



K-12 Principal News

Tough Decisions for School Principals



Principals from across the U.S. discuss their hardest on-the-job challenges.

One of the more difficult things is to observe a teacher who doesn't know how to relate to the students. Teenagers, in particular, have to connect emotionally to their surroundings. If the teacher isn't emotionally connected to the students, well, it's "war time."

Here's my quandary. How do I tell the teacher and the administration that the essential "ingredient" for effective teaching just isn't there? This is tough because there are repercussions for the teacher and I feel somewhat helpless as the "expert" in teacher education because connecting emotionally

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10 Survival Tips for New, Struggling Principals

By Sandra Harris, Ph.D.

1. Effective Principals emphasize what *we do for our students* to be successful.
2. Effective Principals focus on *people*, not programs.
3. Effective Principals empower others (faculty, students, parents).

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ADMIN NEED-TO-KNOW



Common Core State Standards

Most parents desperately want their children to get good grades, be accepted into college, be employable, and be prepared to compete in world markets.

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FUNDING FEATURE



Governor, Please Make My School a Prison

"Don't tell me where your priorities are. Show me where you spend your money and I'll tell you what they are." ~ James W. Frick

SEE PAGE 3 >

ED TECH FEATURE

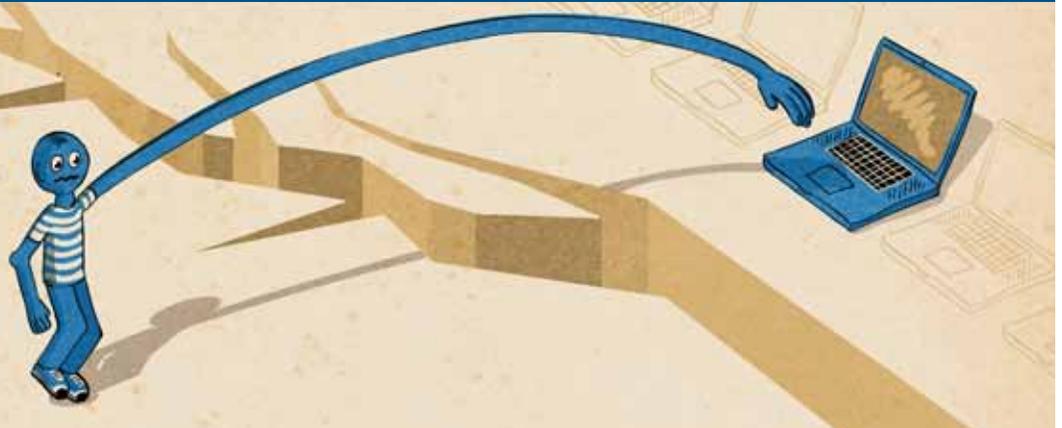


Closing the Digital Divide

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Closing the Digital Divide for Students

By Mark Pullen



For all students, becoming fluent with the use of technology is critical to ensuring their future job opportunities.

Yet there exists a troubling technology disparity: a significant number of U.S. students, especially those in low-income households, do not have access to a computer or an internet connection in their homes. This “digital divide” makes 1:1 programs even more essential.

School districts with 1:1 technology programs, which offer each student access to a computer throughout the school day, are best positioned to close the technology gap and to allow all

\$75,000 or more have internet access, the same is true of less than 60% of individuals earning \$30,000 or less. Individuals with higher educational attainment (*college degree vs. high school diploma, for example*) also consistently display higher rates of internet use than individuals with less education.

Broadband internet usage also varies dramatically by both income and race. A 2009 survey showed that Asian American and white households had broadband at home far more frequently than Hispanic and African American households. For all races, broadband Internet usage rates increase as household income increases, and as educational attainment increases.

So What Should Schools Do?

Considering the correlation between income and educational achievement, it is critical that we work to

ensure that all of our students at the very least have access to an internet-connected device throughout the school day. (*Many 1:1 programs take this even further, allowing students to use their devices outside of school hours as well.*) It is imperative that we teach all of our students the skills needed not only to successfully navigate the internet but also to critically assess the validity of the information they find from a variety of online sources. It is also crucial that we teach our students to view themselves as creators of online content, not merely

consumers. Computer labs which students visit once or twice a week are simply not sufficient to address the digital divide. It’s time for schools to close the technology gap once and for all by implementing a 1:1 program for all students.

Closing the Digital Divide One Step at a Time

For some schools, an immediate jump to 1:1 computing just isn’t feasible. Whether the initial cost is too great or access to professional development is lacking, many schools are not immediately ready to take advantage of the opportunities provided by 1:1 devices.

Three alternate routes districts can take to begin closing the digital divide without needing to purchase a computer for each student include:

1. Start where you can, whether it be with a single laptop floating from classroom to classroom or the 1:4 computer model.
2. Start pilot classrooms to demonstrate the effects of 1:1 learning.
3. Open up computer lab access to students before and after school.

In 2010, more than **20%** of U.S. households still did not have an internet connection at home.

learners to become fluent with technology. This article will take a brief look at the statistics behind the technology gap and provide a possible answer to this problem.

The Digital Divide: Whom Does It Impact?

In 2010, more than 20% of U.S. households still did not have an internet connection at home. Rates of internet use in the United States are heavily influenced by household income: whereas 95% of people earning

Learn more about the digital divide at TeachHUB.com

About the author: Mark Pullen, 1:1 classroom teacher, on behalf of Worth Ave. Group.

Worth Ave Group provides laptop, tablet computer, and iPad insurance to schools and universities. <http://www.worthavegroup.com/education>

FUNDING FEATURE

Governor, Please Make My School a Prison.

“Don't tell me where your priorities are. Show me where you spend your money and I'll tell you what they are.”

~ James W. Frick

A Michigan superintendent channeled James Frick as he wrote a letter to the governor to request that his school be turned into a prison.

In this ironic argument, Superintendent Nathan Bootz points out how backward society must be to dedicate more resources to its prison inmates than to educating students.

Here is his letter addressed to Michigan's Governor Rick Snyder requesting that he have the decency to start treating schools like prisons.

Dear Governor Snyder,

In these tough economic times, schools are hurting. And yes, everyone in Michigan is hurting right now financially, but why aren't we protecting schools? Schools are the one place on Earth that people look to "fix" what is wrong with society by educating our youth and preparing them to take on the issues that society has created.

One solution I believe we must do is take a look at our corrections system in Michigan. We rank nationally at the top in the number of people we incarcerate. We also spend the most money per prisoner annually than any other state in the union. Now, I like to be at the top of lists, but this is one ranking that I don't believe Michigan wants to be on top of.

Consider the life of a Michigan prisoner. They get three square meals a day. Access to free health care. Internet. Cable television. Access to a library. A weight room. Computer lab. They can earn a degree. A roof over their heads. Clothing. Everything we just listed we DO NOT provide to our school children.

This is why I'm proposing to make my school a prison. The State of Michigan spends annually somewhere between \$30,000 and \$40,000 per prisoner, yet we are struggling to provide schools with \$7,000 per student. I guess we need to treat our students like they are prisoners, with equal funding. Please give my students three meals a day. Please give my children access to free health care. Please provide my school district Internet access and computers. Please put books in my library. Please give my students a weight room so we can be big and strong. We provide all of these things to prisoners because they have constitutional rights. What about the rights of youth, our future?!

Please provide for my students in my school district the same way we provide for a prisoner. It's the least we can do to prepare our students for the future... by giving our schools the resources necessary to keep our students OUT of prison.

Respectfully submitted,
Nathan Bootz, Superintendent
Ithaca Public Schools

Solving the Common Core State Standards Puzzle



[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

Their cries for accountability and higher student achievement have brought about standards and standards-based testing.

Though No Child Left Behind and the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have been surrounded by controversy and resistance, the development of standards and tests to measure student achievement based on those standards have brought benefits to teachers, students and parents.

Benefits of Standards Development

The Common Core State Standards clearly define what students are expected to know and do at each grade level.

Breaking test data down by subgroup data has made schools more aware of low achieving sub-groups, and now low achieving sub-groups can no longer be hidden by the overall achievement of majority populations. This will help in closing the achievement gap.

A recent DOE proposal may give families the ability to track their child's readiness and their school's effectiveness in preparing their child for a career or college. (U.S. Department of Education, Blueprint for Reform College and Career Ready Students, 2010)

These changes make it beneficial, if not crucial, for teachers to understand the basics of testing and be able to explain the various purposes of testing to parents and community members as well as use standards and testing to engage

parents in the education of their children.

Helping Parents Understand Test Results

Parents should also be able to understand and interpret their child's test results.

While some parents believe tests put too much stress on their children, it's helpful to explain to them that the use of standards-based assessments supports fair and relevant instruction and the monitoring of students' progress toward standards. Parents need to understand that the testing process helps children achieve at a higher level than if they were left to move through the curriculum with their learning unmonitored and their needs for intervention and enrichment activities unaddressed.

Testing makes students accountable for standards they have studied and helps them to demonstrate their proficiency in these areas. By using test results, teachers then are able to plan instruction based on

students' proficiency in these areas.

When students' knowledge of skills is formatively assessed along the way, test results become a powerful source of helpful information for parents, students, and teachers. When testing is viewed as a tool to help teachers guide instruction and a means to monitor student progress, "testing" becomes much less stressful for all concerned.

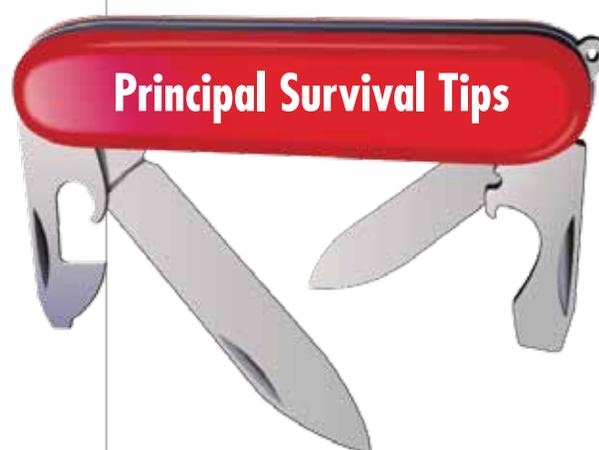
Communicating Standards to Parents

One way teachers can engage parents in the educational process is by communicating the standards their children are expected to know and be able to do. The new Common Core State Standards clearly state the expectations for each grade level and provide examples of real world application.

When parents are aware of the standards, they can partner with teachers to support classroom learning activities and vocabulary building with real world applications found at home.

The following are just a few of the standards that can be reinforced at home:

| GRADE LEVEL | STRAND | STANDARD | SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS |
|--|---|--|--|
| Kindergarten Math | Geometry Identify and describe shapes (squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, hexagons, cubes, cones, cylinders, and spheres. | CCKG2 Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientation or overall size. | While driving in the family car, ask the child to identify shapes he or she sees along the way. Buildings can be rectangles; the sun can be a circle, etc. |
| Grade 2 Math | Measurement and Data Work with time and money. | CC2MD 8 Solve word problems involving dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels and pennies. | Play store at home. Give your child dimes, nickels and pennies, and ask your child to buy something for fifteen cents. |
| Grade 6 English/ Language Arts | Language Vocabulary-acquisition and use | CC6L4 c. Consult reference materials to find the pronunciation of a word or determine clarity or its precise meaning or part of speech. | Use new vocabulary words at home. Encourage your child to look up word meanings either in home dictionaries or online. |
| Grades 9-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies | Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies Research to build and present knowledge | CC9-12 WHST9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research. | High school students have lots of opinions. Ask them to support their ideas and statements from what they have read in the newspaper or online. Ask them for evidence! |
| Grades 9-12 Math | Statistics and Probability Using probability to make decisions | CC9-12 S-MD4 Develop a probability distribution for a random variable defined for a sample space in which probabilities are assigned empirically, find the expected value. | Find a current data distribution on the number of TV sets per household in the United States and calculate the expected number of sets per household. Ask your child how many TV sets s/he'd expect to find in 100 randomly selected households. |



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4. **Effective Principals communicate, communicate, communicate.**
5. **Effective Principals respect and value diversity.**
6. **Effective Principals manage conflict creatively and in a timely manner.**
7. **Effective Principals uphold high standards for students, teachers, and themselves.**
8. **Effective Principals are courageous.**
9. **Effective Principals advocate for those in need of support.**
10. **Effective Principals ensure that the school campus is a safe, welcoming place for all.**

Learn more survival tips for new, struggling principals at TeachHUB.com

Don't Get Sued: 5-Step Guide to Teacher Liability

By: Dr. N.L. Essex



Teacher liability is a critical issue. You are responsible for your own acts that may result in liability charges, so make certain that you protect yourself against avoidable liability suits.

Here are 5 tips that will minimize potential liability suits:

1. Make Your Class a Safe Place

Courts view schools as safe places because students are taught and supervised by licensed teachers. You operate in place of parents for students assigned to your classes. You are also called on to perform three important legal duties—to instruct, supervise and provide for the safety of students as determined by the courts.

Simply stated, do all that is possible to warn and protect students from potentially dangerous conditions or activities in your school and provide proper supervision to ensure that your students are protected from avoidable physical injuries.

2. Copy Off Other Teachers to Recognize Duty of Care

You are expected to exercise the same degree of care as fellow teachers would exercise under similar conditions. The standard of care will vary based on the age, maturity, experience and mental capacity of students in your classes and the type of activities in which they are involved.

For example, you will need to provide more oversight when supervising pre-school or kindergarten students using playground equipment based on your students' ages, maturity and judgment. Similarly, if you were

teaching P.E. or a science lab, more focused supervision and instruction are needed to prevent avoidable injury to students based on their use of potentially dangerous equipment.

3. Look Into the Future by Understanding Foreseeability Requirements

Be mindful that you are obligated to anticipate that certain situations may prove harmful to students. Once determined, you must take steps to prevent avoidable injuries.

For example, it may be all too common for one of your students to tell you that he has been threatened by another group of students. If you don't take this information seriously and fail to inform your principal, you could face a liability suit if the student is actually assaulted and injured because the injury should have been foreseeable.

4. Caution: Avoid Negligent Behavior

Most liability cases involve teacher negligence where teachers fail to exercise the degree of care that is necessary which results in physical injury to a student.

It is important to know that teacher negligence involves four elements:

- *The teacher must owe a duty of care to the student*
- *The teacher must breach that duty*
- *The student must suffer an injury*
- *There must be a direct connection between the student's injury and your breach*

All four elements must be in place to make a valid liability challenge by an injured student.

For example, you may be negligent if your class

is left unsupervised for a period of time while you chat with a fellow teacher in the hallway. What could make this worse is that if you are aware that some of your students tend to bully other students on a regular basis. Then, it is conceivable that a student may be injured by another if left unsupervised. If it is necessary to be away from your class, simply ask a fellow teacher to check on your students. Make sure that a discussion is held with your students about your rules that apply to them while you are out of the room as well as the consequences involved if they violate them.

5. Use Good Judgement to Avoid Intentional Acts that May Harm Students

Intentional acts committed against students such as assault and battery in corporal punishment cases can occur if students are punished excessively because of disruptive behavior.

On the other hand, slander can occur if you leak confidential or sensitive information in one of your student's educational records to co-workers that could damage the student's standing in school or diminish the student's reputation. Libel can occur when you write a letter of reference for a student and include negative opinions not based on facts that can prove harmful to the student.

To be safe, do not make unfounded damaging statements about your students at any time. The key for you in all issues involving liability is to exercise good judgment in your dealings with students which will certainly minimize your exposure to law suits.

Tough Decisions

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to students is an internal journey that is very personal and private. As one of my former teachers used to tell us: "It's caught, not taught."

Dr. Virginia Allery
Administration
Turtle Mountain Community Schools
Belcourt, North Dakota

The most difficult decision I had to make this year was to prioritize our needs and which needs we had to cut. Knowing that I had to cut teaching resources, materials, technology and staff while not compromising our students' education was the most difficult task I have faced.

Laura Clark
Principal
St. Joseph School
Wilmette, Illinois

My toughest decision(s) every year of my administration have been budgetary. Being a small private school, I have an operating budget based on projected enrollment. I have to bring teachers under contract based on, in some sense, hypothetical numbers. Making decisions about salary increases, deciding if I can extend the curriculum budget that little bit extra for a tool that will impact learning in the classroom, or deciding to increase financial aid to allow a student that may not otherwise be able to attend are the decisions that cause me sleepless nights.

Barbara Priestly
Principal
Mullein Hill Christian Academy
Lakeville, Massachusetts

Since I deal with curriculum and testing issues for the district, our hardest decisions have focused around the new STAAR test for Texas and how to incorporate the 15% rule. Incorporating the new STAAR tests for 3rd-8th grade, with new STAAR End of Course tests starting this spring while at the same time, phasing out the old TAKS testing (this test remains at only the 10th and 11th grade) has been a challenge.

Gaye Lynn
Assistant Superintendent
Valley Mills ISD
Valley Mills, Texas

Personnel issues are always the most difficult for me. As a charter school, we have a great deal of flexibility regarding teacher employment. We are very focused on teacher effectiveness and student achievement and believe the teacher is the single most important factor in student success.

It is always difficult for me to separate my personal feelings from my professional judgment. At the end of this year, I will not be renewing two teacher contracts because of inadequate performance. While both teachers are really nice people, I have to face facts that they are not effective educators, and that's hard!

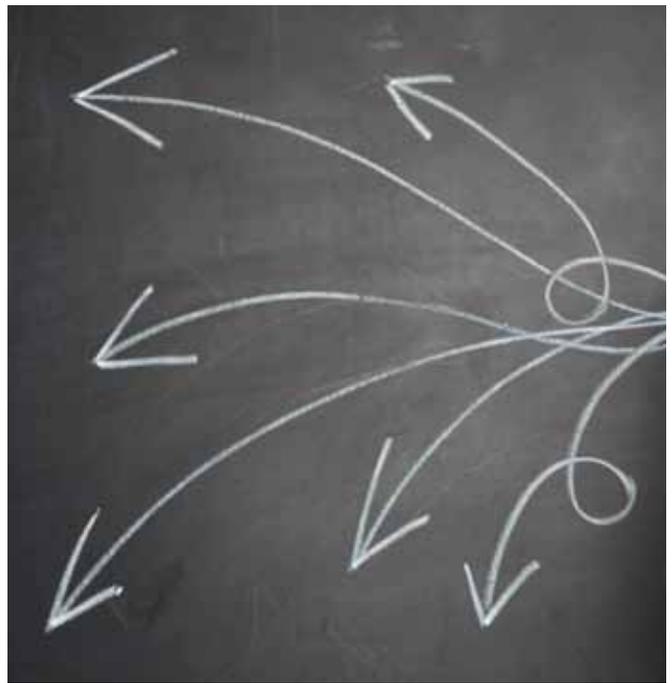
Sherry Rowan, Ph.D.
Principal
Harding Fine Arts Academy
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

I had to place a teacher on a performance plan, which any principal will tell you is a draining, time-consuming process. Dealing with struggling teachers is always difficult because it entails having many difficult conversations. You are telling another professional they are not working to standard. You have to make a decision as to whether the issue(s) the teacher is having can be corrected, or are you going to have to evaluate the individual.

Jamal Crawford
Principal
Hardeeville Middle/High School
Hardeeville, South Carolina

The most difficult decision was to really move forward with removing a tenured teacher from the classroom. Knowing that she was tenured and thought she was entitled. I decided to do what I know is best for the kids and their future.

Nicole Johnson
Principal
South Elementary School
North Chicago, Illinois



Helping teachers understand that they were not using best practices and that it did not mean they were poor teachers. We need to use methods that are not 20 years old and push for professional development to help them.

Ann Chandler
Superintendent
Morrisonville CUSD 1
Morrisonville, Illinois

The most difficult decision most often times revolves around student conduct and school financials. Many times, you get students from local schools that come to you with many issues and many times, those issues have not been recognized or, at times, not treated right. It takes time for those students to adjust, so you have to be patient with them through the process.

The second part is making decisions related to funding. This year has been particularly difficult due to the loss of some funding, IDEA, fed. jobs etc. Without these funds, positions have to be eliminated. These are people who depend on the job and have contributed so much at a far less rate of pay than at district schools.

Stephen Evans
Executive Director
Suncoast School for Innovative Studies
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Approved for distribution.

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