

# Principal View

Vol. 24, No. 2 • Winter, 2010

MESPA is unified with NAESP

## Richard Elmore to Present at the MESPA Winter Conference

**T**he MESPA/MESPEF Winter Conference is scheduled for Thursday, January 14, 2010, at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough. This conference will feature Richard Elmore who will present on Instructional Rounds, based on his most recently published book *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning*.

Instructional rounds – a practice adapted to education from the field of medicine – embodies a specific set of ideas about how practitioners can work together to solve common problems and improve their practice. In the education context, it is designed to help schools, districts, and state systems develop the capacity to support high quality teaching and learning for all students.

The rounds practice is designed to strategically connect school district and state efforts with improvements at the instructional core – teachers, students and content – and to build collaborative networks of educators who learn from and with one another about improving instruction.

For more information and registration materials go to <http://www.mespa.org/10WinterConference.pdf> or call 508-624-0500.



**RICHARD F. ELMORE**

is the Gregory R. Anrig Professor of Educational Leadership at Harvard University. He is also co-director of the Connecticut Superintendents' Network, a community of practice for superintendents engaged

in the improvement of instruction, sponsored by the Connecticut Center for School Change. He is a member of the faculty of the Executive Leadership Program for Educators. This program builds on several prior initiatives at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, Business School, and Kennedy School of Government, and works with state commissioners of education and school superintendents, along with their leadership teams and key stakeholders. He holds a bachelors degree in political science from Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington, a masters degree in political science from the Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, California, and a doctorate in educational policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

He is co-editor, with Bruce Fuller and Gary Orfield, of *Who Chooses, Who Loses? Culture, Institutions, and the Unequal Effects of School Choice* (1996) and, with Susan Fuhrman of *The Governance of Curriculum*. Other publications include *Restructuring in the Classroom* (1996), coauthored with Penelope Peterson and Sarah McCarthey, "Getting to Scale with Good Educational Practice" (*Harvard Educational Review*, 1996), and "Investing in Teacher Learning: Staff Development and Instructional Improvement in Community School District #2, New York City" (National Commission on Teaching & America's Future and CPRE, 1997). His most recent publications are *When Accountability Knocks, Will Anyone Answer?* (CPRE, 1999), coauthored with Charles Abelman, *Building a New Structure for School Leadership* (Shanker Institute, 2000), *Bridging the Gap Between Standards and Achievement* (Shanker Institute, 2002), *School Reform from the Inside Out: Policy, Practice, and Performance* (Harvard Education Press, 2004) and *Instructional Rounds in Education: A Network Approach to Improving Teaching and Learning* (Harvard Education Press, 2009) by Elizabeth A. City, Richard F. Elmore, Sarah E. Fiarman, and Lee Teitel.

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**SAVE  
THE DATE!**

**MESPA Spring  
Conference  
Wednesday – Friday,  
May 5 – 7, 2010**

More info:  
[www.mespa.org](http://www.mespa.org)



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**TARI THOMAS**  
Principal,  
Clifford M. Granger School, Feeding Hills

# Four Generations are in Our Schools Now...

**D**oes a veteran colleague you work with stubbornly refuse to accept change?

Is a teacher's relentless optimism and faith making you mad?

Does the young and inexperienced know-it-all have you tearing your hair out?

Misunderstandings and division can occur when people of different generations—working side by side—have difficulty understanding each other. School principals can diffuse this tension by learning about the differences among fellow administrators and their instructional staffs, appreciating their generational differences and making an effort to interact with members of each generation in a way that suits their work ethic and communication style.

Social scientists have identified four generational groups whose actions, attitudes, and achievements are impacted by the discoveries, events, and inventions they have experienced.

**The Silents** are the generation born before 1945 and can be referred to as the World War II generation. Experiencing two world wars and the Great Depression has taught most members of this generation how to live within limited means. The Silents are loyal, hardworking, financially conservative and faithful to institutions. They have worked longer than any other generation before them. Many are

approaching retirement or are retired and now working part time jobs.

Silents as staff and community members serve as historians of the changes that have occurred in education and in our world in general. It is important to acknowledge their contributions and life experiences. They often work as mentors for young teachers and help them to see that learning to teach well is a lifelong endeavor.

**The Baby Boomers** were born between 1946 and 1964. When the Baby Boomers entered the work force, they felt compelled to challenge the status quo, and they are responsible for many of the rights we now take for granted. Because of their large numbers, they faced competition from each other for jobs. As a result, the Baby Boomers invented the 60-hour workweek, figuring that demonstrated hard work and loyalty to employers was the way to get ahead and stay secure in their positions. The Boomers' sense of who they are is deeply connected to their career achievements.

This generation is also politically adept when it comes to navigating the political landscape in the workplace. They actively seek opportunities to contribute and move up the career ladder with many seeking administrative or teacher leader positions. Wise principals can channel their com-

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## THE PRINCIPAL VIEW

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**WEBSITE**  
[www.mespa.org](http://www.mespa.org)

**EDITOR**  
John Ciesluk  
283 Wendell Road  
New Salem, MA 01355  
(978) 544-8192  
[jciesluk@lesley.edu](mailto:jciesluk@lesley.edu)

**ADVISORY BOARD**  
Tari Thomas, Feeding Hills  
Kathleen Podesky, Mansfield  
Nadya A. Higgins,  
MESPA Executive Director (ex-officio)

**MESPA PRESIDENT**  
Tari Thomas  
Clifford M. Granger School  
31 South Westfield Street  
Feeding Hills, MA 01030  
(413) 821-0581  
[tthomas@agawampublicschools.org](mailto:tthomas@agawampublicschools.org)

**MESPEF PRESIDENT**  
Rich Burchill  
Belmont Day School  
55 Day School Lane  
Belmont, MA 02478  
(617) 484-3078  
[rburchill@belmontday.org](mailto:rburchill@belmontday.org)

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Nadya Aswad Higgins  
MESPA Education & Technology Center  
28 Lord Road, Suite 125  
Marlborough, MA 01752  
(508) 624-0500  
FAX (508) 485-9965  
[higginsn@mespa.org](mailto:higginsn@mespa.org)

**ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
James C. Brown  
MESPA Education & Technology Center  
28 Lord Road, Suite 125  
Marlborough, MA 01752  
(508) 624-0500  
[jimbrown@mespa.org](mailto:jimbrown@mespa.org)



## Executive Excerpts

NADYA ASWAD HIGGINS

*MESPA Executive Director*

### 20 Years of Making a Difference

As 2009 comes to a close, it is a time for reflection, a time to see where we have been, what we have done, and what more we need to do.

The MESPA Education and Technology Center will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year. It is hard to believe that we established this Center in Marlborough two decades ago. The time has flown by! MESPA is an association that is going to be 84 years old in 2010, and it operated as a volunteer organization until 1979, when it hired its first executive director. I was delighted to take on that position, and for twelve years operated from my home. Our office was there, the meetings of committees were held there, and the services for members were distributed from there. It became clear, as the association grew, that we needed to do something differently. We needed to have not only a physical space out of which to operate, but a symbolic one as well – one that would say to our members as well as the entire educational community that principals mattered and that they deserved to be served with the highest quality possible.

So it was in the late 80's, the Foundation, MESPEF, and MESPA embarked on a major fundraiser to raise the funds for a down payment on the building in Marlborough. This Center provided a site for major conference space, a library, a software library, and offices. Up to that point, the offerings that MESPA had were conducted in hotels and one of the Department of Education regional educa-

tion centers. This new facility provided the wings for the programs of MESPA and MESPEF to soar. In 2000, we added another suite that gave us a total of 11,000 s/f for the programs of the association and the foundation.

This facility has made a difference, not only for MESPA members, but also for the entire educational community. Because of it and the tireless efforts of many members of the Boards of Directors and staff over the past two decades, we were able to develop one of the highest quality professional development programs in the state and have been told even in the United States. We could not have done so without this Center in place. It helped us to develop a:

- Technology Center, where hundreds of teachers and administrators have received education in technology and technology integration.
- Certification Program for Administrator Licensure (CPAL) that has educated about 300 people to become principals and assistant principals.
- Doctoral program in educational leadership, first with Boston College where we served 80 people who received their Ed.D. degrees, and now with Lesley University where 18 students are being educated in our first cohort of a new Ph.D. program in educational leadership.

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### 2010 MESPEF FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

**"SECURING LEADERSHIP  
EXCELLENCE FOR SCHOOLS"**

CONTRIBUTORS as of 12.22.09  
*This campaign began in November, 2009.*

#### CONTRIBUTOR CATEGORY

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# NAESP Report

**TONY CIPRO**

*NAESP State Representative*

*Principal, Houghton Elementary School,  
Sterling*

## Proud To Be A Principal

*Wisdom Comes from Experience,  
Experience comes from having made good decisions,  
Good decisions come from having made bad decisions. . . .*

Principals often refer to the term: “life-long learner.” We promote literacy as the vehicle to communicate this for today’s children. We use it to advocate professional development for our teachers. We recognize principals too must be life-long learners. This role goes beyond being a model for the people, big and small, with whom we daily interact. As successful learners principals must apply what they have learned from experience over the days, weeks, months, and years of their careers.

Although I’m not prepared to offer a full accounting of my numerous experiences as an elementary principal, I will present some of the things I have learned from over 35 plus years in school administration. These are practices that I’ve acquired, and attempt to utilize, from many trials and tribulations and acting on suggestions from teachers, children, parents, and MESPA colleagues. Some years ago I attended the Gesell Institute seeking to learn more about child development. It was the first time I heard the phrase: *“Practice doesn’t make perfect, but practice does make permanent.”* This applies to a principal’s development as much as to a child’s development, because the acquisition of a practice takes practice, practice, practice.

### Developing a Leadership Style

I struggled with leadership style in my first years of school administration. After only two years of teaching I got talked into being a full-time assistant principal of an elementary school with 700 plus children. I was exposed to different styles of leadership of both principals and superintendents. These real life experiences were valuable as were the graduate courses, post graduate courses and workshops I attended on administration. All of these presented me with an attractive menu of leadership entrees. I came to realize that I would be best served by choosing a variety of “leadership appetizers,” tasting and testing many of the styles to which I had been exposed.

Looking back, I see that I acquired skill from my professional training. However I came to realize two important things. First, I realized I had to be me, the person. Then me, the principal, would follow. Second, I best learned from observation. From both of these evolved my leadership style which could best be identified as situational.

#### *Examples:*

- There are times it is best to use personal power;
- There are other times when it is best to use position power;
- Sometimes lead with your head;

- Sometimes lead with your heart;
- There are times to be direct;
- There are times to be passive;
- If you err, do so out of compassion and not out of fear;
- Be honest with self (nothing is worse than making another happy, but you miserable);
- Take time for reflection because “if you go within, you won’t go without.”
- Want help in being a life-long learner? Your secretary is your greatest resource.

### Develop a School Mission Statement

A mission statement can tell who you are as a school and what you seek to do. It should be brief and specific. The principal should not author a school’s mission statement. A group of teachers, parents and principal can devise this document together. I utilized our School Council with an equal number of staff and parents. I’d suggest the group not exceed twelve in number. Report back to staff regularly at staff meetings. Do the same at PTO meetings. Expect to have at least three drafts. Don’t seek staff or parent votes on your final draft; look for consensus. Everyone will then have ownership. Here is the mission statement at our Houghton School:

#### *MISSION STATEMENT*

*We are a child-centered school. Our commitment is to provide challenging and creative learning experiences that enable children to build both a strong academic and social foundation. Our school offers a safe, supportive environment where children care to learn and learn to care.*

Make the mission statement visible in print. Have the mission statement professionally printed & framed. Post a copy in your school’s front lobby, not the office. You want it to be seen by staff, parents, visitors, and children. Have copies of the mission statement professionally printed on heavy stock paper (size of a 3x5 index card). Ways to promote your school’s mission statement are:

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# Northeast Regional Elementary School Principals' Council Encourages a Repeal of Social Security Offsets

James C. Brown

*MESPA Assistant Executive Director*

In late September, MESPA hosted the annual meeting of the Northeast Regional Elementary School Principals' Council in Hyannis. The NRESPC is comprised of the state principal associations of Zones 1 and 2 of

the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), including Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Member Associations in attendance discussed two Social Security Offsets – the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset Provision (GPO), both of which have a significant impact on educators from 13 states including Massachusetts. The WEP reduces the earned Social Security benefits of an individual who also receives a public pension from a job not covered by Social Security and the GPO reduces Social Security spousal or survivor benefits by two-thirds of the individual's public pension. In other words, the WEP and GPO affect many public school principals who are employed in states that do not provide for social security contributions, but who have, nonetheless, earned social security benefits from other employment and paid into the system. Massachusetts principals are affected by these offsets.

The NRESPC requested that the NAESP Board of Directors discuss and take a position on the elimination of these offsets. At its October meeting, the NAESP Board of Directors discussed this request and voted to take a policy position supporting the repeal of WEP and GPO, known in Congress as the Social Security Fairness Act (HR.235, S.484). These companion bills seem to have broad bipartisan support and we urge MESPA members to contact their Representative and Senators to move these bills forward.

## **MESPA Offers an Array of High Quality Professional Development for Principals and their Leadership Teams**

In addition to the Winter Conference, featuring Dr. Richard Elmore on Instructional Rounds, MESPA is offering a number of high quality professional development programs throughout 2010. Featured programs in January and February 2010 include:

- January 14    **Distinguished Lecture: Instructional Rounds**  
Presenter: Richard Elmore
- January 21    **Getting Inspired: Using Kidspiration Across the Curriculum**  
Presenter: Evelyn Woldman
- January 28    **The Head, Heart and Hand of the Ethical Principal**  
Presenter: Ronald Areglado
- February 4    **Getting Inspired: Using Inspiration Across the Curriculum**  
Presenter: Evelyn Woldman
- February 5    **Supervision and Evaluation to Improve Teaching and Learning**  
Presenter: Kim Marshall
- February 10    **Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners through Differentiated Instruction**  
Presenter: Louise Thompson
- February 24    **Success in the Middle: Meeting the Needs of Young Adolescents in the K-8 Setting**  
Presenters: Santo Pino and Juan Rodriguez

For a complete listing and descriptions of all professional development offerings, registration forms and to learn more about the MESPA In-District Program and MESPA Coaching Program, please go to:

<http://www.mespa.org/professional/calendar.html>

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- Include a copy with kindergarten registration packets
- Include with school registration materials for all grades
- Quote from or read the mission statement at kindergarten parent orientation
- The principal reads the school's mission statement at large gatherings of parents or visitors including Open House, Community Reading Day, and School Committee presentations
- Have it printed in your school handbook
- Have it printed as part of your budget requests
- Let it serve as the foundation for your annual School Improvement Plan

A school's mission statement should be lived, heard, seen in print, and visibly seen in the many daily practices of school life.

**School Values**

An expression that I have heard from some children is: "School Rules!" The meaning is not rules to be obeyed, but rather school is the best! I frequently tell parents that I do not believe in rules for school. The association is negative since it is almost always about don't(s), no(s), and can't(s). Rather, I believe we should teach ethics or values which all rules would otherwise fall under. At our school we have established five school values. They are: *kindness, respect, cooperation, honesty, and responsibility*. They support our mission statement words of "care to learn and learn to care." These values are printed in 4 inch high letters on color coded paper strips which are then laminated. For example: RESPECT appears on red paper construction backing. KINDNESS on yellow, etc. Same color background for each value in every room and in every grade.

These values are visible in each of our classrooms and meeting areas for children and adults. Where discipline may

be required, adults connect an incident to a school value. I have found this practice helps ensure *commonality of language* (spoken and heard) as well as *consistency of practice* on the part of all school adults. Both of these assist in the creation of a strong social foundation in the school.

**Motivation/ Inspiration/ Guidance/Humor**

We all have times when we need a little "pick-me-upper." I've created a file of quotations that help me to re-energize, get back into focus, or just help remind me as to why I'm here as a principal. I use them for talks, on weekly staff notices, or just as "caffeine free stimulants." Here are some of my favorites:

- Horse sense is what keeps horses from betting on people.
- A smile adds a great deal to face value.
- See everything, overlook a great deal, and improve a little each day.
- Competition doesn't create character, it exposes it.
- The greatest ability is dependability.
- The room for improvement is never full.
- The art of educational progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order.
- Faster can be slower.
- When you get to the end of your rope tie a knot, hang on, and swing.
- Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; Working together is success.
- Advice can be like snow. The softer it falls, the deeper it goes.
- You never grow old until you've lost all your marvels.
- Courage: the art of being the only one that knows you are scared to death.
- Life is made of sighs, sniffles, and smiles.
- You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give.

- Life is like the ocean, having both high tides and low tides.
- You don't choose your profession. Your profession has chosen you. For it is you that possess gifts of the present that will be tomorrow's future.
- We believe our children are the future. Teach them well and let them lead the way.

**The Arts**

Support Art, Music, and Physical Education in your school. Hire the very best people you can. Require and promote the development of these staff as a "teaching team." Look for alternate revenue streams to buy the instructional equipment and materials they need to provide children the best learning opportunities. Parents love the arts. They will find ways to fund such requests.

Integrate the arts into other subjects by thematic teaching. Encourage your classroom teachers to have the arts integrate units of study in social studies, science, and literacy on a grade level basis into their teaching. This practice can be supported by allocating time at staff meetings for the arts team to give updates of their efforts.

Defend the arts during times of budget cuts. Provide exposure to the children's exhibition of the arts to parent/public audiences whenever and wherever possible. Art, Music, and Physical Education are important in the overall development of young children. They provide opportunities for children to achieve in school and later in life. Furthermore, these subjects engage both hemispheres of a child's brain. Our country's economy thrives on creativity. It is these subjects that can help activate and support the development of each child's creative nature.

**Special Education**

I know of no other segment of public education that provides more stress, raises questions, yet offers so much satisfaction as a child progresses. Value your special

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education staff members. They can provide classroom teachers and principals with instructional expertise better than any workshop. Meet with these staff on a regular basis to provide them all the support you can muster. Help them work through the minefields of regulations; paperwork that exceeds that of any administrator; and the requests and demands from a variety of parents and advocates.

Your special education staff need to have opportunities to participate in regular education activities. Take your time to help them find time to carry out their duties of instruction, evaluation, classroom consultation, writing IEP'S, meeting the overwhelming regulatory requirements, serving as their own pseudo-secretaries in the maintaining of each child's special education file AND to have a life, outside of school. Sounds like a training ground for the principalship; I think it truly is. Good special education staff are special.

**Library/Media Center**

Our library/media center serves as the instructional hub of our school. Nothing is so important in school as the teaching and learning of literacy. Your main resource should be your library/media center. Find numerous revenue streams to establish a library/media area that serves your children and your teachers. A children's literature inventory can be built over time. Such was the case at our school. This is a project you need not take on by yourself. Use your School Improvement Plan to create short, mid-level, and high level goals for acquiring books. The publication *Information Power* has standards that can assist you in your quest for upgrading your children's library.

Funding sources can include budget appropriations, proceeds from PTO sponsored book fairs, or other school fundraisers that are goal specific to increase the number of children's books in your school library. Make your requests known to the public. Donations of recommended books with a special inserted plate to note

children's birthdays, a deceased family member, or special family considerations serve as other means to acquire books. There are philanthropists out there! No one, but no one says no to books for a children's library.

Book selections can come from a number of recommended library sources including a community's public library. Be sure to include your staff recommendations and those of a librarian or library aide. They know the circulation of a variety of books by topics and titles.

These are some of the practices I have developed from numerous experiences as a principal. There are many more I could share. All my experiences have involved working with wonderful people: teachers, parents and children. So too, all of these parties have been *my teachers*; teachers of this principal, for this principal, and with this principal. If it were not for them I would not be the principal or person I am today.



The poster features a blue background with a large white arrow pointing right. In the top left, there is a logo for 'naesp 2010' with a stylized figure of a person and a child. Below the logo, it says '89th ANNUAL CONVENTION & EXPOSITION' and 'APRIL 8-11, 2010 | HOUSTON, TX'. The main text reads 'MISSION Possible: Enrich Your World and Beyond'. Below this, it says 'Join us for learning, leading, and building community.' At the bottom, it says 'NAESP's 89th Annual Convention & Exposition'. There are two circular inset images: one showing a group of people sitting at a table, and another showing a group of people in red shirts working outdoors.

**naesp 2010**  
89<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION & EXPOSITION  
APRIL 8-11, 2010 | HOUSTON, TX

**MISSION Possible:**  
**Enrich Your World and Beyond**

Join us for learning, leading, and building community.

**NAESP's 89<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention & Exposition**



## Editor's Corner

JOHN CIESLUK

### Catching Up or Leading the Way...

**C**atching Up or Leading the Way: *American Education in the Age of Globalization* is the title of Yong Zhao's recent ASCD book (2009) that has stretched my thinking about education reform in dramatically new and different directions.

As states are applying for Race To The Top (RTTT) federal grant funds, several are making dramatic compromises about long-standing policies concerning school governance and finance in order to qualify for much needed federal funding. There is no question we need stimulus funding to support our nation's public schools... but at what cost and for what purpose? Yong Zhao argues that the furtherance of the basic tenets of NCLB – more rigorous and uniform national standards and greater accountability – should not be the focus of our future reform efforts.

The following questions that appear on the back cover of the book frame the heart of Zhao's discussion:

"At a time when globalization and technology are dramatically altering the world we live in, is education reform in the United States headed down the right path? Are schools emphasizing the knowledge and skills students need in a global society—or are schools actually undermining their strengths by overemphasizing high-stakes testing and standardization? Are education systems in China and other countries really superior as some people claim?"

Chinese born and educated, Zhao is a Distinguished Professor at the College of Education at Michigan State University and serves as the director of the US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence and the Center for Teaching and Technology. *Catching Up or Leading the Way* provides school leaders, politi-

“...the furtherance of the basic tenets of NCLB – more rigorous and uniform national standards and greater accountability – should not be the focus of our future reform efforts.”

cians and the public with a comprehensive and thought-provoking treatise on international education reform. Zhao traces the history of US education reform, starting with the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*, up to the latest work on national standards by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. He examines the history of education in China, beginning with the advent of their Imperial Exam program (keju) that spanned 1300 years (605-1905) and cites current goals of the 17th Congress of the Communist Party (2008) that call for relaxing requirements of the current university entrance examination system

(gaokao) and becoming an innovative nation. He presents the challenges we face with globalization and the proliferation of technology, and he offers a new set of recommendations for the future of American education, ones that take into account the global competence required of students to face the challenges of the 21st century and beyond.

Zhao offers this challenge on the final page of the book:

“American education is at a crossroads. Two paths lie in front of us: one in which we destroy our strengths in order to catch up with others on test scores and one in which we build on our strengths so we can keep the lead in innovation and creativity.”

The picture that Zhao presents about what should affect education reform is one that all school leaders should understand as major decisions about the future of American education are made. What constitutes a world-class education cannot be based on assumptions made by a few influential politicians and state leaders. Key decision-makers need to hear from well-informed professionals as RTTT grant funds are forthcoming and changes to NCLB imminent.

## MESPA Welcomes New Members

The MESPA and MESPEF Boards of Directors welcome the following principals and assistant principals as new members of the Association:

Ruby Ababio Fernandez  
 Lisa Bailly  
 Tamara Blake  
 Harolyn Bowden  
 Barney Brawer  
 Thomas Brindisi  
 Eliza Burns  
 Christine Cappadona  
 Ethan D'Ablemont Burnes  
 Marlon Davis  
 Paula Del Prete  
 Laura Dolloff  
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 Michael J. Perkins Elem. School  
 Heard Street Discovery Academy  
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 Eastham Elementary School  
 John P. Holland Elem. School  
 John Winthrop Elementary School  
 Gardner Pilot School  
 Baldwin Early Learning Center  
 Burncoat Street Middle School  
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 Gov. Winslow Elementary School  
 Charles H. Taylor Elem. School  
 Manassah Bradley Elem. School  
 North Street Elementary School  
 F. Lyman Winship Elem. School  
 Lee Academy Pilot School  
 Dr. Wm. Henderson Elem. School  
 Emily A. Fifield School  
 Carver Elementary School  
 John McDevitt Middle School  
 Curtis Guild Elementary School  
 South Grafton Elementary School  
 Highlands Elementary School  
 Maurice Donahue Elem. School  
 Charles Sumner Elem. School  
 Joseph Tynan Elementary School  
 Curley K-8 Upper School  
 Forestdale School  
 McKinley Elementary School  
 Edgartown Elementary School  
 Duval Elementary School  
 Paul Dever Elementary School  
 Murphy K-8 School  
 Mildren Avenue K-8 School  
 Lillian Jacobs Elementary School  
 Orchard Gardens Pilot School  
 Jackson-Mann Elementary School  
 Crisafulli Elementary School  
 John Eliot Elementary School  
 Dennis C. Haley Elem. School  
 Wm. Ohrenberger Elem. School

Mattapan  
 Amherst  
 Dorchester  
 Roxbury  
 South Boston  
 Worcester  
 Hingham  
 Hull  
 Jamaica Plain  
 Cambridge  
 Framingham  
 Plymouth  
 Whitman  
 Brighton  
 Rehoboth  
 East Longmeadow  
 East Boston  
 Dracut  
 South Boston  
 Chelsea  
 Medway  
 Eastham  
 Dorchester  
 Dorchester  
 Allston  
 Brighton  
 Worcester  
 Bourne  
 Marshfield  
 Mattapan  
 East Boston  
 Tewksbury  
 Brighton  
 Dorchester  
 Dorchester  
 Dorchester  
 Carver  
 Waltham  
 East Boston  
 South Grafton  
 Braintree  
 Holyoke  
 Roslindale  
 South Boston  
 Jamaica Plain  
 Sandwich  
 Boston  
 Edgartown  
 Whitman  
 Boston  
 Dorchester  
 Mattapan  
 Hull  
 Roxbury  
 Allston  
 Westford  
 Boston  
 Roslindale  
 West Roxbury

MESPA also welcomes the following individuals who were formerly Aspiring members and have now become Active members as principals or assistant principals:

Nancy Ames, Assistant Principal  
 Marcy Dugas, Assistant Principal  
 Erich Ledebuhr, Principal

Ethel E. Hammond School  
 Harwich Elementary School  
 Hanscom Middle School

Onset  
 Harwich  
 Hanscom

MESPA also welcomes the following Aspiring members to the Association:

Kari Hoffman  
 Diane Jaquith

Armstrong Elementary School  
 Burr Elementary School

Westborough  
 Auburndale



ANNOUNCING

### The 2010 Thomas C. Passios Outstanding Principal Award

Sponsored by the

Massachusetts Elementary School  
 Principals' Association

Massachusetts  
 Department of Elementary and  
 Secondary Education

Fitchburg State College  
 Alumni Association

AND

### The National Distinguished Principal Award

Sponsored by the

Massachusetts Elementary School  
 Principals' Association

National Association of Elementary  
 School Principals

Awards may be presented  
 to one Elementary Level  
 and one Middle Level Principal

**Deadline for Receipt  
 of Nomination Binders:  
 March 1, 2010**

For more information  
 about the Awards,  
 the Criteria for Selection  
 and a Nomination Form,  
 please contact Jim Brown,  
 MESPA Assistant Executive Director  
 at 508-624-0500  
 or via e-mail at  
[jimbrown@mespa.org](mailto:jimbrown@mespa.org)

**Executive Excerpts***continued from page 3*

- Licensure program in instructional technology where over 30 people have received their licenses in this field.
- Comprehensive professional development program that has educated thousands of administrators and teachers in curriculum, leadership, management, legal and other areas.
- Leadership coaching program for principals that has received stellar evaluations.

Further, the Center has been rented by educational agencies across the Commonwealth, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Social Services, school districts, and private companies being among them.

It is safe to say that the MESPA Education and Technology Center has made a difference to the educational community. Those people who contributed to the fundraiser many years ago, that helped us to raise the down payment for the Center, have seen a far-reaching effect of that contribution over two decades and that effect is still being felt by educators across the state.

Last month, MESPEF embarked on another fundraiser, only the second one in our history. Its purpose will be to gain resources to continue and expand some of the outstanding programs that MESPA and MESPEF offer and to build up our reserves that have been affected by the economic downturn. Already our retired members have contributed their support. In 2010, we will be approaching businesses, companies, and individuals to help build the next great decade for MESPA and MESPEF.

As we look back, we see the foundation that launched so much growth and support for principals and other educators. Looking forward, we see another decade, and more, of continued service to all of these people in whose hands we have placed the future of our state and nation—principals!

**President's Message***continued from page 2*

petitive nature and sense of optimism into school initiatives that benefit everyone in the school community.

**The Generation X-ers** were born 1965 to 1980. X-ers are technologically savvy and learned to be most adept at video games and personal computers during their formative years. This group has experienced soaring divorce rates, their parents being laid off after years of dedicated service, and challenges to the government, organized religion and big corporations. This has instilled a sense of skepticism and distrust of institutions. Because they don't expect employer loyalty, they see no problem changing jobs frequently to advance professionally.

Generation X-ers believe that work isn't the most important thing in their lives. They are resourceful and hardworking, but once their workday ends, they'd rather pursue other interests. Gen X-ers' life experiences span events from Watergate

to Operation Desert Storm. They grew up in a "pre-standards" era with open classrooms and experiential learning. As today's teachers, Gen X-ers prefer action to talk and seek balance between their personal and professional lives. Principals can call upon their extensive technological skills to enhance the work of the school and use their creative energy to think outside the box. Social scientists believe it best not to try to micro-manage Gen X-ers but instead give them clear guidelines followed by the space and independence to get the job done.

**The Millennials** were born from 1981 to 1999. The oldest Millennials are recent college graduates and are just now entering our work force. These are children who have had access to all sorts of technology (cell phones, pagers and personal computers) all their lives. Millennials

*continued on page 11***COUNTY ORGANIZATIONS NEWS****Hampden County**

Marie Pratt, MESPA County Director for Hampden County and principal of Blueberry Hill Elementary School in Longmeadow, hosted the first county meeting in October.

At that meeting, a list of topics for future meetings was generated and those attending had an opportunity to informally network.

Future meetings will begin at 4:00 PM and will be held on a bi-monthly basis. County meetings will be held in various schools. The next meeting date has not been determined, but it will be hosted by Jordana Harper-Ewert, principal of the Robert R. Litwin Elementary School in Chicopee. Expected topics to be covered at the meeting may include H1N1, Budget Strategies/Rationale, and the Principals' Toolkit. An email will be sent out to all Hampden County members announcing the date.

Other topics for future Hampden County meetings will include Supervision and Evaluation, RTI, Assessments, Self Care and Balance, the Breakthrough Coach, and Dealing with Difficult Parents.

For more information about Hampden County activities, please feel free to contact Marie at [mpratt@longmeadow.k12.ma.us](mailto:mpratt@longmeadow.k12.ma.us)

**President's Message***continued from page 10*

are eager to learn and enjoy questioning things. They exude confidence and strong self-reliance. They are collaborators and favor teamwork, having functioned in groups in school, organized sports and extracurricular activities since they were babies.

Millennials reject the notion that they have to stay within the rigid confines of a job description and plan to keep all of their career options open. Millennials are more likely to make entire career changes, build parallel careers or have multiple careers over their lifetime. Millennials also value the expertise of the older generations and bring their cutting-edge technological knowledge and skills to the school environment. They are especially adept at multi-tasking and value, as well as seek, immediate feedback on their work performance. When we are explicit in letting Millennials know that we value their expertise and input, we are more likely to retain more of them in the teaching profession.

Important tasks for school leaders include the development of deeper understanding of the staff members who work in a school, learning what they value and how they view the world, and then creating a culture where all individuals can work in a collegial manner. When the principal as well as staff members from different generations know more about each group's values, characteristics, and contributions, it is inevitable that a stronger school culture will develop.

The birth years defining the generations aren't entirely clear cut. You might identify with more than one generation if your birth year falls near the beginning or the end of a given generational range. In that case, consider yourself a "cusper"—one who's on the cusp between one generation and the next.

Three such groups exist in today's work force:

**Traditionalist/Baby Boomer:** Born around 1940 until 1945, members of this cusper group value the strong work ethic of the traditionalists but are also eager to challenge the status quo as a Baby Boomer.

**Baby Boomer/Generation X-er:** Born between 1960 and 1965, these cuspers witnessed the success of their older Baby Boomer counterparts but have also experienced the recession the early Generation X-ers have experienced. Computers didn't enter into elementary and high schools until after this group graduated.

**Generation X-er/Millennial:** Born from 1975 to 1980, these cuspers possess an interesting mix of Generation X skepticism and millennial optimism and they're quite comfortable with technology.

Cuspers are valuable in the workforce because they identify with not just one generation but two and as a result can bridge an understanding between the two generations. They're often skilled at mediating, translating and mentoring the next generation.

Social scientists say it's helpful to be aware of the differences and appreciate the strengths and positive attributes each generation on your staff possesses. Once you have acknowledged the differences and taken time to consider the strengths of your staff and colleagues you can find ways to interact with them that will be mutually beneficial.

Since communication, professional development, supervision and evaluation and appreciation and recognition are the four key variables of school life that are heavily impacted by generational differences it can be important to think about the generations on your staff in order to make good matches.

For instance, the first choice of communication for the Generation X-ers and Millennials is always the newest technology—they are wired and there is no turning back. Cell phones, instant

messaging, iPods, Podcasts, webinars, blogs, e-newsletters are the preferred communication channel for their personal lives as well as professional lives. It might be helpful to make it at least a part of their professional development and for giving and receiving instant feedback. These digital natives need to be patient and understanding with their colleagues who are less technologically proficient or inclined and the older crowd needs to be accepting of the new wave.

Essentially, respect for generations really goes both ways. Younger employees can learn to value the experience of their older counterparts and older workers may benefit by embracing the viewpoints of their younger colleagues.

In teaming and mentoring situations, those involved need to be proactive in learning about work preferences and seek to understand the perspectives of those who are coming from a different place and time. Much like the work we have done around multiple intelligences, theory and learning styles with our students, we need to build the same level of understanding and appreciation for each other. It is only when we do the work to better understand and appreciate one another as adults that we will be able to do our best work in helping students succeed at high levels.

**Sources:**

Neil Howe, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, 2000

Matt Starcevic, *Center for Coaching and Mentoring*, 2009

Riverside Health Systems and the Mayo Clinic, 2005

Marc Prensky, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants" from *On the Horizon* (MCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001)

# MESPA FALL CONFERENCE

▶ Kathy Podesky, MESPA Vice President and Conference Chair, opens the MESPA Fall Conference



▶ Nadya Aswad Higgins, MESPA Executive Director and Rich Burchill, MESPEF President, receive a gift to MESPA from Cathy Lis, Territory Manager for Lifetouch Studios



▼ Stephen Fortin accepts the James Argir Scholarship on behalf of his son, Jeffrey, from Greg Libutti, VALIC Regional Manager, and Nadya Aswad Higgins, MESPA Executive Director



◀ Liz Perry, principal of Dr. John C. Page School in West Newbury, reads a letter of thanks from her daughter, Grace, in recognition of her being awarded a scholarship



▲ Robert Lane accepts the James Argir Scholarship on behalf of Connor Johnson from Greg Libutti, VALIC Regional Manager

# PHOTO COLLAGE

▶ Susan Brookhart, featured speaker at the Fall Conference, presented on Classroom Formative Assessment: Supporting Student Learning



▶ Nadya Aswad Higgins, MESPA Executive Director, brings greetings to conference participants



▲ Deborah Donovan, MESPA Past President, receives the Past President's Award from MESPA President Tari Thomas

▶ Greg Irvine accepts the James Argir Scholarship on behalf of his daughter, Meredith, from Greg Libutti, VALIC Regional Manager



◀ Liz Perry accepts the James Argir Scholarship on behalf of her daughter, Grace, from Greg Libutti, VALIC Regional Manager



# Avoiding Public Records Pitfalls

Sheilah F. McCarthy

*Lenow & McCarthy*

The recent troubles that have befallen Michael Kineavy, top aide to Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, illustrate potential pitfalls that exist for public employees in connection with the Massachusetts Public Records Law. Mr. Kineavy stands accused of “deleting” thousands of emails that he wrote in the course of fulfilling his duties in the Mayor’s office. Of course, the reason that the number of emails “deleted” is known is because Mr. Kineavy may have hit the “delete” button, but that did not effectively delete the emails and those documents have now been recovered by computer experts. In an apparent response to the public outcry related to this news, Mr. Kineavy took an unpaid leave of absence. The Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General recently got involved in the case.

The first step in avoiding Mr. Kineavy’s predicament is to have a basic understanding of the law. The law defines “public records” broadly as:

All books, papers, maps, photographs, recorded tapes, financial statements, statistical tabulations, or other documentary materials or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any officer or employee . . . such materials or data fall within the following exemptions. . .

There are eighteen (18) separate categories of exemptions. Some of the more salient categories where school building principals are concerned are as follows:



1. Statutory exemptions (specifically or by necessary implication of a particular statute);
2. Investigatory materials compiled by necessity by law enforcement or other investigatory officials the disclosure of which would so prejudice the possibility of effective law enforcement that such disclosure would not be in the public interest;
3. Personnel and medical files or information; also any materials or data relating to a specifically named individual, the disclosure of which may constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
4. Inter- or intra-agency memos or letters relating to policy positions being developed by the agency, but this exemption does not apply to reasonably completed factual studies or reports on which the development of such policy positions has been or may be based;
5. Notebooks and other materials prepared by an employee which are personal to him and not maintained as part of the files of the governmental unit;
6. Records related solely to personnel rules and practices of the governmental unit, provided however, that such records shall be withheld only to the extent that proper performance

of necessary governmental functions requires such withholding;

7. Home address and telephone number of an employee, except that this information can be provided to public employee unions (employee organizations), nonprofit organizations for retired employees, and criminal justice agencies;
8. Test questions and answers, provided that such materials are intended to be used for another test, examination, or assessment instrument; and
9. Records related to a public building such as blue prints “or any other record relating to the security or safety of persons, buildings, structures, facilities, utilities, transportation or other infrastructure . . . , the disclosure of which, in the reasonable judgment of the custodian, . . . is likely to jeopardize public safety.”

See G.L. c. 4, § 7 (clause 26). While the definition of “public record” must be broadly construed, the opposite is true of the exemptions, which must be narrowly construed.

Generally, the custodian of a public record has ten (10) days from receipt of a request in which to provide access to the requested materials. Anybody who is denied access to public records may pursue the remedy provided under Section 10 of Chapter 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The remedy is pursued first through the Supervisor of Public Records, which is a division of the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth. Upon determination by the Supervisor that the record is public, s/he will order the custodian to comply. If the custodian still refuses to comply, the Supervisor will

*continued on page 15*

***Avoiding Public Records Pitfalls****continued from page 14*

notify the Attorney General or the appropriate District Attorney who may take whatever measures he or she deems necessary to ensure compliance. The remedy available under Section 10 of Chapter 66 does not preclude an individual from pursuing his or her own remedy in court. In any court action, the burden of proof will always be on the custodian to prove that the records requested are somehow exempt from disclosure.

How has this law been applied in practice? There are several categories of records that are exempt because they are expressly exempted under separate statutory provisions. For example, evaluations of special needs children, juvenile delinquent case records, student records, and library circulation records are exempt to name a few that are particularly germane to building principals. With regard to other types of materials, it may be surprising (or perhaps not) to learn that individual employee absentee records showing name, dates of absence, and generic classifications of the absence (e.g. sick day, vacation) are not exempt. However, of course, any information in those records that discusses or discloses a medical or health matter would be exempt. Payroll records are not exempt. However, student evaluations of teachers are exempt as are teacher disciplinary records that contain any identifying references to the teacher.

There is no question that there is a presumption that emails written and received in the course of employment as a public

employee are public records. Such emails would be exempt from disclosure under the public records law only if their content causes them to fall within one of the enumerated exemptions. To avoid the embarrassment that Mr. Kineavy has recently suffered, public employees should remember that simply “deleting” an email does not actually delete the document or file from the computer and computer forensics experts can recover the emails.

The prudent course of action for any building principal is to confer with the Superintendent’s office to ascertain the document retention schedule that the school district adheres to for emails (and other documents and records) and be careful to maintain the email, rather than trying to delete it. Some school districts, perhaps many, should have policies in place relating to emails and other records and how those records should be maintained. Further, although a building principal is, technically speaking, a “custodian” of public records, in the event that a principal receives a request for public records, that request should be forwarded immediately to the Superintendent’s office for guidance on a response. The Supervisor of Public Records advises that public employees should print out emails (sent or received) and file them in accordance with the employing entity’s paper filing system procedure.

For more information go to [www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/pdf/guide.pdf](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/pdf/guide.pdf)

## KEEP YOUR RECORD AT MESPA CURRENT

In order to ensure that you are receiving all of the benefits of membership, we urge you to notify us if you have a change of mailing or e-mail address, or if your position has changed and you wish to renew in the Association in a new category of membership.

Many of our communications, as well as the **Principal View**, are sent to our members electronically. At times, we offer professional development programs at no cost, or reduced cost, funded by grants. These are announced via e-mail blasts and participants are chosen on a first come, first serve basis.

**It is, therefore, very important that:**

- ⇒ ***We have your correct email in our database – we encourage you to provide us with your personal home email address as well as your work email address***
- ⇒ ***You ask your system to permit email from any account @mespa.org, and not to interpret it as SPAM***