

# NASB News Update--August 2015

## News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation



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### Supporting Success for All Students through Local School Board Leadership



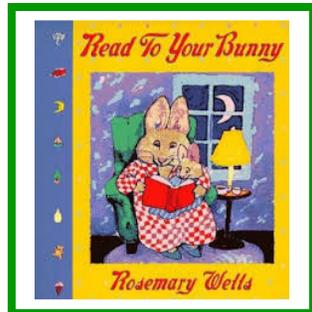
### A Message from NASB's President



Greetings!

Literacy in the earliest years is the focus of our book review this month. As we analyze and prepare for our first school year since passage of Nevada's new Read By Three law, let's take a look at a book that belongs among every school board member's essentials.

**Read To Your Bunny** is a tiny book—a short illustrated poem by Rosemary Wells, the author of the Max and Ruby picture books *Bunny Money*, *Bunny Cakes*, and many more. **Read To Your Bunny** will tuck in easily with your laptop or iPad or even ride along in the glove box of your car.



I didn't know about the Max and Ruby books until my kids found them at the library one morning about fifteen years ago. When my children were in their early childhood and early elementary school years, we visited the library weekly.

Our tradition was no renewals, in the hope that choosing new books each week would help us take full advantage of the great variety of books available at the library.

This hope ended up coming true only every other week. Once they found them, my kids checked out all the Max and Ruby books they could find every time they could. We would read them for a week, turn them in, check out a great variety of books, read those, turn those in, then check out all the Max and Ruby books again, and so it continued for many years.

Those many years are cherished memories now for many reasons, not the least of which is the profound influence that reading together had on my kids' future lives.

I can't begin to describe how glad I am that we did it. It is such a great part of our lives that we didn't give it up even after they outgrew picture books like the Max and Ruby books. We still read a chapter or so together from a Harry Potter or some such book before we go to bed at night.

For each of my children, reading out loud together every day has positively influenced their love of reading, their sense of personal academic ability, their enthusiasm for learning, and even their courage and persistence in pursuit of their dreams. **Read To Your Bunny** captures the promise of that influence.

For each of the students we hope to see succeed in our communities, we can encourage reading at home. Sharing **Read To Your Bunny** takes hardly any time at all. It is easy to have along and easy to introduce into nearly any opportunity we have to interact with parents and families of our students. I recommend it as a great way to ensure we never miss an opportunity to encourage literacy in families.

**Read To Your Bunny** is also a handy tool for parents as they establish a tradition of reading together. Short and endearing, the book can serve as the introduction to each time a parent and child sit down together to read other books. It sets a tone of happy expectation and reminds both parent and child that what they are about to do is going to be rewarding.

I will leave the poem itself to be discovered, and instead share, by way of a highlight, some of the words the author includes in a brief afterword in the back of the book:

*... the most important thing in the first years of life is the growth of the mind and spirit.*

*This is when a child learns to love and trust, to speak and listen....*

*Trusting, singing, laughing, and language are the most important things in a young child's life.*

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*And so they must come first for mothers and fathers, too. Because we can never have those years over again.*

*Reading to your little one is just like putting gold coins in the bank. It will pay you back tenfold.*

*Your daughter will learn, and imagine, and be strong in herself. Your son will thrive, and give your love back forever.*

She is right!

**Erin Cranor**

NASB President [Clark]  
702/266-6890



### NASB 2015 Annual Conference

**November 20-21**

**Reno—Atlantis**

**Award Nomination Forms Deadline**

**August 14**

**Award Ceremony November 21**



## NASB Conference Speaker to Focus on Generational Attitudes and Education in the Future



CenturyLink—one of NASB's corporate friends—is sponsoring **Randy McCrillis** as a major speaker for the 2015 NASB Conference at the Atlantis Casino Resort Hotel Spa in Reno. Randy is returning due to the popularity of his presentation at the 2014 Conference and with a new perspective on generational attitudes that influence public education.

Randy's work focuses on facilitating large organizational change efforts, guiding management teams in the promotion of systemic effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

He conducts team building, personality assessments and diversity awareness events for top level managers to front line staff teams.

As an external consultant he has used his consulting experience in the private, public and volunteer sectors. He currently serves as faculty/staff at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Randy has a Ph.D. in Leadership from the University of Nebraska; he has taught courses in cross-cultural communication, organizational behavior, leadership and diversity facilitation at the graduate and undergraduate levels.

Special thanks to some of NASB's generous corporate friends—



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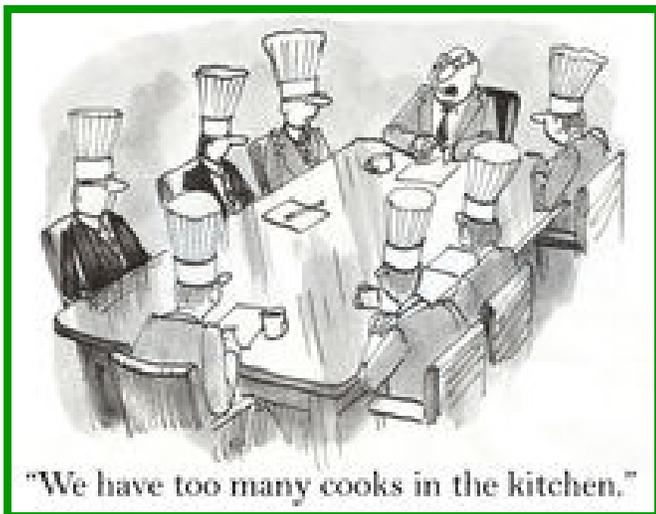
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### Boardsmanship—Five Ways to Derail the Superintendent Search

By Steve Horton, Ohio School Boards Association  
School Board Services Consultant

With the tenure of a superintendent in Ohio averaging fewer than five years, it's likely that every school board member in the state will face the daunting task of replacing a district superintendent. [NOTE: In Nevada, the average tenure of a superintendent since 1993-1994 is approximately four years.] In doing so, the board enters a critical decision-making process and should "own" the process from start to finish. No one else has responsibility for making this decision, and making the right one is crucial.

Most professional search consultants have seen it all. Many searches go from beginning to end with few or any negative issues to address. Others seem to falter a bit and, on occasion, one will collapse under its own weight. How can board members prevent this? Here are five issues that, if unmitigated, can derail an otherwise productive search.



#### 1. Too many cooks in the kitchen

In most states, statutes place the responsibility for selection of the superintendent solely with the board of trustees. This means that the board must decide and vote on that person in public session.

But what about the staff members who will work with and be supervised by the new superintendent? What about community members whose tax dollars pay his or her salary and will feel the impact of some of the decisions the new hire makes? Shouldn't they have a say in who's hired?

These are fair questions. Seeking staff and community input can almost always add value to the final decision. But beware! There's a fine line between providing input and attempting to seize control. The board should be strong in its commitment to the process. It is never a good thing when the momentum of the search is hindered or stopped midstream by strong opinions from outside sources.

#### 2. Letting go is sometimes the most difficult thing to do

Most superintendents are passionate about their work. They are professionals who have spent their lives in education and truly believe in what they do. The outgoing superintendent often carries tremendous influence and the weight of this key voice can be a difficult distraction for the board. He or she is invested in the district and may have strong opinions about who is selected for the job.

However, comments about candidates or the process itself to colleagues, journalists, staff and community members can quickly get out of control. Second-guessing the board's decision on the merits of a candidate or the search process will make life difficult for the incoming superintendent. Staff (including the current superintendent) and the community should want the board to do the best job possible. Interference can halt the decision-making process entirely. Mr. or Ms. Outgoing Superintendent, step back and let the board do its work.

#### 3. Do we have any internal candidates?

A consultant will always ask these questions: Are you, as a board, truly interested in this person as the new superintendent? Are you going to offer a courtesy interview, or does the candidate need to come in on his or her own merits? Is there significant staff and community support for the internal candidate? Do some want the internal candidate while others do not?

All of these questions must be answered upfront and the board must be committed to the decisions it makes. Turning down a popular internal candidate can be particularly painful, but here is where the board must remain strong. Waffling is not an option. If you are united in your decision, the community ultimately will be the same. Remember, no one but the board members know all the "must-haves" the position requires.

#### 4. Who's doing the talking?

The consultant or search facilitator must keep communicating with the entire board throughout the search. This key factor is universal, and comes from years of OSBA search experience.

Every consultant can remember a search in which a single board member insisted on being the sole point of

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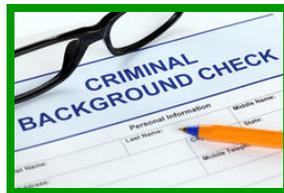
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contact. The board president, or another selected board member, may indeed be the main touch point for the consultant. But conversations and ideas shared between these two must always be shared with the full board and the full board must be informed and agree on key decisions.

There are many moving parts to a search and, as much as possible, all board members need to be in on all communications throughout the process. The search facilitator will make this clear to the board during the planning stage of the search.

### 5. What's that schedule again?

Board members are busy people. Because the search involves several occasions where the full board must be present, schedules and time lines can become some of the toughest pieces of the search. Dates set in stone should be discussed and agreed to in the planning meeting.



The application deadline, screening report, first-round interviews, second-round interviews and the vote to appoint the chosen candidate are all events requiring full board commitment. The best searches are ones in which each board member makes the process a personal and professional priority. It's all about momentum — the search must move forward with all board members remaining on the ride until it comes to a complete and successful stop.

In the end, the best advice for any board is to work together to share information, discuss, debate and eventually come to consensus on this high-impact decision. Understand that you, as board members, have gained information through discussions, application review, interviews and reference checking that no one else in the district has seen. Trust that information and make your decision.

It really does take all board members to make the best possible choice, and it's the rare board that will make a decision that pleases everyone. However, it can happen, and the chances for such an outcome will rise exponentially when the board commits to and is willing to own a healthy and functional search process.

*[From the OSBA Journal, a publication of the Ohio School Boards Association, June 2015.]*

## Commentary—Shifting Assessments: Why to expect a drop in performance when students are tested under the new academic standards

By Raymond Yeagley

The students in your school district, by this point in the school year, probably have taken their state tests and your staff may be on pins and needles wondering how the schools fared in this annual rite.



The anxiety about test scores and their implications is justified. If this is your first year testing the Common Core or other new standards on a new state testing regime, the proficiency rates in your school district most likely have dropped. Does this mean student performance has declined or that your teachers are not performing as well as in past years? Not necessarily.

Obviously, changes in student proficiency cannot be ignored, and schools need to constantly strive for more academic growth for their students. The lower scores, however, may not portend as dire a situation as they may appear to describe. The phenomenon of predictably lower scores on new standardized tests has been recognized for decades. Even before the advent of high-stakes assessment of state standards, a district's scores typically would rise each year as students and teachers became familiar with the test and its characteristics.

Usually, when a new generation of the test was normed, released and adopted by school districts, all or nearly all of the districts would see an apparent drop in performance. In the second and subsequent years, however, the scores resumed their inexorable climb until another new generation of the test or a different test was adopted. This pattern occurred even in the

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absence of new standards and significant changes in curriculum, driven primarily by familiarity with the test.

### **Predictable Decline**

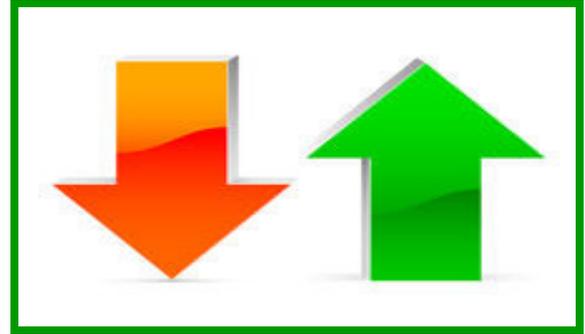
In our present circumstance, with newly adopted standards and a new focus on college and career readiness, at least five factors can contribute to a drop in test performance:

- **New tests:** Like new tests of the past, the new state tests probably are generating uncertainty in student test-taking behaviors, lack of familiarity with new item types, and the insecurity associated with novel situations. Generally this will result in lower scores.
- **New content:** Teachers and students in many states are just now getting up to speed on new, more rigorous tests and content related to the most dramatic change in state standards since their initial inception nearly 30 years ago. Further, the changes to new curriculum are occurring after most students have experienced several years in the prior system. This is true for all but the youngest students.
- **Higher expectations:** In addition to changes in content, the new standards require deeper understanding of the content and skills and have expectations for students to use the content in new ways. This manifests itself through higher cognitive complexity and greater depth of knowledge being measured by the assessment.
- **New scales:** Further complicating an understanding of academic growth and performance is the introduction of new scales for reporting student academic status. This confounding variable prevents comparison of new state test scores with prior years because there is no bridge in the state assessment system to equate the old and new scales and derive comparative meaning.
- **Higher cut scores:** Prior state tests had cut scores predicated on No Child Left Behind requirements, with the expectation that proficiency was low enough that 100 percent of students would have an opportunity to achieve it by 2014. The new state tests will involve cut scores predicated on the level of performance required to be college and career ready. We're already seeing evidence that proficiency rates are declining, in part because students are being tested against a more difficult standard of performance.



### **Mitigating Harm**

The bottom line in this milieu of changes is that the rate and depth of student learning may actually improve while student test performance, as evidenced by proficiency rates, decreases. Educators need to be prepared to help their communities understand this reality and mitigate the harm that may come from misinterpreting results from the new assessments.



First and foremost, educators should seek a path that will have the greatest positive influence on actual student learning, not just a temporary impact on test scores. We are preparing students for college and careers. High-quality tests provide one indicator of successful learning, but the estimates from assessments are imperfect and incomplete.

Educators need to foster the non-cognitive skills not measured in state tests: perseverance, self-regulation, motivation and a host of other characteristics tied to success in school and work.

A second set of mitigation strategies will necessarily involve communication about school and district performance that presents a more balanced picture of performance than can be ascertained from the state assessment alone. This requires a strong knowledge of assessment but goes well beyond that to other data sources about students and schools. It probably acknowledges a need and desire for further improvement (who doesn't need to improve?), which should be accompanied by an accurate and relatively complete picture of ongoing progress.

### **Moving Forward**

Developing a local assessment strategy, whether tied to new standards or not, should begin not with an inventory of tests you use, but rather with a focus on your district's approach to helping students learn.

An essential strategy is developing a higher level of assessment literacy among your teachers and administrators. Understanding how to create, select and use data from assessments that are well-matched to your district's approach to curriculum and instruction will help to shape an assessment strategy that is supportive of teaching and learning.

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Professional development likely will be the foundation for strong formative assessment practice and may be one of the most powerful catalysts your district can employ for strengthening instruction. This cannot be single-shot, stand-and-deliver professional development that provides teachers with a few strategies to be filed on the bookshelf. Rather, it involves creating a collaborative environment where, over time, teachers learn together and explore assessment data and other information about students with their collective knowledge and wisdom.

If you have been using a commercial test with a stable scale, continue its use for at least a couple of years after full implementation of the new state-assessment system. This can provide the bridge between past and current performance and can illuminate growth and progress that have been masked by the new proficiency expectations and scales.

Separate the state assessment from state standards—they are not the same. Curriculum should be driven by the standards; instruction should be driven by the curriculum. If either curriculum or instruction is driven by results from the state assessment, which samples the standards, student learning will be narrowed and student progress will be slowed. Many kinds of assessments can inform instruction but none should drive curriculum.

### **Limiting Practice**

One of the hardest strategies may be to minimize the amount of time devoted to practice testing. It is tempting to look at the short-term goal of raising the test score by a couple of points, but it uses and reduces valuable instructional time. Assessment outcomes should be an estimation of the students' understanding of the content domain, skills and concepts taught, not a reflection of how many times students have navigated the test platform and practiced test-taking strategies.

School should be about opening new worlds of learning to engage and excite students and to help them find and prepare for their future paths in life, not about preparing for the next test.

Finally, and most importantly, the assessment system should focus primarily on providing valuable information to the teacher and student in planning for teaching and learning and should communicate understandable information to parents about their children.

No assessment drives learning directly, but when assessment shifts from being solely an accountability hammer to becoming a useful instructional tool, exciting things can happen for students, teachers and parents.

*[Raymond Yeagley, a former superintendent, is vice president of research and chief academic officer of Northwest Evaluation Association in Portland, OR. This article appeared in the June 2015 issue of AASA's School Administrator.]*

## **A Reminder for Board Members: Why Safety at School Matters**

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors six categories of priority health-risk behaviors among youth and young adults: 1) behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; 2) tobacco use; 3) alcohol and other drug use; 4) sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection; 5) unhealthy dietary behaviors; and 6) physical inactivity. In addition, YRBSS monitors the prevalence of obesity and asthma. YRBSS includes a national school-based Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted by CDC and state and large urban school district school-based YRBSSs conducted by state and local education and health agencies.

The most recent results from the YRBS are for the period from September 2012–December 2013. Here are some pertinent results from **Nevada** students.

### **Violence-Related Behaviors**

- 15.7% of high school students carried a weapon during the 30 days before the survey.
- 6.5% of high school students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the 12 months before the survey.
- 19.6% of high school students were bullied on school property during the 12 months before the survey.
- 15.0% of high school students were electronically bullied during the 12 months before the survey.
- 11.0% of high school students did not go to school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school during the 30 days before the survey.
- 10.3% of high school students experienced dating violence during the 12 months before the survey.

### **Marijuana and Other Drugs**

- 39.8% of high school students used marijuana at least one time during their lifetime.
- 18.5% of high school students used marijuana during the 30 days before the survey.
- 18.4% of high school students took prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription at least one time during their lifetime.
- 17.3% of high school students used synthetic marijuana at least one time during their lifetime.
- 9.8% of high school students used inhalants at least one time during their lifetime.
- 31.1% of high school students were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug by someone on school property during the 12 months before the survey.