



North Dakota Leaders Compass

January 2018

Executive Director Deliberations

Happy New Year! Can you believe that we are really at the point of being in the 2nd half of the school year? WOWZA! This seems to be the busiest year that we've had with our organization. NDCEL continues to be recognized by not only the members but by those in our state as an organization they can go to and get help and support. This is large in part due to the quality of our members. Your work each day and doing it in an exemplary manner makes our job possible to execute. Thank you for all you do!

Over the past couple months, I've been focusing on themes that are about personal development and characteristics that truly can make us all better leaders. Together we've going through concepts of integrity and character. Today I want to focus on "commitment". It is no secret that to do our jobs well, it takes a tremendously high level of commitment. We are asked to be exemplary in all we do – after all, what we do truly impacts kids and the future of our state and nation. Doing your job in that exemplary fashion each day most certainly takes commitment.

Think of a person you know right now who you believe is a person of "good character" – he is that person that can display the characteristics we've been focusing on in the past

months – integrity and character. Do you see him/her in your mind? Close your eyes and put the image of that individual in your mind. Now reflect upon what that person says or does – the personal characteristics that that individual has in place that make him/her a role model for you. What comes to mind? What things do you see in your mind's eye as you picture that person?

The odds are that fairly high on that list of characteristics you indicated commitment. This person probably has an unwavering dedication to so many things in life. They are dedicated to being a good family member, a good friend, they do their best at work – they are just good and decent people. These people just seem to have their heads and their hearts in the right place. They aren't concerned about how much power they have or who they get to boss around. They don't care so much about getting credit, but would rather give credit. They stay focused on what is important. They know that what they believe must drive their behavior. Each day, our behavior defines our reputation that we can enjoy (or not) as well as the legacy we will leave behind one day. Does this person face days where it is easy to fall "off the wagon" so to speak? Of course! However, typically this person works hard to fight off those days.

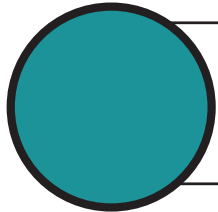


Now for the big question...are you this person – this committed person? Are you in the mind of someone right now who is reading this? Here are some questions to think about as you approach your day today.

- What am I committed to?
- What values are important to me?
- How committed am I? To work? To my family? To my friends?
- What have I done personally that is evidence of this?
- Does my behavior come close to the person I'd consider to be my "commitment role model"?
- What can I do to be a role model for others?

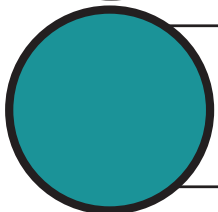
Vince Lombardi once said, "The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence regardless of their profession." I hope with all my heart that you are committed and will continue to be committed to excellence in all areas of your life. I'm excited to see the legacy you leave.

Upcoming Events



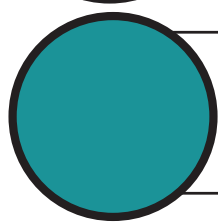
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NDAESP MidWinter Conference

FEBRUARY 1-3, 2018
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NDASSP MidWinter Conference

MARCH 21-23, 2018
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For more information contact Donna Mellmer, Event Coordinator • donna.mellmer@ndcel.us • 701-258-3022



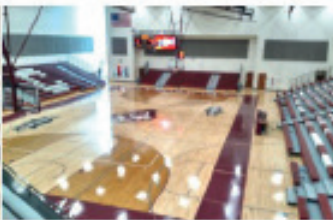
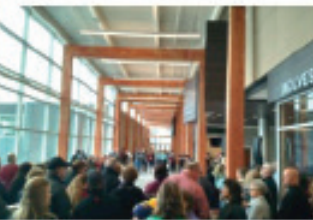
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School Leadership

A Principal's Perspective: The Importance of School Culture

BY: KYLE WAGNER ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 28, 2016 © EDUTOPIA.ORG

As a school leader, your top commitment is to improve student learning. So refining instructional practice among your staff should be at the top of your priority list. But before you go sifting through data and refining your school's standards, you should keep in mind that creating a positive school culture can have a remarkable impact on the success of your school.

The ASCD book *How to Create a Culture of Achievement in Your School and Classroom* shows how positive school culture encourages greater effort and productivity, improves collegial collaboration, supports successful change and improvement efforts, builds commitment and identification of students and teachers with your school, and amplifies energy and motivation of staff members and students.

And, really, what leader wouldn't want a more energized and motivated staff?

While there is no exhaustive list of the most effective strategies for creating this sense of community at your school, I have tried many over the years. The following techniques and examples represent my top five.

1. PLAN A BRIDGE PROGRAM FOR NEW STUDENTS AND STAFF

We were all newbies at one point. Plan immersive experiences that help newbies fit into the culture of the school. At University Park Campus School in Worcester, Massachusetts, students begin learning the culture curriculum before the first day of school. Every new middle school student is required to attend a three-week academy to meet his or her teachers and peers and engage in a learning experience. Similarly, at High Tech Middle School in San Diego, students attend a 10-day bridge program to complete a project-based experience in order to be ready for their first projects when they start the school year. These immersive experiences allow new staff and students to feel a sense of community on the first day of school.

2. MAKE SCHOOL-WIDE GOALS VISIBLE

Where do you post the goals for your school? Chances are, they are hidden away in a website or a staff room. Post school-wide goals in a visible place so that the entire school community will feel a shared sense of purpose. You can also recite your mission statement over the PA each day and provide an example of a student or classroom that is achieving it. In *"The Principal's Role in Successful Schools,"* Shelly Habegger finds that even schools with a disproportionately high number of underqualified teachers and students from disadvantaged backgrounds experience greater academic success when a positive school culture is created.

3. KEEP A LOYAL OPPOSITION

How do leaders move the school in a positive direction when there are loud voices that stand in opposition? Quite simply, according to Thomas Sergiovanni in *The Principals' Perspective*, keeping a loyal opposition builds trust. At the International School of Beijing, for example, before rolling out any initiative to the faculty, the head of the school always asked those opposed to provide their critique. This gesture transformed the biggest naysayers into his greatest proponents. Another way to do this is to create a survey that asks staff members to rate their commitment to fulfilling each school-wide initiative. Invite them to include the additional support they need to reach each goal.

4. ESTABLISH COLLABORATIVE NETWORKS

Once you have identified the greatest obstacles to achieving your school-wide goals, hire an educational consultant to help you overcome these obstacles. In New York City, LaShawna Harris, the principal of P.S. 330Q in Queens, partnered with Morrison Healthcare to improve school culture through staff appreciation days and team-building activities. The school saw a 22 percentage point increase in the number of teachers who found the principal's vision to be clear, as well as a 43 percentage point increase in the number of teachers who felt supported.

5. HOLD SCHOOL-WIDE RALLIES AND ASSEMBLIES

How often does your whole school gather? While many schools have a smattering of assemblies spread across the school year, it's less common to gather every morning. At Quest College Preparatory School in McCallen, Texas, the school gathers daily to celebrate achievements and emphasize expectations for behavior and character. These celebrations often include a school song, announcements by students of upcoming events, and sometimes a brief showcase of student work. Beyond building school spirit and unity, a daily routine like this helps keep you focused on the big picture as a leader ([Related Article: Daily Assemblies: Deepening Relationships Through Ritual and Recognition](#))

Motivating a school is an effort that lasts throughout the year. By focusing on instilling a positive school culture, principals can make these tasks manageable and fulfilling.

How do you support a strong school culture in your building?

NAESP Executive Director News - Winter 2018

Timely Resources for You, Your Teachers and Your School

L. EARL FRANKS, ED.D., CAE IS NAESP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Happy 2018 from all of us here at NAESP!

Please know that daily, your NAESP staff strives to provide resources and services based on our mission, “to lead in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle-level principals and other education leaders in their commitment for all children.” Below is an update on NAESP programs, products, and services. As NAESP members and future members, I hope you will take the time to access these valuable benefits. Hopefully these services can assist you in the important work you do for the students you serve.

New Opportunities

NAESP is proud to offer new resources and opportunities to help principals hone their craft. Here is a sampling of NAESP’s offerings—all meant to help you do your job better.

- **Webinar Wednesdays.** This fall, NAESP launched its newest FREE member benefit: Webinar Wednesdays. Each month, NAESP members will have the opportunity to learn from experts in the field on a wide range of school leaders-

hip topics. Archived webinars are available only to members using your NAESP log in. Learn more at www.naesp.org/career/webinars

- **Principals of Literacy Institute.** Looking to learn more about literacy instruction? Need to expand your expertise as an instructional leader and learn how to develop and implement a strategic, schoolwide literacy plan that empowers your teachers, families, and students? Gather your leadership team and join NAESP and Scholastic for the Principals of Literacy Institute, Sept. 20-22, 2018, in Nashville. Learn more at www.scholastic.com/principalsinstitute.

- **Afterschool and Summer Learning.** NAESP has partnered with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to offer a new portal to help principals support and champion quality afterschool and summer programs. The initiative—which launches this winter—features a special supplement to Principal magazine, an interactive web-based portal with state specific tools and resources, best practice videos, and a

research report. Visit <http://afterschool.naesp.org/> to learn more.

- **NAESP’s Annual Conference in Orlando.** We hope you are making plans to join us for the NAESP Pre-K–8 Principals Conference, July 9-11, at the Orlando World Center Marriott. This premier professional development conference for elementary and middle-level principals will afford you the opportunity to connect with your peers, learn best practices, and have access to today’s education movers and shakers. To date, we have confirmed three keynote presenters: Sal Kahn, Daniel Pink, and Sean Covey. Visit the conference website and register today: www.naespconference.org.

- **Principal Insights Delivered to Your Email.** NAESP has relaunched it’s bi-weekly news aggregate, Before the Bell, to Principal Insights. It’s still delivered to your email twice a week—but the new content is geared toward leadership development for principals.

- **Social Media Takeover.** Every month, principals can connect with their peers to find practical solutions to the

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Continued... NAESP Executive Director News

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challenges of being a school leader. #NAESPChat is hosted by members of NAESP's newly formed Digital Leadership Ambassador Program.

- **Resources for Your Students.** Help build the next generation of leaders with American Student Council Association (ASCA)—NAESP's newly re-launched program that recognizes and supports student councils across the nation for making a difference in their schools and communities. Visit the new ASCA website, www.naesp.org/asca, to access information, activities, awards, and a student council store. Your students will be glad you did!

In Case You Didn't Know

- **NAESP Offers Legal Benefits.** NAESP offers a solution to uncertain or inadequate liability coverage: a professional liability plan with legal assistance benefits. You'll have peace of mind knowing that if your school district doesn't have sufficient coverage or refuses to defend you, your back-up plan is in place. Your association's affiliation with the Trust for Insuring Educators (TIE) makes this

valuable member benefit possible. Visit www.naesp.org/membership/legal-benefits to learn more.

- **Student Awards Programs.** NAESP administers the President's Education Awards Program (PEAP) and the American Citizenship Awards (ACA); both are now open for the 2018 awards season. These programs offer a unique opportunity for principals to reward students' success. This year we are proud to offer two new products: graduation cords and certificate jackets for PEAP. For more information on the awards and to order, visit www.peap-aca.org.

Other News

- **Advocacy.** NAESP welcomes Danny Carlson as the new Assistant Executive Director, Policy, Advocacy, and Special Projects. In this role, Carlson will guide NAESP's advocacy and legislative initiatives and strategic alliances to advance the Association's policy agenda. Reach out to Danny at dcarlson@naesp.org, or connect with him on Twitter @dannydcarlson

- **Vice President Election.** The

2018 NAESP Vice President Election will be open from March 20 – March 30. Look for your customized ballot in your email on March 20. In the meanwhile, learn more about the two candidates, Kimbrelle Barbosa Lewis and Thomas Payton. Visit www.naesp.org/2018-naesp-election to learn more.

If you are not a current NAESP member, please accept my personal invitation to join our family of principals, assistant principals, and other administrators. NAESP is the only national association committed to serving elementary and middle-level school leaders. Our unwavering commitment is to enhance our advocacy efforts and impactful support that we currently provide and to offer innovative and inspired products and services—all delivered with un-paralleled service. We put you, our members, at the forefront of everything we do.

If I, or our team of dedicated professionals at NAESP, can be of service to you, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thanks for being a part of the NAESP family and best wishes for a successful school year.



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NOELLE ELLERSON NG ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, POLICY AND ADVOCACY AASA, THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

2018 is just over a week old, and already Congress' to-do list looks a LOT like that of 2017. And for good reason: much of the work at the top of their to-do list is a spillover of items they did not complete in 2017.

Front and center are the final negotiations around the FY2018 funding bills. Federal fiscal year 2018 (FY18) started October 1, 2017. While Congress failed to fund the government, they avoided a shutdown by using a short-term continuing resolution (CR), which keeps government running while buying Congress more time to complete its work. They passed a CR that went until Dec 8, then a CR that went to Dec 22, and then the CR we are under right now, one that runs through January 19.

2018 is the start of a mid-term election year, so we shouldn't expect any major legislation, and we can expect that Congress will want to wrap up appropriations work as soon as possible so as to clear room for campaigning. It is not as simple as appropriations work alone, though: Congress has nearly two years' worth of backlogged items they are trying to address in the first three weeks of 2018: FY18 appropriations, raising the caps, resolving the deferred action on childhood arrivals (DACA) program, Secure Rural Schools

(Forest Counties) and Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP), among others.

Once Congress comes back from recess next week, there is not enough time for them to complete their work, so we can expect at least one more short-term CR, likely into February. Congress will continue its work to reconcile the differences between their proposed spending levels, which are significant when it comes to education: The House cuts U. S. Dept. of Education by \$2.2 billion; the Senate provides a nominal \$29 million increase. The funding conversations will hopefully include a resolution for the lack of funding currently available for CHIP and Secure Rural Schools.

An additional wrinkle related to the FY18 effort is the ongoing dialogue about raising the funding caps. Without explicit effort to raise the funding caps, Congress will be bound to the FY18 funding cap, which is BELOW FY17. Carrying over from previous years, the conversation about raising the caps raises debate about the size of the increase, how (or if) to pay for the increase, and whether or not to maintain parity between defense and non-defense discretionary funding (AASA supports parity). Defense hawks want to provide a funding increase for defense, but not non-defense discretionary funding, which is where

education dollars fall. Democrats are committed to parity. We have to see how this plays out.

While not related in terms of policy, the politics overlap: When President Trump announced the end of DACA protections for young people brought here as minors, he started a six-month clock for Congress to resolve this issue. That timeline expires in March, meaning Congress has less than two months to find common ground. Democrats are interested in a clean DACA deal, the DREAM Act, a piece of legislation that provides a path to citizenship. AASA supports the DREAM Act. Republicans are interested in expanding the conversation to include some of their broader immigration priorities, including money to build a portion of the wall, ending chain migration, and a few other things. A bipartisan group of Congress is expected to meet the week of January 8, and that should give a good indication of if a bipartisan deal can move forward.

I am at the end of my word allocation and have managed to give a lay of the land without detailing a specific outcome. And that is largely because we cannot predict with certainty how any of these discussions will go. We will continue to monitor these conversations and let you know how they unfold.

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How to Build Snowmen from a Snowflake Generation

By: Tim Emore

https://growingleaders.com/blog/how-to-build-snowmen-from-a-snowflake-generation/?utm_source=Master+List+%28Monthly%2C+Weekly%2C+Daily%2C+Events+%26+Offers%29&utm_campaign=9b14b9569d-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b8af65516c-9b14b9569d-304641257&mcm_cid=9b14b9569d&mcm_eid=66b51930a3

For years, we've heard journalists, educators and employers tell us that our youngest generation in America could be called a "snowflake generation." Why? Because so many of these kids have been raised in a delicate, soft environment, protected from life's harsh realities and responsibilities. Some even wrote that we've coddled them, protecting them with "bubble wrap."

Wikipedia reminds us, "The term 'snowflake' has been used to refer to children raised by their parents in ways that give them an inflated sense of their own uniqueness. This usage of 'snowflake' has been reported to originate from Chuck Palahniuk's 1996 novel *Fight Club*, and its 1999 film adaptation."

Initially, the term "snowflake generation" was mere slang, but was soon it was recognized as one of Collins Dictionary's 2016 words of the year. Collins defines the term as "the young adults of the 2010s, viewed as being less resilient and more prone to taking offence than previous generations." Similarly, in 2016 the Financial Times included "snowflake" in their annual Year in a Word list, defining it as "A derogatory term for someone deemed too emotionally vulnerable to cope with views that challenge their own, particularly in universities and other forums once known for robust debate."

How and Why Did These Snowflakes Appear?

Helicopter Parents

These are the parents we've read about since 2002, hovering

over their children, insuring they get all the benefits they deserve. More than thirty years ago, parenting styles began to shift. Moms and dads became preoccupied with the safety and self-esteem of their kids. As this parenting population grew, culture began to reflect their sentiments: "Baby on Board" signs in the back of the mini-van; diaper-changing tables in public restrooms and child safety rules increasing. I know parents who did their child's homework and who joined their graduate at his first job interview.

Participation Ribbons and Trophies

Eventually, youth sports leagues felt it was important to celebrate participation more than winning. It was understandable. Most kids won't win a championship and adults felt that should not prevent those average players from being rewarded in some way. A few years ago, I visited a friend's home and saw his child's room literally filled with trophies and ribbons he'd been given. He had never won any championships. This has fostered an expectation of rewards just for showing up.

Grade Inflation

Students' grades have been on the rise for over forty years—not so much because they are smarter than children decades ago, but because grades have been inflated by schools. In the 1960s, the average grade given was a C. Why? Because C means average. Today, the average grade is an A. Many adults fear students cannot handle the harsh reality of a C.

I spoke in one school district where faculty told me they were not allowed to use red ink when grading papers; it was too harsh. Some told me they were not permitted to use the word "no" because it was too negative.

Virtual Realities and Prescribed Activity

Instead of making teens work jobs, we got them involved with recitals, practices and games—all supervised and prescribed by adults. While piano, ballet and sports can begin to cultivate discipline, these activities are still virtual realities, only a facsimile of the real world. When a teen says they want to do something that actually matters, adults then places them in a supervised program that emulates the real world. It's all controlled by adults, which fosters dependency and reduces ownership.

Technology and the Media

As this generation grew up over the last 20 years, portable devices and social media took over. Kids today are exposed to tens of thousands of images each day, often causing them to feel jealous over what friends are doing (having seen their Instagram posts). They believe everyone deserves the latest iPhone (or Android), the latest Abercrombie and Fitch jeans, the latest Xbox, the latest Nike shoes and a subscription to Netflix. Entitlement and materialism usually walk hand in hand.

Safe Places in College

As students enter college, they begin to clamor for safe places, free from opposition or harsh

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HOW TO BUILD SNOWMEN FROM A SNOWFLAKE

GENERATION - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

feedback. This came to light in a confrontation between Yale University students and faculty Head of College, Nicholas Christakis. The confrontation arose after Christakis' wife, Erika, a university lecturer, suggested students should "relax a bit rather than labeling fancy dress Halloween costumes as culturally insensitive." This sparked a "screaming, almost hysterical mob of students." Even if their views are right, the answer isn't always to remove opposition, but to know how to handle it.

Who's to Blame?

In the end, far too often these "snowflakes" are products of our making. Not seeing what was happening soon enough, parents, teachers and other adults forgot that raising children is not just about protecting but preparing. We wouldn't let them fail. We removed the consequences of poor decisions. We praised the wrong qualities in them. We risked too little, we rescued too quickly and we raved too easily. As they came of age and should have been ready to enter adulthood—more educated and with greater advantages than past generations—a mammoth percentage moved home after graduation. According to Monster.com, in the five-year period between 2010 and 2014, somewhere between 60 and 80 percent returned home, following their college experience. A 2010 study revealed that a full one third of all American males between the ages of 22-34 still lived at home with their parents. While the challenge involves all genders, our males have been the greatest victims of this tragedy.

They often remained boys when it was time to become men. For instance, while males and females both move home after college, the women often return home with a plan. The guys usually return home with no plan at all. Their "Call of Duty" is a video game—not a reality of life. Mom is far too ready to cook, clean and cater to them.

Building Snowmen from the Snowflakes

1. Grit and Gravity

Zero gravity environments cause muscles to atrophy. We learned this from NASA over fifty years ago. Astronauts in space had to perform exercises to prevent them from becoming weak in a space capsule that had no push or pull from gravity.

Metaphorically speaking, this principle is applicable on earth as well. When adults remove the "gravity" (the push or pull that stretches people) our young will be unable to do tasks that past generations of young adults were able to do. Strength comes with stretching. Grit grows with gravity. As their leaders, we must introduce (or allow) gravity to take effect, knowing it's a positive and essential element of their growth. Learning to pay bills, assuming responsibility for tasks, negotiating projects with both teachers and employers cannot be learned on a screen or with a lecture. It requires action. Growing up works like riding a bike. You must do it yourself. Sure, kids begin with a tricycle and then a bike with training wheels. But eventually, the training wheels must come off, or embarrassment will prevail. Like teaching a child to ride a bike, our

leadership must offer a balance between support and letting go.

Today, our young will only cultivate grit when they are forced to be resourceful. Grit comes, psychologist Angela Duckworth says, when students must reach down and find a way to achieve something on their own. The more resources we give them, the less resourceful they tend to become. Further, research tells us we must encourage them to stick with a commitment for at least two years to see lasting results.

2. Control and Hope

In experiments with adolescent rats, psychologists discovered what they later called, "learned helplessness." Studies verified that rats stop pulling a lever to get food when nothing happens. The same response occurs with humans when participants pursue a certain goal. When nothing happens for a period of time, they conclude the goal is out of their control—and they stop trying. Too often, our young give up due to "learned helplessness." This happens, however, in both a surprising and sinister fashion. It's all about control. Studies reveal that when the activities in their day are controlled by adults (and hence, not in their control), both their angst and hopelessness rise. The more we govern and prescribe the agenda, the less they feel hopeful and the more they feel helpless.

Further, learned helplessness promotes irresponsibility. Kids feel little responsibility to work because it's "not up to them." I believe most middle class students assume that if they make a mistake, some adult will

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HOW TO BUILD SNOWMEN FROM A SNOWFLAKE GENERATION - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

this may feel good, it hinders development. Feeling that outcomes are in their control gives them a greater sense of hope and ownership.

Established generations must slowly encourage and even insist on giving them control of the “agenda.” This is the only way to build ownership, engagement and responsibility. It requires trust and flexibility, since young people may not perform to our standards. We must decide what we want most: perfection or growth.

3. Belief and Reality

What message do you suppose it sends a student when the adults in his life continue to swoop in and save him whenever something goes wrong? While it may feel good at first, it communicates: “We don’t think you have it in you to solve this problem. You need an adult to help you.” Consequently, these young people don’t feel like adults themselves until somewhere between ages

26-29. They can remain on their parents’ insurance policy until age 26. In one survey, young adults reported they believe adult-life begins with “having their first child.” Today, this doesn’t happen until long after 18 years old. So while we give them the right to vote, they may have no concept of reality. Rights without responsibilities creates virtual adults and often, spoiled brats.

As I mentioned earlier, adults have filled our kids’ lives with artificial experiences. Young people may try to act like real adults, but we’ve not trusted them to take on something genuinely important—something that has high stakes. And they’ve gotten the message loud and clear: You are just a child. You don’t know any better. You need help. You’re not an adult.

When an adult is both supportive and demanding, it accomplishes something amazing. A young recipient begins to believe

in themselves, because their parent or employer believed in them first. And that belief is displayed by offering real-life experiences to the young person, that communicates: “I believe in you and your ability to handle this opportunity.” It may be an overseas trip, or a job or even raising funds for a significant cause. But it’s all about great expectations. One experiment found that a specific type of feedback given to young teens increased the students’ efforts between 40 and 300 percent. What was the feedback? It was simply: “I am giving you these comments because I have high expectations of you, and I know you can reach them.” So, the next time you owe some feedback to a young person, ask yourself: Are the remarks I am about to make communicating belief in them?

In the end, we created the snowflakes. It’s now our job to build snowmen.



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What if Our “New Normal” Isn’t Good?

I’ll never forget September of 2001. President George W. Bush attempted to help Americans deal with the horrific terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. In his remarks, he said we must prepare ourselves for a “new normal.”

By this term, he meant that what is common and routine; what’s becoming normal for our daily lives will be different. And we must adjust our expectations.

In some ways, this is the day in which we live regarding several categories:

- We are teaching a generation of kids who learn about those 9-11 terrorist attacks as a story from history.
- We are now leading students who have their heads down much of the time, staring at their portable devices.
- We are parenting teens who are more connected to friends than ever, yet simultaneously they are often in isolation—and they may exhibit poor people skills.

We are now employing and educating young people who don’t need adults to get information. Thank you, Google and Wikipedia.

We’ve all had to adjust to a “new normal.”

Sometimes the “new normal” is a good thing. Change can be very positive, such as:

- the end of slavery
- women’s right to vote
- new child labor laws
- communication by phone
- the expansion of civil rights
- the discovery of penicillin

My big question is—how do we know when the “new normal” is not good?

I’m concerned that we often shrug our shoulders and simply moan, “Ah, that’s just the way things are now.” Or, “Ugh! Kid’s today!” As if there’s nothing we can do about new realities except to merely allow them. I’d like to challenge that paradigm here, with a different thought. Consider this:

- All progress brings change.
- But not all change brings progress.

I recently spoke to a parent of two teenagers. This dad is engaged with his children, but unfortunately, he has lost sight of his responsibility to lead them. Because everyone is on the go,

they seldom have any time together as a family, and if they do eat together, each member merely scrolls through the feeds on their phone during the meal. He finds himself driving them to practice nearly every day and he doles out money to fulfill their every whim. In short, he reacts; he doesn’t lead.

Let me offer a few reminders of where today’s culture has gone astray. Sadly, few of us are willing to recognize the current situation and take action:

1. Youth Sports

I love sports, but today we ask kids to give their soul to a single sport. They travel, buy equipment and spend multiple days a week practicing or playing.

2. Portable Devices

I love technology, but parents feel they must succumb to the demands of their kids to buy the latest gadget—or they won’t keep up with their friends.

3. Brand Names

I appreciate a good label as much as anyone, but to spend ridiculous amounts of money just to display a specific brand and achieve status is unhealthy.

4. Standardized Test Scores

Educators are my heroes and I respect academic achievement, but students today spend an inordinate amount of time preparing for or taking tests.

None of these items on the list above are evil. We’ve simply allowed them to occupy a higher place of importance than they should. And our children are the real victims. Coaches feel their hands are tied because of demanding parents. Parents feel they must work the system for their kid to get ahead. Students are subjected to stressful levels of performance, usually because adults fail to lead them well. We all feel like we’re a victim of a system. Often, no one shows the backbone to question the system. Few take a stand and refuse to play the game. We react to a “new normal”—instead of holding fast to a more healthy and manageable way to live.

Be a Proactive Leader Not a Reactive Victim: Choose Your Normal

As we begin a new year, I want to challenge each of us to lead. To lead our homes. To lead our schools.

To lead our sports leagues. To lead ourselves. Our phones make a poor master but a great servant. Our systems have become our “boss” rather than a “guide” to develop life skills in our young. We’ve lost perspective and allowed a “new normal” to surface, rather than insisting they become fads. We can determine so many of the “normals” if we’ll only stand up and question commonalities that appear unhealthy:

- Evaluate the results your new “normal routines” are achieving.
- Ask questions of the powers that be: why are we doing this?
- Brainstorm with those involved if the results can be reached a better way.
- Decide what you value most and work to ensure that is the “new normal.”

Sometimes, we can do nothing about a “new normal” in society. It is what it is. The train has left the station and we need to get used to it. Often, however, we give up too soon on an unhealthy “new normal.” We lose perspective.

Pete is a dad who coaches his son’s team in a youth hockey league. He told me his son is very good and will often “hog” the puck and do all the scoring. So, one season, Pete encouraged his son to relax a bit and share the glory with his teammates. “After all,” he said, “It’s just a game.”

Three games into the season, the team had lost all their games. Pete grew upset and yelled at his players to work harder. When they fell behind in game four, Pete pulled his son aside and told him to take over: “Go after the puck, and take it in for a score.” His son looked puzzled and questioned his dad since this was different than his original instructions. Pete raised his voice, insisting his son do it because it was the only way they were going to win! With that, his son looked at him and replied, “Dad—twenty years from now, is this going to matter? It’s only a game.”

Sometimes our kids become mentors for us.

Regardless of how culture morphs, let’s determine the timeless habits and attitudes our young adults will need to thrive in the future—and ensure they remain “normal.”

Common Mistakes Made by High School Athletic Directors

Reprinted with permission - By Kevin Bryant

It would not be difficult for any honest interscholastic athletic administrator to fill up a page or two about the mistakes he or she has made and would like to avoid in the future. I've been there myself as a former athletic administrator. Reflecting on my own experiences (and mistakes), I'd like to offer a series of tips that will not only benefit novice athletic administrators, but veteran administrators, as well.

1. Your most important job is not paperwork.

The important daily details of running an athletic program are critical; however, we must not get caught up in the daily tasks to the point that we miss impacting the lives of those with whom we work.

While I was athletic director at Tigard High School outside Portland, Ore., I would often head to a practice of one of our teams just to get my balance. It might have been a tough day, and seeing student-athletes and coaches doing their thing seemed to right all wrongs in my world while reminding me why I do my job. I also looked forward to my twice-monthly meetings with our Student-Athlete Leadership

Team. In this environment, I got to know athletes on a one-on-one basis and connect with them about their lives outside of sport.

2. Don't focus on wins over life lessons.

Life skills will leave an indelible mark on those in your athletic program if they learn them on purpose rather than by accident. Coaches in our programs need to make life skill lessons a part of everyday practice plans. We spend hours on strategy and athletic skill-building, which we should, but our top priority must be lifelong impact.

We took up to six months at Aloha High School in Beaverton, Ore., to develop the following mission statement: "Teach life skills to Aloha Warrior student-athletes." It became our mantra, and we encouraged each other by sharing great life lesson stories with each other on a nearly daily basis.

3. Value the "ownership" of your booster club.

My first year at Tigard, I did not place much focus on our booster club because we had so many other challenges, and I honestly felt that it didn't need me. That was to my detriment.

I did not gain any value from these important relationships, perspectives and assistance with community issues. I eventually saw this was time well spent and critical to the success of the adults serving our athletic programs, as well as our programs themselves.

I have always defined ownership as people supporting what they have helped to create. These adults had proven their ownership of our program through their time, energy and financial support.

4. Everything does not rest solely on your shoulders.

Yes, your title says director and you are in charge of the athletic program. However, sharing the load with others on your staff will allow you to keep your sanity and be the most successful. I had several parents come assist me at Aloha High School when I started. Their willingness to answer phones, and help me organize and deal with paperwork was a lifesaver.

Pick your helpers carefully, but do ultimately pick some helpers. The job is lonely enough. Build a team around your position. As John Wooden said, "It is amazing



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how much can be accomplished when no one cares who gets the credit.”

5. You can't save everyone.

Invest your life in a few so you can maximize your time and effort. Deputize your coaching staff to do the same. In the movie “The Guardian,” Kevin Costner is responsible for training newly recruited Coast Guard rescue divers. One of his trainees, Ashton Kutcher, asks him, “How do you decide who you will save?” He answers, “I swim as long and as hard as I can, and the sea takes the rest.”

I have had numerous conversations with coaches and athletic administrators relating to this topic. All of us want to make a lasting impact, but we must be wise as we invest in the lives of those with whom we are involved. Choose wisely. Look for those folks who are FAT (Faithful, Available and Teachable).

6. Don't let pride get in the way.

While at Aloha High School, I was in my office when one of my head coaches came in. I wasn't paying much attention to her, as I was doing the typical three AD things at once. She got my attention when she said

to me, “You are not a very good listener.” At that point, I felt embarrassed and angry, and she had my full attention. Ultimately, it was a great lesson for me.

When people come to my office, I give them 100 percent of my attention so I can meet their needs. This head coach was also a full-time teacher in our building, and I know how busy she was with myriad things herself. As a result of our interaction, our relationship deepened. She saw that I was willing to take criticism and listen to her concerns.

7. You can do better.

I gave an evaluation tool to my staff each year, and asked for practical and direct feedback about our work together. I cannot in good conscious evaluate my staff without giving them the same opportunity. Each coach deserves an evaluation each year. The athletic director evaluates the head coaches, and head coaches should evaluate their entire assistant coaching staff each year.

8. Details matter.

Checking and rechecking your schedules, transportation plans, and officials and game management schedules on a daily basis is critical to your success and

running an effective program. I was startled by a visiting team my first year at Aloha High School. They were from the Portland area and were there for a JV boys' basketball game that I was positive was not being played in our gym that night. Upon checking, I was wrong. I was very lucky that our JV boys' team happened to be practicing in the gym at that time, and we had time to connect with the officials, call parents and get the gym ready. I was lucky beyond words.

In talking with other ADs, I learned aware that I was not the first person to make such an error. I became aware of two other league teams that had not checked schedules for a track meet. The closest they got to pulling it off was both schools passing each other in buses headed to each other's home site. So, yes, details are very important.

Finally, You will make mistakes and that's okay. There has never been, nor will there ever be, the perfect AD. Pick one or two of the aforementioned mistakes to avoid, and you will be better for it — as will your staff and ultimately your student-athletes.



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