for accelerating learning and setting higher standards. It recommends actions to schools as they work to improve curriculum and instruction. The *HSTW* comprehensive design framework is made up of four essential elements:

- **Establishing a curriculum structure of rigorous courses** Enroll all students in the right courses and set the goal to have at least 85 percent of students complete the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum including an upgraded academic core and either an academic or career concentration.
- **Creating a school culture that accepts responsibility for student achievement and provides personal support** Set high expectations for teachers, students and the school. Expect students to work hard both inside and outside of class. Expect teachers to teach from bell to bell, be prepared with assignments and assessments benchmarked to at least the Basic and Proficient levels, and provide extra help to students to help them meet higher standards.
- **Promoting a school culture that prides itself in providing quality, engaging and relevant instruction** Make literacy and numeracy an emphasis across the curriculum. Give challenging assignments and use research-based instructional strategies that engage and motivate students to learn at high levels.
- **Providing leadership that advances a culture of continuous improvement** Create and support an organizational structure that allows teachers to plan together, delivers staff development including follow-up and builds leadership teams made up of teachers who are empowered to make decisions.

What does a school look like that has fully implemented the *HSTW* design?

- Goals and priorities are clear and focused around a culture of continuous improvement.
- The principal is an instructional leader who engages the teachers in using data to make decisions that support student achievement.
- Time is structured so teachers can collaborate and plan integrated units, conduct peer observations/feedback and participate in study groups.
- The school emphasizes that effort is the basis for students “getting smart.”
- At least 85 percent of students complete the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum.
- Throughout high school each student has an assigned adult mentor who cares about them and supports them in achieving their goals.
- Counselors, teachers, parents and students are partners in the guidance process.
- Extra help is readily available and required for those not meeting standards.
- A catch-up system is in place for students coming into the ninth grade who are performing below the Basic level in reading and mathematics.
- Seniors are not allowed to “coast” — they are expected to take a high-level mathematics course and complete a senior project for graduation.
- Students receive intensive literacy and numeracy experiences across the curriculum.
- Students are actively engaged in relevant learning assignments.
- Rigorous academic courses are taught to the same high standards for all students.
- Rigorous career/technical courses are taught to industry standards.
- Students participate in high-quality, structured work-site learning experiences.

Using Small Learning Communities to Create a Culture of Higher Expectations

by Heather Boggs

Small learning communities — “schools within schools” — such as career academies or ninth-grade academies, offer large high schools unique opportunities to create a culture of higher expectations that support increases in student achievement. Well-developed small learning communities of 250-300 students can promote better attendance, provide students with a sense of belonging and reduce the number of dropouts.

Effective small learning communities can create a sense of personalization, build a collective responsibility among teachers for increased student achievement, set higher expectations for quality student work, and reward and celebrate achievement. Some practical suggestions for creating a culture of higher expectations through small learning communities are:

Personalization The small learning community is a “place” in the school where students and their families are known by a team of teachers, including an adviser. This can be accomplished by:

- Welcoming students into the community, providing a thorough orientation, designing activities around the theme of the community (e.g., learning about a career area or succeeding in ninth grade), and planning celebrations of student achievement.
- Assigning 10-15 students per teacher/adviser and establishing a regular time for teachers to meet with advisees for planned advisory experiences — setting goals, planning a course of study to achieve goals, and developing high school study skills and postsecondary options.
- Creating a system for making regular contacts with parents and families by telephone every few weeks, through quarterly celebrations and reviews of student work, and in annual individual conferences.

A collective responsibility for student achievement

Small learning communities are led by teams of teachers accountable for student success. Their work is accomplished by:

- Training the team to learn how to work together to set goals and resolve conflicts.
- Establishing regular times for the team to meet using agendas and meeting summaries.
- Evaluating student data regarding attendance, failure rates and behavior referrals regularly, and modifying action plans accordingly.
- Connecting students to extra-help sessions and contacting parents to ensure student participation.

High expectations and quality work Teachers work together to set standards for quality work and identify common expectations by:

- Setting literacy goals that support students reading 20-25 books per year across all subjects, writing at least one paper in all classes weekly, and completing a research project in all classes annually.
- Developing interdisciplinary curriculum activities to help students see the relevance of their studies.
- Developing and consistently enforcing common expectations for student behavior.
- Establishing standards for quality work, such as criteria for high-quality written reports, reviewing student work on a regular basis and discussing ways to support them in improving their work.

Rewards and celebrations Small learning community can create a sense of excitement around student success by:

- Setting standards and providing a variety of awards for students related to attendance, grades and good behavior for every student meeting that standard.
- Inviting parents into classrooms to view and interact with student work in the late afternoon or evening.
- Rewarding “pairs” of students who successfully mentor other students to meet high standards for grades, attendance and good behavior.

Effective small learning communities can create a sense of personalization, build a collective responsibility among teachers for increased student achievement, set higher expectations for quality student work, and reward and celebrate achievement.

Motivating Teachers is about Effective School Leadership

by Karen Faircloth

When school leaders ask themselves how to better motivate and gain the full cooperation of their teaching staff, they must look within. The traditional leadership model is one of isolation. Teachers did their thing — they went into classrooms and taught their content, and little or no meaningful interaction between teacher and principal existed until a brief end-of-year evaluation conference. The collaborative leadership model is characterized by shared responsibility and frequent, constructive interaction between school leaders and staff members. The question becomes, for the principal-leader, not *how do I motivate staff*, but, *what can I do to help create a culture in which staff can be successful?*

Half of all new teachers will leave the profession during the first five years. Attrition rates in high-demand teaching fields (special education, mathematics and science) are as high as 20 percent after just the first year. The problem is not *getting* teachers, it is learning how to develop a culture that makes them *want* to stay in their present school or district, continue with professional growth and remain in the profession.

How can principals nurture and provide continuing professional development for teachers that will lead new teachers to become great teachers?

Facilitate teachers working together.

Teachers who are able to work with other teachers are more effective with facilitating cooperative work among students, more willing to serve as peer-mentors or coaches, and show more personal investment in the overall success of school initiatives. Principals can create organizational structures that promote a higher degree of trust among peers and an enhanced sense of school-wide camaraderie.

Establish and define a climate of high expectations.

Principals can accomplish this in a number of ways. For instance, if one of the school's *non-negotiables* is that all students will be treated with dignity and respect, and the principal is seen calmly and respectfully speaking to an unruly student, he or she is modeling *the expectation or the standard*. Principals who set the tone for faculty meetings, making them information-rich and focused on instructional issues, are modeling high expectations. When leaders develop a personal professional growth plan, make it public and ask that teachers do the same, they are modeling a high level of expectation.

Provide frequent and meaningful feedback for teachers.

It is imperative that leaders see the strong connection between providing positive feedback and teacher motivation and performance. Principals with an *open-door* policy encourage teachers to drop by to discuss issues or concerns and communicate a genuine interest in the teachers' work. Those who schedule summer, mid-year and end-of-year individual conferences with teachers further convey interest in each professional's needs.

Finally, allowing professional choice for teachers as they carry out their duties and responsibilities.

This is another key element of motivation. Multiple studies present evidence that by providing choice, principals can increase the staff's level of motivation and its job performance. Further, studies indicate that teachers who are provided choices are more likely to allow their students similar choices in the classroom. It is important to focus issues of choice on standards-based instruction.

Teacher Recognition Positively Affects School Culture

by Steve Smith

In *1001 Ways to Reward Employees*, Bob Nelson describes a memorable experience of Peggy Noonan, former President Reagan’s speechwriter. Ms. Noonan had been writing for the President for four months, but had not met him. One day, she discovered the President had written “very good” on one of her speech drafts.

“First she stared at it. Then she took a pair of scissors and cut it off and taped it to her blouse, like a second-grader with a star. All day, people noticed it and looked at her and she beamed back at them.”

Nelson describes personal notes like Peggy Noonan’s and personal congratulations from one’s supervisor as the top motivational techniques. Employees, however, tend to report that their supervisors use these forms of appreciation infrequently. As in business and industry, when school administrators recognize the hard work of teachers, individual motivation increases, as well as “heightening the feeling of being on a winning team.”¹

Schools, like other organizations, routinely overlook celebrating important achievements. Successful school cultures find ways — both simple and more complex — to recognize members’ achievements. School leaders can begin transforming a negative school culture by supporting positive cultural elements and staff through actively celebrating the positive and the possible.

Two of the norms for a healthy school are grounded in staff praise — appreciation and recognition, and caring celebration and humor.² **The following represent ways principals and schools can recognize and celebrate teachers, teacher teams and/or the faculty, at little or no expense:**

- Send notes of thanks and appreciation for a job well done, even if only a sentence.
- Make available “You Done Good Award” note cards that faculty and staff can send to each other.
- Have each senior send a letter of thanks and appreciation to a particularly effective teacher.
- At meetings of parents, ask them to describe teachers who were particularly conscientious about helping students be successful. A few times each year, publish excerpts of these parent tributes.
- Reserve a part of each faculty meeting for recognition and praise of jobs well done in instruction, extracurricular activities, special programs, etc.
- Provide after-school celebrations with plenty of food when the school makes achievement gains (test scores, dropout rate, attendance, etc.). After the staff has emerged from a particularly difficult period, some schools hold “desserts” parties — “stressed” spelled backwards.³
- Administrators cook breakfast for the faculty and staff before school.
- An administrator serves as the substitute for a teacher’s difficult class or duty.
- Provide opportunities for feedback and discussion while promoting a team atmosphere with frequent, short, unscheduled administrative walk-through classroom observations.
- Give small awards or recognition to a teacher who tries a new instructional strategy — whether it succeeds or fails.
- Give “Golden Broom Award Cards” to teachers seen picking up trash. After collecting 10 cards, custodians give the teacher a small prize.
- Provide compensation time for teachers who contribute extra time and effort.
- Send thank-you notes to spouses for staff members’ hard work.
- Send each staff member a birthday card with personal note.
- Have a “Teacher of the Month” program that can include letting the current recipient decide the next deserving recipient and presenting to that person the “traveling teacher of the month” trophy.

¹ Deal, Terrance and Peterson, Kent. *Shaping School Culture: The Heart of Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999.

² *The One Minute Manager*. Berkley Publishing Group, 1983.

³ Connors, Neila A. *If You Don’t Feed the Teachers, They Eat the Students: Guide to Success for Administrators and Teachers*. Incentive Publications, 2000.

Recognizing Classrooms with a Positive Culture of Learning

by Betty Harbin

Each individual classroom is a microcosm of the school, and as you open the door, there is an instant message about its culture. A positive classroom culture shouts that this class is about the business of learning.

More than 60 percent of the teachers reporting in our recent teacher survey believe that the success or failure of a student in their classroom is “beyond their control.”¹ To create a positive culture, teachers must believe and communicate that all students can learn. Classrooms with positive learning cultures display evidence of:

High Expectations Students’ “best” work on display sends a message of what quality work looks like. The teacher establishes expectations for assignments “up front” and students redo, revise and improve the quality of their work to meet those expectations. Students believe that “it’s cool to do well on assignments and tests” and know that working hard to meet standards is expected.

Standards-based Instruction Goals and activities that are age- and grade-appropriate and aligned with state and national standards provide accountability and confidence in the lessons. Chalkboards listing standards and daily activities communicate the priorities of the instruction while stressing student outcomes.

Literacy experiences Easily accessible classroom bookshelves filled with current, attractive, content-based materials encourage students to read, write, think and speak the language of the subject. Quality teachers communicate fluently using content-based vocabulary and express and encourage interest and enthusiasm in the subject matter. Student writing — evident throughout the room — demonstrates a literacy-based curriculum.

Classroom management Prominently displayed rules and procedures communicate the importance of focusing on instruction and reducing distractions. The teachers’ respect for students’ ideas as worthy of discussion conveys an attitude of acceptance and alleviates counter-productive actions or feelings. Eighth-graders who report school rules are rarely defined have a mean score in reading of 139 compared to 160 for students who reported rules are often defined.²

Room arrangement The arrangement of tables or desks can encourage proximity teaching, accessibility to students and a variety of instructional strategies. When working with individual students, small or large groups, the room arrangement can signal that participation is expected. Materials such as computers, maps, electronic circuitry, aquaria or even an iguana or a hamster can encourage student engagement.

Motivating students Many teachers understand that it is hard to want to work on something “you are not good at,” but encouragement and modeling by others can lead to motivation. A variety of activities addressing the different learning styles of students provide multiple opportunities for success and enable students to believe they have the ability to succeed and that failure is not an option. Posting schedules for extra help and giving students extra time are ways to address different learning abilities and styles.

Parents as partners Frequent communications to parents in a variety of ways about the positive and the negative develop their connection to the purpose of the school. For example, telephone logs listing more positive contacts than negative ones demonstrate a way to build confident relationships with parents.

A principal said, “You can determine the culture of a school as soon as you enter the front lobby.” The same comment applies to individual classrooms. Some are safe and productive — some are friendly — and some are “in-between.” Through careful observation of the physical classroom, the actions of teachers and students and the expectations for learning, a well-defined sense of the culture is discovered.

¹ *Making Schools Work Middle Grades Assessment Report: Reading, Mathematics and Science*, Southern Regional Education Board, 2002.

² *Ibid.*

The Senior Year: Creating a Culture That Makes It Count

by Caro Feagin

With apologies to Shakespeare and Hamlet, “*there is something rotten in the state of the senior year.*” In too many schools there is a prevailing view by students, local boards of education, administrators, teachers and parents that students are “owed” a year that is fun, weak in core content, free from exams and short in daily hours. Many students put more effort into low-skilled, part-time jobs for spending money than into their ongoing education. For many American students, the senior year is a time to “let up” on studying and to “coast.” This is not true in any other industrialized culture.

If we are to see increases in student achievement, the senior year must be a time for students to get fully prepared for the next step after high school — further study or work. For those already well prepared, it should be a time to invest in articulated programs between the high school and postsecondary institutions. The senior year is too costly in terms of valuable time. It is not a time to squander resources.

National and SREB data show that about half of our seniors are not taking challenging courses. For example, in the *High Schools That Work* 2002 assessment, only 36 percent of the students assessed completed four credits in college-preparatory mathematics — Algebra I and higher. Their mean score was 312 compared to 288 (below Basic) for the other 64 percent. In the same assessment, 34 percent of the seniors completed four credits in college-preparatory English/language arts. Their mean score was 288, 16 points above students who did not. Students who took three years of science with at least two at the college-preparatory level has a mean score of 299 compared to 277 for students who did not.

In the 2002 *HSTW* assessment data¹, the proficiency levels were as follows:

The percentages scoring at or above the Proficient level are small, especially in mathematics (13 percent) and science (16 percent); however, the latest figures from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that only 16 percent of seniors across the nation scored at

or above the Proficient level in mathematics and only 18 percent did so in science. These percentages point out a severe problem in all schools. We are a long way from the national standard of Proficient. Based on these data, there are some obvious questions:

Why would any educator or parent not recognize the compelling need for a challenging senior year aimed at preparing students for their next step? Students who cannot score at or above the Basic level have extremely limited opportunities. Numerous studies show that “the more you learn, the more you earn.” Students who are below Basic in reading, mathematics and science are barred from advancing in postsecondary education and in good jobs.

If 55 percent of our students are scoring below Basic in science, shouldn't they be taking science in the senior year? Science and technology are cornerstones of today's world. Simply and perhaps harshly put, more than 50 percent of our students are scientifically illiterate — scoring below the Basic level.

If 45 percent of our students are scoring below Basic in mathematics, shouldn't they be taking mathematics in the senior year? Mathematics is one of the “gate-keepers” that stops or slows down an individual's progress in many careers. People who are not problem-solvers, who cannot make estimates or who cannot think logically are not ready to participate in economics, politics, education or society.

No Child Left Behind expects all students to be at the Proficient level by 2012. Shouldn't the senior year be focused on hard work and commitment to excellence? The 2002 *HSTW* data suggest that we can no longer ignore the senior year. But what can local leaders do to improve the senior year? They can take action that affirms the senior year as the capstone year by requiring students to demonstrate composite skills of readiness for postsecondary study and a good job. After considerable study, The National Commission on the Senior Year said, “...The final year should serve as a consummation of what already has been accomplished and a launching pad for what lies ahead.”

	Reading	Mathematics	Science
Below Basic	25%	45%	55%
Basic	36%	42%	29%
Proficient	33%	11%	14%
Advanced	6%	2%	2%

¹ These data represent all students in the *HSTW* network who took the 2002 Assessment — from new and experienced sites. The great majority of these students are career/technical completers.

Steps to Raising the Bar

Action 1:

Raise graduation requirements so all students complete an upgraded academic core and either an academic or career/technical concentration.

The core, at a minimum, is four credits in college-preparatory English; four credits in mathematics (Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II and a higher-level mathematics course); three to four credits in college-preparatory, lab-based science, and three years of college-preparatory social studies. This core will ensure that students are ready for the next step — postsecondary education, the military, the workplace, etc.

An academic or career/technical concentration is a well-defined course sequence of at least four credits beyond the core that permits deep study in a specific career/technical or academic field. Academic concentrations can be in mathematics/science and in the humanities. At least one course in each area should be at the Advanced Placement level. Examples of career/technical concentrations include pre-engineering, automotive technology, agricultural technology, medical professions and teaching.

Action 2:

Begin efforts to strengthen the senior year early. School leaders can work with postsecondary institutions to administer placement exams to juniors. Leaders can use the results on these exams to modify the program of study to prepare seniors for postsecondary studies and work.

Action 3:

Require all students to take a minimum of three academic courses in the senior year, including college-preparatory English, mathematics and science. When students have not taken challenging courses in certain subjects in more than a year, they often struggle in those subjects when they enter college.

Action 4:

Require all students to complete a culminating senior project with a research paper, presentation, product or service and community evaluation.

Action 5:

Work with colleges and universities to align the high school curriculum to higher and more realistic standards.

Action 6:

Advocate multi-strategies for juniors and seniors to earn college credit while in high school — Advanced Placement and joint enrollment courses, approved courses at technical institutions, learning experiences on college campuses during summer and the school year, the virtual high school, etc.

Action 7:

Prepare Readiness Guides for seniors to be sure they are ready to go to postsecondary education or work without remediation in language arts, mathematics and science.

The National Commission on the Senior Year said, “In the agricultural age, postsecondary education was a pipe dream for most Americans. In the industrial age it was the birthright of only a few. By the space age, it became common for many. Today, it is just common sense for all.” It is our duty and responsibility as educators to apply common sense to saving the senior year.

Instructional Leadership 101: What Principals Can Do to Improve the Quality of Instruction

by Scott Warren

Research supports three interrelated facts about student achievement. First, quality teaching makes a difference in student achievement; second, quality teaching must be supported by skillful principals; and third, skillful principals move beyond management to a focus on improving instruction. The question for many school leaders is “How do I provide instructional leadership that supports teachers?”

There are seven basic strategies that leaders can use as a framework for becoming effective instructional leaders in their school. These basic strategies are:

- **Communicate the importance of effective instruction through daily routines and visibility in classrooms.**

Effective instructional leaders communicate through their actions that quality instruction is key to success. They do not interrupt instruction and are visible throughout the building ensuring that students are in classrooms — not in hallways — and they see that teachers have adequate supplies. Leaders review and make comments on lesson plans and frequently visit classrooms using walk-through and formal observations.

- **Change the faculty meeting from information-giving to information-sharing and professional development.**

Effective leaders use faculty meetings as an opportunity for teachers to share what is working in their classrooms, address common concerns and work together to address problems and plan instruction. Also technology now allows leaders to communicate basic information via e-mail.

- **Engage teachers in using data to determine strengths and areas for growth.**

Effective principals engage faculty in using data to help determine professional development needs, establish benchmarks for improvement, develop teacher study groups and gain support for reform efforts. Classroom observations, teacher surveys, student surveys, focus group discussions and individual discussions provide additional data.

- **Communicate the vision of the school.**

Principals use formal and informal communications to emphasize the school vision and help maintain a positive environment. A true instructional leader consistently communicates that improving student achievement is the basis for success. Recognition programs acknowledge student excellence and exemplary pieces of student work hang on school walls so that everyone entering the school recognizes the importance of achievement.

- **Create a learning community where professional development is valued.**

Effective school leaders create a learning environment where the staff continually support each other in the learning process. Administrators and teachers actively participate in professional development and the principal provides follow-up support including opportunities for teachers to work together to practice and refine new strategies acquired.

- **Find time for teachers to work together.**

Instructionally-focused principals find time for teachers to work together to improve instruction. Principals do this by banking minutes, buying periods through additional substitutes, and providing common planning time, including professional development time in school calendars and using current time more efficiently.

- **Employ the right teachers and support them.**

Good principals take the time to involve others in selecting the right teachers for their schools. This involves more than interviewing and checking references. They ask prospective teachers to provide portfolios of exemplary lesson plans, quality assessments including examples of student work and videos of their teaching. Once new teachers are selected, good principals provide a support network to help ensure their success. New teacher support groups, mentoring programs and periodic meetings with new teachers are ways principals can support new teachers as they improve instruction.

Instructional leadership demands that principals change strategies. Leaders who will effectively guide their schools to meet the challenges of No Child Left Behind will use these strategies to help transform their school into a model for improving student achievement.

A View from the Doorway: Creating a Culture of Learners in English/Language Arts

by Renee Murray

Imagine, for a moment, a visit to neighboring 11th-grade English classes in a typical high school. In the first, students have just completed reading aloud Act I from Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. Students were assigned roles as class began and they read aloud until five minutes before the end of the period. The teacher assigned the text questions at the end of the act. “Make sure you have them ready for tomorrow,” he directs. “Don’t worry about the connections question, just do the comprehension questions. We’ll probably write an essay in class tomorrow comparing the Salem witch trials to the McCarthy Communism witch hunt. You might want to read page 826 to get ready.”

Next door, the students are also studying Act I of *The Crucible*. Students are assigned roles to perform. To prepare, small groups research related topics. The group that includes Tituba’s portrayer does a Web search on voodoo, the young women who will be reading Abigail and Betty’s roles research hysteria and the group with “Reverend Hale” looks into the Salem clergy. As they collect information, groups discuss how this information impacts the character portrayals. Another group reads a rubric that students will use to measure how well actors portray characters. Their homework for the day — “Based on what you have learned so far about *The Crucible*’s characters, complete a Venn

diagram comparing one character to a modern-day character in something else you have read or viewed.”

Which class would you rather attend? Which learning environment is more engaging? In your school, which is more typical?

Cultures of English/language arts classes vary widely. Typically, the first classroom describes the daily schedule of basic or regular English classes. Students are not trusted to create their own learning nor to discuss what they read. Everything has a “right” answer determined by the teacher or textbook authors. In fact, teachers often make the assumption that students have neither the thinking skills nor the motivation to understand anything beyond what they direct. The second classroom mirrors the honors college-preparatory class envisioned for all students. Students are trusted to construct their own learning, yet are held to standards. They have more opportunities for reading and writing, for teamwork and problem solving and for research. There is a strong emphasis on connecting academic concepts to real-world situations. Students become engaged and take risks in their learning. Teachers become facilitators for learning rather than distributors of knowledge.

General or Regular English Class	Ideal Honors College-preparatory English Class
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Factual knowledge valued ■ Teachers assign grades ■ Writing focused on one draft ■ Writing focused on teacher as audience ■ Students’ reading limited to literature anthology, generally read in class ■ Little or no interdisciplinary connection ■ Limited resources ■ Ability or social grouping ■ Skill sheets ■ Limited oral communications opportunities ■ Traditional assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mastery of skills valued ■ Teachers and students evaluate work based on rubrics and standards ■ Frequent revision required ■ Balance of writing including writing to learn, writing to demonstrate learning and authentic writing ■ Students read widely, often outside class ■ Intentional interdisciplinary connections ■ Variety of resources ■ Heterogeneous grouping ■ Application of learning through writing and speaking ■ Extensive oral communications opportunities ■ Mix of authentic and traditional assessments

Currently, fewer than 30 percent of high school graduates have taken at least one “honors” language arts course in high school, according to the U. S. Department of Education. *HSTW* has defined college-preparatory English as having four main components: reading a book a month, writing a short paper that is graded each week, completing an annual research paper and making regular oral presentations. By these criteria, a little more than one-third of the students who took the 2002 *High Schools That Work* assessment completed the recommended college-preparatory language arts curriculum. Only 19 percent of the students participating in the same year’s middle grades assessment reported that they were enrolled in an advanced English/language arts class. ***Yet it is the distinctive characteristics of this honors college-preparatory curriculum that all students need in order to prepare for the type of rigor and high-level thinking expected in the college setting and in the workplace.***

What characterizes the honors college-preparatory English class? The curriculum emphasizes both quality and quantity, while the teacher focuses on assisting students to develop and practice skills — rather than instructing them in a set of facts. The course is based on the concept that all students can be successful if they exert enough effort.

SREB recently worked with a panel of educators to develop readiness indicators for college-preparatory high

school English classes. These indicators describe a middle grades English class in which students write something each day, papers of one to three pages once a week, longer pieces each month and a research paper each year. Students read the equivalent of 10 to 12 books — including novels, short stories, nonfiction, poetry, technical writing and periodicals. Students lead discussions, present three to five speeches and take notes and organize them for specific purposes each week.

Not only are students doing more in a rigorous English class, they are held to a higher standard. Students regularly review exemplary models for their work, measure their work against rubrics, revise their work frequently and reflect on the quality of their work. They learn the tools of revision, incorporate technology in presentations and address their work to real-life audiences for authentic purposes.

When honors college-preparatory English becomes the standard rather than the rarity, much more is expected of both students and teachers. The culture is one in which students become engaged and take risks in their learning. They are excited because their reading and writing is valued and has a life beyond the classroom. Literacy learning becomes a social, community act that helps all students become proficient, literate adults.

Changing the Learning Culture of Science to Raise Achievement

The 2002 *HSTW* Student Survey data indicate four factors that impact positively on science achievement:

■ Level and number of science courses taken

It is very clear that the more science courses students take — and the more rigorous those courses are — the higher students’ achievement scores. Students taking college-preparatory physical science had a mean score in science achievement of 297 compared to 282 for students taking general physical science. Students taking college-preparatory biology had a mean score of 301 compared to 285 for students taking general biology.

■ Activities within the science class

What students do in science class makes a difference. Completing short writing assignments, tying instruction to real-world experiences and working with other students on challenging science assignments has a positive impact.

If students are continually asked to complete low-level assignments, they will not perform at the Basic level, much less at the Proficient or Advanced levels of achievement. Too many students are not given challenging assignments. For example, 24 percent of students reported being designing a science experiment once a semester, 22 percent once a year and 29 percent never.

■ Level of expectations

Only students who reported being in a classroom where at least four of the following five factors were in evidence had science scores at or above the Basic level:

- teacher indication of amount/quality of work to earn an “A” or a “B”,
- availability of extra help,
- time spent on homework,
- opportunities to revise written work, and
- frequency of hard work needed to meet high standards.

The students who reported being in classrooms with *little or no emphasis* on high expectations had a mean science score of 283 while those reporting *intensive emphasis* had a mean science score of 304 on the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment.

Science achievement can be raised by eliminating low-level science courses, requiring more science courses, engaging students in science activities and raising expectations.

by Bob Moore

Read All About It!

Newspapers Can Help Create Real-world Learning in Schools!!

by Joyce Winterton, Associate Director of Education for USA TODAY

Whether in times of good news or bad, students in schools everywhere are impacted by the world around them. Utilizing newspapers in each classroom can help students deal with tough times, celebrate good news and understand how their education can be applied throughout their lives. Through reading newspapers, students can relate to successful people who have the same cultural background, learn from those who are different and aspire to worthwhile goals. Newspapers are a cost-effective strategy for cross-curricular initiatives that engage students in relevant and timely learning. Reading and critical thinking are essential skills that must be an integral part of every school's culture, with the goal of creating an environment where students "want" to read and apply their knowledge to the world around them.

Newspapers are a daily educational resource that can be delivered to the school. Since its inception in 1982, *USA TODAY* and its related education resources help teachers easily and effectively integrate real-world problems into the curriculum. These educational resources can help teachers meet their curriculum objectives and help them produce measurable gains in student achievement.

The *USA TODAY* Education program provides the following:

- A daily lesson plan — Experience TODAY — is delivered with the newspaper and also is available on the Web site at www.education.usatoday.com by 9:00 p.m. EST the evening before.
- Web site resources including Math TODAY, Entrepreneurship Education, Career Quest and Monthly Projects provide interactive learning for high school students. A searchable standards database demonstrates how the resources relate to national standards.
- Professional development resources for educators through online in-service and current education news and case studies through the collegiate Web site at www.usatodaycollege.com are also available. Teachers have access to resources that will help them integrate technology as an effective teaching strategy.

USA TODAY in:

Mathematics courses Math TODAY lessons — developed in collaboration with teachers — engage students in utilizing mathematics through current news. The lessons — aligned to national standards — are appropriate for algebra, geometry, statistics, pre-calculus and calculus.

Science courses From cloning to bioterrorism to the fight for longevity, the newspaper brings the impact and practical application of science into the classroom. In combination with the newspaper, the daily lesson plan and case studies illustrate why students need to understand how science impacts their lives now and in the future.

Health courses Learning to live longer and healthier lives is a must for middle grades and high school students. Whether it is through the "10 Toughest Sports," positive student norming or the impact of alcohol on the brain, the newspaper and its education resources engage students in making wise choices.

Using the newspaper can help students develop and apply higher-order thinking skills and help teachers engage students in real-world learning by analyzing, evaluating and interpreting information. A school culture that promotes student engagement in real-world learning and encourages them to embrace the value of learning helps students understand how their education will benefit them in the world in which they live and work.

Through a partnership with the Marriott Corporation and USA TODAY all *High School That Work* and *Making Middle Grades Work* schools can have \$1,000.00 worth of these educational resources for \$500.00. For additional information about this matching grant, contact Angela Utter at autter@usatoday.com or 800-872-3415, ext. 5911.

Improving Attendance and Tardiness to Class and School

by Myra Reynolds

Just as ants and gnats can spoil the picnic, small problems can ruin the most eloquent of preparations for excellence in teaching and learning. Tardiness and poor attendance are hard to address in isolation from the larger instructional picture — they are resulting behavioral symptoms of a problem — NOT the problem itself. Adolescents are tenacious creatures who will devote endless hours to the hobbies and favorite pastimes they enjoy. Likewise, it is hard to engage them in tasks and activities that they perceive as boring and of no interest, irrelevant to meaningful goals and more challenging. Herein lies the secret to having students develop better habits of attendance and to be engaged in more on-task behaviors.

If classes and lessons have no clear relevance and application, students will not focus and engage in the task at hand. If you ask students — which we ought to do more often — why they do not consider it important to report to school and class on time, they will tell you that their classes are boring, that it doesn't matter if they attend, and often that “the teacher doesn't really care” if they are there.

All too often, these purported facts are reality. Grading practices, overly lenient absentee policies, lack of follow-through with consequences, inadequate teacher planning for instruction and no personal attachment between students and adults at the school — all contribute to support the unengaged student's point of view. If students can be absent, make up missed work or have grades “averaged” resulting in a “passing” grade even if they miss 10 to 25 percent of the instruction, why should they attend regularly? If lessons are boring and not linked to students' inter-

ests, their future or even their present reality, why should they invest or contribute their own time and energy?

You cannot achieve positive attitudes toward school and improve attendance through punishment — only resentful compliance in some rare cases. However, high absenteeism and tardiness are not problems in schools with adults who care about and know their students and communicate with them regularly and in schools with teachers who use higher order thinking activities and active engagement strategies.

Solving attendance and boredom problems start with changing what teachers are teaching and how teachers are teaching it. Aligning curriculum to educational and career goals, giving all students challenging assignments, utilizing instructional strategies that actively engage students in meaningful assignments, showing students examples of quality work, holding students to clearly identified standards for earning high grades, and taking an interest in each individual student — are all strategies that can help students develop good habits of attendance and punctuality.

Rewards and recognition for good attendance and punctuality can enhance positive student and parent attitudes toward the school. These rewards, however, must be significant and meaningful to the students. Ask students what rewards they would value and offer those rewards. Teachers who themselves have good attendance and punctuality can serve as a positive influence on student attendance and punctuality.

If you ask students — which we ought to do more often — why they do not consider it important to report to school and class on time, they will tell you that their classes are boring, that it doesn't matter if they attend, and often that “the teacher doesn't really care” if they are there.

Building a Culture of Professional Development that Works

by Gail Anderson

We think of staff development as workshops, courses and presentations by experts. Often the training is hit or miss and fragmented — not connected to long-term goals or school improvement plans. In high-performing schools, staff is involved in a continuous improvement process to enhance the quality of instructional practice and student achievement.

A high-performing school culture is built from the district to the classroom. District superintendents lead principals and teachers to study data to determine school and classroom-level needs. Then, a specific plan is designed to relate professional development activities to the overall school goal. This provides individual schools the flexibility for establishing plans that meet their students' needs. A district goal of using professional development as a continuous process to improve classroom instruction means that some deep-seated beliefs and practices would have to be unlearned. Some of these are:

These practices can be unlearned:

- Professional development is **not** a matter of personal choice. It is for the collective good of **all** students and aimed at enabling educators to work toward district and school goals.
- Professional development must **not** be viewed from an individual perspective with each teacher learning for himself or herself. There must be a high degree of cooperation to prepare students to meet high expectations for achievement. More effective learning occurs when working together on common instructional problems.
- Professional development is **not just** experts **telling**, but rather groups of teachers **studying** and developing units, lessons and strategies; trying them out, talking about what worked and what didn't and how to improve it. **It can be in the form of faculty study groups, demonstration classrooms or sharing strategies during faculty meetings, workshops or coursework.** It is about collectively studying student work to identify weaknesses and plan for addressing them.
- Accountability is **not** a one-way proposition — it is reciprocal. School districts invest time, resources and money to provide training and support to meet new expectations demanded of educators. Teachers are obligated to demonstrate improved performance leading to improved student achievement.
- The quality of professional development is **not** judged on the basis of the temperature of the meeting room, the size of the tables or the food served. Rather it is based on the new knowledge and skills acquired, the implementation of the training, the impact on improving student achievement and the attainment of school and district goals.

Customize professional development to help real teachers work with real students in real classrooms. Because improving classroom instruction occurs through experimentation and error, it is important to create an environment in which teachers observe and coach each other as they implement new practices. Provide time within the school day for teachers to work together on problems within their own schools and to generate products focusing on improved teaching and learning. Continuous monitoring and measuring of the impact of professional development on change in school and classroom practice and student achievement is essential.

Effective staff development requires the active support and collaboration of school leaders, not just superficial participation. If the principal does not attend, teachers view the session as unimportant. School leaders must prepare their staff in advance of the workshop with the new knowledge to be taught, the connection to the school improvement plan, the rationale for the training and the expectations for implementation and monitoring. Having district or board-level participation is an added plus that helps to maintain the focus on district goals.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) offers the following questions to make the most of consultants invited to lead site-based workshops:

- Why is it important for this person to work with your staff? How will the work connect to the school improvement plan and district goals?
- What outcomes will be accomplished by hiring this consultant to come to your district or school?
- How will you use the time you have with the consultant? Will he/she visit classrooms, advise planning groups, present whole faculty workshops, analyze student data, review teacher work?
- How will you get staff to buy in to this training? How will you assess their readiness to engage in the planned content?
- What kinds of follow-up are being planned to extend the learning process?
- By what data will you assess the effectiveness of this training? Who will be responsible for collecting and analyzing the data?

North Carolina Board of Education and Duke Engineering School Launch Project Lead The Way

by Carolyn Helm

Project Lead The Way (PLTW) is proud to announce new affiliate partners dedicated to helping students achieve higher academic success while at the same time addressing the nation's need for a technology workforce. The PLTW program is a national pre-engineering program for high school and a middle grades technology curriculum designed to help students learn about technology careers through a project based-learning curriculum that integrates mathematics, science, language arts and technology standards. Duke University, the State Board of Education, and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction signed a partnership agreement on September 11, 2003, to launch PLTW throughout the state.

Project Lead the Way is an established pre-engineering program providing the following resources:

- fully-developed curriculum for high school and middle school;
- extensive professional development curriculum for teachers; and
- school counselor professional development training and conferences.

“Making school more relevant for students is a critical need,” said State Superintendent Mike Ward. “We view Project Lead the Way as a viable way to show students that they need to start preparing for the future while they’re in school.”

When Duke's Pratt School of Engineering called to express interest in the program and to offer help, it was a wonderful offer,” said June Atkinson, director of the Division of Instructional Services for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. “With Duke providing professional development training for our teachers, we can finally get this program launched statewide.”

Duke's Gary Ybarra, associate professor and director of undergraduate studies in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, said “Engineering is an excellent foundation for any career. Solving real-world problems that improve the quality of life for humans is an exciting context for learning mathematics and science. PLTW will offer high school and middle school students the opportunity to learn engineering principles and receive credit for courses that will transfer to colleges and universities nationwide.”

Al's Baker's Dozen Strategies for Creating a Positive and Rewarding School Culture

by Fay Kline

During a *HSTW* technical assistance visit to Heritage Hills Junior/Senior High School in Lincoln City, Indiana in April, 2002, team members noted that both students and teachers enjoyed being there. It was refreshing to experience the “climate” of overall friendliness, enthusiasm and positive attitudes. So what sets this school apart from so many others? It did not take long to realize that the unique leadership style of Principal Al Logsdon has made the difference. Based on interviews, observations and a recent survey, it is clear that he has won the respect, support and admiration of staff and students.

It does not take additional funding or technology to do what Logsdon has done. It does, however, require an empathy for others, passion for the profession, and “purposeful” acts of kindness. It is about caring and nurturing — validating every individual. It is about having common goals and celebrating successes. The following are “Al's Baker's Dozen Strategies for Creating a Positive and Rewarding School Culture:”

The Dozen Strategies

1. Treat everyone as an important person — they are!
2. Reward teachers who take risks to accept positive change. Praise is a powerful change agent.
3. Recognize everyone who does the extra things necessary for success. Our Renaissance Program does an exceptional job in this area.
4. Inspect what you respect — be in the classroom often to observe learning taking place.
5. Get to know the at-risk students on their turf before they take all your time in your office.
6. Let students know you love them — you may be the only adult who cares deeply for them. (I define love as respect and setting high expectations for each student.)
7. Realize that parents only send you the best they have. Treat their best like a banker — try to guarantee them a decent return on their investment under your leadership.
8. Empower teachers and let them lead. That was the hardest thing for me — a good school manager — to do. It has paid dividends beyond belief.
9. Demonstrate your enjoyment of being a principal. You are the most important servant in the lives of young men and women. Let them know that it is a pleasure to be with them.
10. Continually improve your communication skills. Listen to all, take a stance and explain why any unpopular decision has to be made for the good of all concerned.
11. Maintain daily visibility in the halls and classrooms. Attend as many student events as possible and let each participant know their contribution is appreciated.
12. Encourage parents to become involved in the school by serving on committees. When they agree to serve, make sure they comprehend their role.
13. Continually study the change process and enhance the level of trust in the school.

Logsdon says,

"Ten years ago when I became principal of this rural junior/senior high school with an enrollment of 1,130, the school board was overly concerned about improving discipline in the building. My first item of business was to inform students that treating each other and their teachers with respect was the major rule in the building, and those that refused to abide would be directed to quickly enroll in the school of hard knocks. When students realized that everyone was going to be treated as equals and in a consistent manner, it was amazing how soon the climate improved."

"It has always been my policy to create an environment where everyone understands they are extremely important in the success of the school. This is done by setting high expectations for students, teachers and support staff and recognizing them when they meet those expectations. If at all possible, I visit at least half of the 65 classrooms on a daily basis. During that time I observe teaching strategies and student participation. When students are not engaged in the learning process, I talk to them later in the day and find out what their problem is and then assist them to get back on task."

The following list, along with selected quotes from teachers and students, describes the characteristics of the healthy school culture and positive climate found at Heritage Hills Junior/Senior High School (HHHS):

■ **A caring principal encourages and supports teachers and students to do their very best.**

"Mr. Logsdon always walks around the school and visits the classrooms and students. He really cares about us and our education."

■ **Teachers and staff work together cohesively as a team and take pride in their work.**

"The teachers care about students. If a student has a question or concern, they can always get help from a teacher."

■ **An inviting, attractive building and campus are clean, safe and orderly.**

"I think our bright, clean campus, sufficient supplies and equipment and manageable class sizes of around 25 show that education is valued in our community."

■ **The value of education is No. 1 priority. Teachers and students respect and accept one another.**

"Teachers know who you are. They say "Hi" in the hallway when they pass you. It makes me feel as if I am cared about by the teachers. Our teachers challenge us to do the best."

■ **Clear and concise rules exist and are fairly enforced. There is trust and confidence in the system.**

"One of the many things I like about Mr. Logsdon is that he always treats me with respect. He is unfailingly polite. People will not always remember everything you say, but they will never forget how you treated them."

■ **Appreciation and recognition, both formal and informal, are given to teachers and students on a regular basis for effort and achievement.**

"I like all the programs we have awarding academic excellence. Some examples of that are the 4.0 GPA award program, honor roll awards programs, etc. I appreciate these because they encourage students to do well academically."

■ **The silent sustained reading program brings common focus, purpose and cohesiveness to all.**

"I love the emphasis on reading at our school. The reading period in the morning is a good start, and teachers model the desired behaviors by reading as the students do."

■ **Professional development is encouraged and ongoing. There is sharing and follow-up activities.**

"Mr. Logsdon's *untiring* leadership inspires us all to continuous improvement. He is relentless in his pursuit of excellence and enables us to reach new heights as well. We are readers and writers at this school. It is a positive, enjoyable place to teach and learn."

■ **Data are shared and used by all staff to make decisions about curriculum and instruction.**

"Mr. Logsdon always briefs the faculty on the Indiana state ISTEP+ test data and encourages teachers to look at what the data are telling us. We use this to improve our instruction."

■ **Parents are active partners in the school improvement process.**

"Community forums are held each semester for groups of 30 to 40 parents to listen to their concerns about the school. Parents serve on school committees and have become positive-change agents. Most importantly, they know they are players in the school-change process."

Aspiring principals from small rural schools to large urban schools can learn from Logsdon's example and the HHHS model. Obviously, the efforts of a strong and caring leader, dedicated teachers and a climate of high expectations have created a positive school culture that is making major differences in student achievement.

With a student body of approximately 700 students in grades nine to 12 at HHHS, the graduation rate has tended to remain above the state average for the past several years and has risen to a remarkable 99 percent in 2000-01 and

2001-02. (See the Indiana DOE Web site.) The attendance rate has remained steady — about 96 to 97 percent — for the past several years. In 2002 HHHS students had mean scores in reading, mathematics and science that greatly exceeded the *HSTW* goals. (See Figure 1.) As shown in Figure 2, in 2001 and 2002 students' mean scores on the Indiana state exam (ISTEP+ — English and mathematics) were greater than the rest of the state.

Figure 1: 2000 and 2002 *HSTW* Assessment Results for HHHS

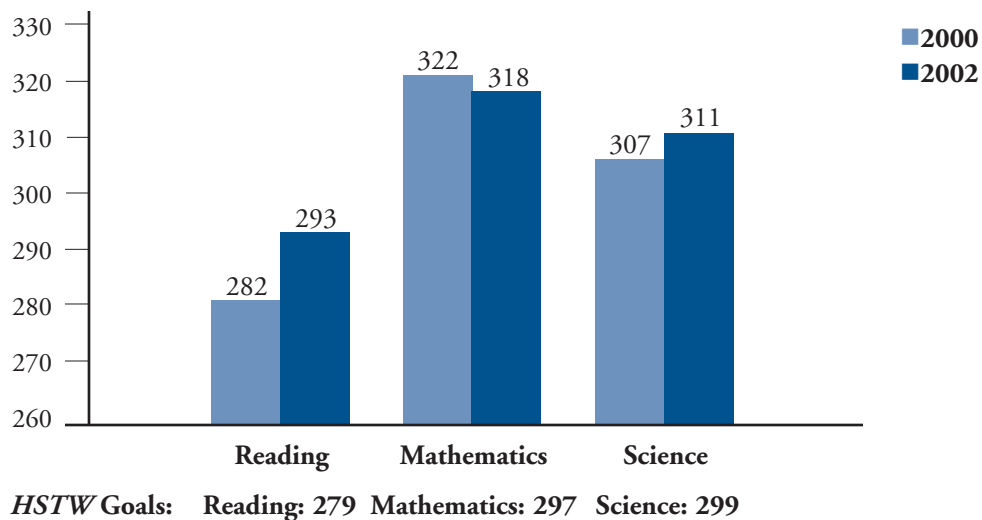
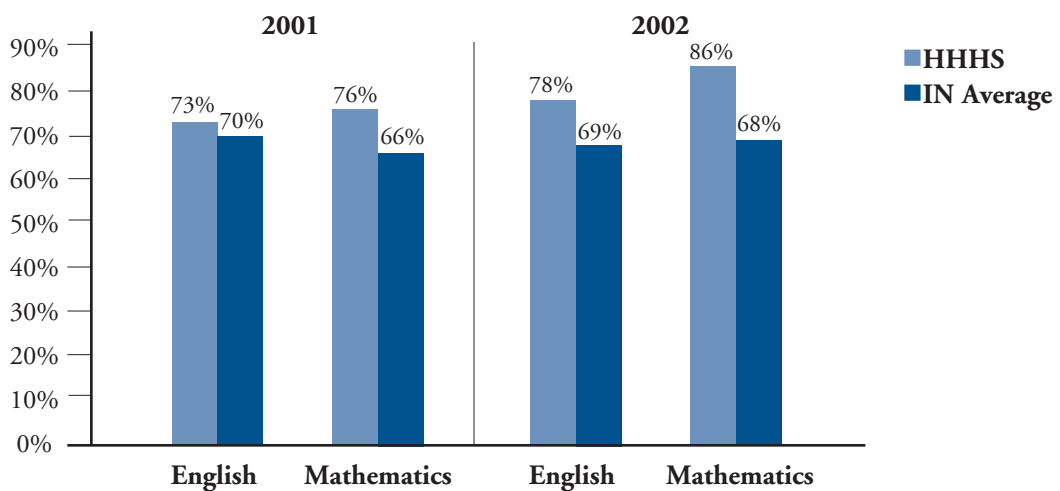


Figure 2: HHHS Grade 10 Percentage of Students Passing Indiana ISTEP State Standard



Creating a Classroom Culture to Support Struggling Students

by Jinan N. Sumler

Every school has at least one teacher who has academically successful students by the end of the year — no matter what their levels of achievement are at the beginning of the year. Some would say this teacher was born to teach — that it's in his/her blood. But what about the rest of us who just want to teach? What do we do when we grow tired of hearing our own excuses for why our students aren't achieving at higher levels?

"We can't get the parents involved with anything."

"By the time students get to us they are so far behind, who can catch them up."

"I just need to get them out of my class and let the next teacher worry about them."

But what if you took a moment and looked at the situation in a different light? What can you control? Each morning you walk into your classroom and for 55, 75 or 90 minutes, those students are yours. Their fate is in your hands, and at some point in your career you believed that students could and should have access to a quality education. Now you stand at a crossroads. You have in your classroom a group of students who have struggled for much of their lives and are just waiting to get the extra push they need. How do you help this group help themselves?

You don't have to wait until the beginning of the quarter, semester or school year to change your classroom into a culture of success. Step away from labeling some of your students as "struggling" or "at-risk" and allowing that to be a lifetime excuse for their non-achievement. When we turn the challenge on ourselves to transform struggling students into high-achieving students, we change the culture of our classrooms and when enough teachers do it, we change the culture of the school.

Assess your classroom culture. Do you:

- believe that these students can succeed?
- expect them to get an "A" or a "B"?
- constantly encourage them not only to do their best, but to take responsibility for their own success?
- come to class prepared to teach from the first bell to the last bell and every minute in between?
- provide structured extra help before, during and after school?
- celebrate successes?

Here are 12 things you can do to influence student achievement in your classroom:

1. Have a daily journal prompt.

Every day have students respond to a journal question that relates to the daily lesson. Journals should be collected and feedback given to improve writing.

2. Have a clear objective related to your lesson.

The objective states what students will be able to do by the end of the lesson. Have students write the objective in their planner and use it as a reference when studying for tests and turning in assignments.

3. Share goals.

Do your students know what the goal is each day? Include students in the goal-setting process. Allow time to receive feedback about what students hope to accomplish.

4. Have a lesson that connects to other courses.

Students will see the connection between what they are learning in one class and how it relates to what they are learning in another. This helps to reinforce what all teachers are teaching.

5. Make connections to the real world.

Using real-world examples keeps students interested and allows them to have more of a buy-in toward their own education.

6. Encourage frequent, planned small group interaction.

Research shows that regardless of subject matter, students retain information learned in small groups longer than in other instructional formats.

7. Address multiple intelligences.

Not every student learns the same way. Make sure that teaching styles leave room for tactile, visual and kinesthetic learners.

8. Assign quality homework daily.

Assign homework every night that goes beyond worksheets. Use other resources such as newspapers, magazines and television to practice higher-order thinking skills.

9. Address study and time management skills.

Give students assignments to help them learn how to organize, plan and set goals for themselves. These skills are developed by having a teacher who has taught them how to use them.

10. Keep student portfolios.

Help students assess their progress and create a sense of responsibility. Constantly review the portfolio and make suggestions for improvement.

11. Leave time for evaluation and revision.

Continually assess your own progress in addition to the progress of the class. Ask for student input and use some of their feedback in the restructuring of your classroom.

12. Be consistent.

Students need structure, no matter their age. Have the same expectations for all students.

New Resources

The complete materials list is available online at www.sreb.org. To order materials, contact the SREB Publication Orders Department at (404) 875-9211, ext. 236.

A Highly Qualified Teacher in Every Middle Grades Classroom: What States, Districts and Schools Can Do

With teacher turnover on the rise, one of the most critical issues facing the middle grades today is the quality of middle grades teachers. This publication recommends seven key practices for increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the middle grades.

By Gene Bottoms and Sondra Cooney
(02V56); 20 pages; \$2.50 each

Improving the Middle Grades: Actions That Can Be Taken Now

Even in times of fiscal austerity, states can strengthen middle grades education. This publication defines six steps states can take to raise achievement and meet the SREB goal that achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.

By Gene Bottoms, Kathleen Carpenter and Sondra Cooney
(03V02); 8 pages; \$1 each

Good Principals Are the Key to Successful Schools: Six Strategies to Get More Good Principals

SREB recognizes that effective leaders are essential if all students are to achieve at high levels. The SREB leadership goal is very ambitious: "Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective principal." This report defines six strategies that state and local leaders can use to achieve that goal.

By Kathy O'Neill, Betty Fry, David Hill and Gene Bottoms
(03V03); 32 pages; \$3 each, \$1.50 each for 10 or more

Research Brief: Factors Affecting Mathematics Achievement for Students in Rural Schools

This research brief is based on a study of more than 2,400 eighth-graders and more than 1,900 12th-graders in 24 clusters of rural high schools and their feeder middle grades in seven states. It surveys the mathematics achievement of eighth- and 12th-graders in these rural schools and looks at how course-taking patterns and classroom practices have affected achievement. It also offers strategies that schools can use to raise student achievement in mathematics.

By Gene Bottoms and Kathleen Carpenter
(03V04); 20 pages; \$2 each, \$1 each for 10 or more

Doing What Works: Moving Together on High Standards for All Students

Schools that make big gains in achievement are those that set high standards and dig deep to discover effective practices. Everyone connected with such a school works together toward a common goal. This publication explains how to organize school study teams that can work cooperatively to understand what changes are needed and to implement and refine the key practices accordingly.

By Gene Bottoms, Lingling Han and Alice Presson
(03V07); 40 pages; \$5 each, \$3 each for 10 or more

Videos from the 2003 Summer Conference

Videotapes of selected keynote addresses and conference sessions from the 2003 summer conference are available — some in CD format. These videos are designed to support local professional development in raising the achievement of high school and middle grades students. They range from 50 to 90 minutes in length and cost \$30 for VHS tapes and \$25 for CDs. To obtain the video list, contact SREB at (404) 875-9211, ext. 236, or visit the Web site at www.sreb.org.

Summer 2003 Materials List and Order Form

The catalog of SREB's school improvement resources has been updated to include new publications, videos and other items. The list contains books, special reports, research briefs, case studies, site development guides, outstanding practices publications, middle grades reports, videos and video packages, and school banners.

(03V06); 24 pages; single copies free, \$.50 each for 10 or more

HSTW 2003-2004 Professional Development Programs

Schedule at a Glance

NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

October 2003

Guidance and Advisement: Preparing Effective Teacher-advisers

October 6-7, 2003, Marriott Charlotte City Center, Charlotte, North Carolina; (800) 228-9290
Hotel reservation and registration deadline: September 15, 2003

School Leaders: Building a Culture of Higher Expectations

October 26-28, 2003, Atlanta Marriott Marquis, Atlanta, Georgia; (800) 228-9290
Hotel reservation and registration deadline: October 6, 2003

January 2004

Quality Teaching: Meeting the Challenge

January 22-24, 2004, Hilton Head Marriott, Hilton Head, South Carolina; (843) 686-8400
Hotel reservation and registration deadline: January 5, 2004

February 2004

Transitions: Middle Grades to High School — Preventing Ninth-grade Failure

February 23-24, Marriott Charlotte City Center, Charlotte, North Carolina; (800) 228-9290
Hotel reservation and registration deadline: February 2, 2004

March 2004

Mathematics: Improving Achievement in Middle Grades and High School

March 15-16, 2004, Marriott Perimeter Center, Atlanta, Georgia; (800) 228-9290
Hotel reservation and registration deadline: February 23, 2004

SPECIALTY WORKSHOPS

November 2003

School-wide Literacy Efforts: Sustaining and Expanding

November 10-11, 2003, Marriott Riverfront, Savannah, Georgia; (800) 228-9290
Hotel reservation and registration deadline: October 20, 2003

February 2004

Small Learning Communities: Creating SLCs to More Fully Implement the HSTW Design

February 16-17, 2004, Hilton Atlanta Airport, Atlanta, Georgia; (800) 445-8667
Hotel reservation and registration deadline: January 26, 2004

For the SREB discount with Delta Airlines call (800) 241-6760 and use the code 189906A.

March 2004

Saving Our Seniors: Preparation for the World Beyond High School

March 11-12, 2004, Hyatt Regency Savannah, Savannah, Georgia; (800) 233-1234
Hotel reservation and registration deadline: February 19, 2004

LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Series A: Using Data to Lead Change for School Improvement

October 9-10, February 5-6, March 25-26
All sessions at Marriott Perimeter Center, Atlanta, Georgia; (800) 228-9290
Hotel reservation and series registration deadline: September 18, 2003
Hotel reservation deadline for Sessions 2 and 3: January 15 and March 4

Series B: Improving School and Classroom Practices

October 20-21, January 22-24, March 15-16
Sessions 1 and 3: Marriott Perimeter Center, Atlanta, Georgia; (800) 228-9290
Session 2: Hilton Head Marriott, Hilton Head, South Carolina; (843) 686-8400
Hotel reservation and series registration deadline: September 29, 2003
Hotel reservation deadline for Sessions 2 and 3: January 5 and February 23

Series C: Creating a Climate of Higher Expectations to Improve Student Achievement

October 26-28, February 26-27, March 29-30
Session 1: Atlanta Marriott Marquis, Atlanta, Georgia
Sessions 2 and 3: Marriott Perimeter Center, Atlanta, Georgia; (800) 228-9290
Hotel reservation and series registration deadline: October 6, 2003
Hotel reservation deadline for Sessions 2 and 3: February 5 and 23

Hotel Information

When making reservations, attendees **MUST** specify they are with the SREB group and make reservations by the stated deadline in order to receive the special group rate. Hotel reservation and workshop registration deadlines are the **same** for national and specialty workshops. For each leadership series, attendees register for a series of three meetings. For the first meeting of the series, the workshop registration and hotel reservations deadlines are the **same**. For subsequent meetings, the hotel reservation deadline is **three weeks** prior to the meeting.

HSTW 2003-2004 Professional Development Programs Registration Form

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Register **online** at www.sreb.org. (Click on *High Schools That Work*)
2. Register by **fax**. (Complete this form and send to (404) 872-1477 Attn: *High Schools That Work*)
3. Make checks payable to SREB and mail to:
Southern Regional Education Board
592 Tenth Street, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30318
ATTN: *High Schools That Work*
4. One registration form **MUST** be completed for EACH attendee.
5. EACH registration form **MUST** have a check number or purchase order number. One check or purchase order may be used for more than one attendee.
6. EACH attendee **MUST** provide an e-mail address. Registration confirmations will be sent to each attendee by e-mail within five business days. Leave a voice message at (404) 879-5562 if confirmation is not received.
7. Cancellations must be received by the registration deadline for the event to qualify for a refund. A \$25 processing fee will be charged for each refund check.
8. Payment is expected prior to the event unless cancellations are made by the deadline date.

Attendee:

FIRST	LAST	JOB TITLE
PERSONAL E-MAIL (REQUIRED)		
SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION		
MAILING ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE
PHONE	FAX	

Send invoice to attention of:

FIRST	LAST	JOB TITLE
ORGANIZATION		
BILLING ADDRESS		
CITY	STATE	ZIP CODE
PHONE	FAX	
E-MAIL OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYMENT		
CHECK NUMBER OR PURCHASE ORDER NUMBER		

Check the professional development program(s) you will attend. You must preregister for a particular strand within a certain workshop. Substitutions on site may NOT be possible. Workshop registration and hotel reservations have the same deadlines. **Attendees are responsible for making their own hotel reservations.**

Check the workshop or leadership series you will attend.

NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

School Leaders: Building a Culture of High Expectations

October 26-28, 2003, Atlanta, Georgia
Register by October 6, 2003

- Strand 1: Eliminating Lower-Level Courses and Providing Extra Help
- Strand 2: Redoing Work Until it Meets Expectations and Effective Homework Policies
- Strand 3: Creating Course Syllabi, End-of-Course Exams and Scoring Guides
- Strand 4: Looking at Assignments and Student Work
- Strand 5: New Leaders' Orientation

Quality Teaching: Meeting the Challenge

January 22-24, 2004, Hilton Head, South Carolina
Register by January 5, 2004

- Strand 1: Project-based Learning
- Strand 2: Cooperative Learning
- Strand 3: Instructional Strategies for Extended Schedules
- Strand 4: Using Gifted Instructional Methods to Teach All Students
- Strand 5: Technical Literacy — Reading and Writing Strategies for Career/Technical Studies
- Strand 6: Technical Literacy — Mathematics and Numeracy Strategies for Career/Technical Studies
- Strand 7: Integration of Technology
- Strand 8: Quality Teacher-led Instruction, Discussion and Questioning Techniques
- Strand 9: Teacher Tool Kit — Strategies for New and Veteran Teachers

Transitions: Middle Grades to High School—Preventing Ninth-grade Failure

February 23-24, 2004, Charlotte, North Carolina
Register by February 2, 2004

- Strand 1: Gearing Up in English, Language Arts and Reading
- Strand 2: Gearing Up in Mathematics
- Strand 3: Gearing Up in Science

Mathematics: Improving Achievement in Middle Grades and High School

March 15-16, 2004, Atlanta, Georgia
Register by February 23, 2004

- Strand 1: Getting Middle Grades Students Ready for College-Preparatory Algebra I
- Strand 2: Improving Teaching and Learning in Algebra I
- Strand 3: Improving Teaching and Learning in High School Mathematics
- Strand 4: Numeracy Across the Curriculum: Integrating Mathematics with Science and Career/Technical
- Strand 5: Leadership to Improve Mathematics Achievement: What School Principals Can Do

SPECIALTY WORKSHOPS

School-wide Literacy Efforts: Sustaining and Expanding

November 10-11, 2003, Savannah, Georgia
Register by October 20, 2003

- Strand 1: Establishing a Focus on Literacy: Setting, Implementing and Monitoring Five School-wide Goals
- Strand 2: Sustaining and Expanding School-wide Literacy Efforts

Small Learning Communities: Creating SLCs to More Fully Implement the HSTW Design

February 16-17, 2004, Atlanta, Georgia
Register by January 26, 2004

Saving Our Seniors: Preparation for the World Beyond High School

March 11-12, 2004, Savannah, Georgia
Register by February 19, 2004

- Strand 1: Preparing for Postsecondary Studies: Language Arts and Writing
- Strand 2: Preparing for Postsecondary Studies: Mathematics
- Strand 3: Getting More Seniors to Graduate

LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Series A: Using Data to Lead Change for School Improvement

October 9-10, 2003, Atlanta, Georgia
February 5-6, 2004, Atlanta, Georgia
March 25-26, 2004, Atlanta, Georgia
Register by September 18, 2003

Series B: Facilitating Change in School and Classroom Practices

October 20-21, 2003, Atlanta, Georgia
January 22-24, 2004, Hilton Head, South Carolina
(Please check the strand you prefer under the national workshop, "Quality Teaching: Meeting the Challenge.")
March 15-16, 2003, Atlanta, Georgia
Register by September 29, 2003

Series C: Creating a Climate of Higher Expectations to Improve Student Achievement

October 26-28, 2003, Atlanta, Georgia
February 26-27, 2004, Atlanta, Georgia
March 29-30, 2004, Atlanta, Georgia
Register by October 6, 2003

Southern Regional Education Board Goals for Education

1. All children are ready for the first grade.
2. Achievement in the early grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
3. Achievement in the middle grades for all groups of students exceeds national averages and performance gaps are closed.
4. All young adults have a high school diploma — or, if not, pass the GED tests.
5. All recent high school graduates have solid academic preparation and are ready for postsecondary education and a career.
6. Adults who are not high school graduates participate in literacy and job-skills training and further education.
7. The percentage of adults who earn postsecondary degrees or technical certificates exceeds national averages.
8. Every school has higher student performance and meets state academic standards for all students each year.
9. Every school has leadership that results in improved student performance — and leadership begins with an effective school principal.
10. Every student is taught by qualified teachers.
11. The quality of colleges and universities is regularly assessed and funding is targeted to quality, efficiency and state needs.
12. The state places a high priority on an education system of schools, colleges and universities that is accountable.

SREB's school improvement initiatives are supported by state consortia, the U.S. Department of Education, the Wallace Foundation, the Whitehead Foundation, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, The Goldman Sachs Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation and Project Lead The Way.

Southern Regional Education Board
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Atlanta, GA 30318-5790

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