



# REPORT

## *Leadership for Learning*

### Iowa Schools Use Principals Center to Reinforce Their Work

Supports were laid more than three years ago for in-depth learning and development with the groundbreaking Iowa Leadership Academy Principals Center Summer Institute. The program's design of applying new learning to participants' schools and work on Individual Professional Development Plans will be applied again June 23-24, 2010, at the West Des Moines Sheraton.

Sign-up begins early in February via an e-mail invitation sent to all principals. A registration rate of \$95 includes one night's stay at the Sheraton, based on room availability. While this offer alone makes it an attractive learning opportunity, it's the variety of ways in which participants can affect student achievement that provides the ultimate payoff for this event.

Conversations with past attendees yield a sampling of the progress being made in Iowa, in part, from learning offered by the Principals Center.

Missouri Valley grades 6-12 co-principals Deidre Drees and Justin Gross have used previous Summer Institute speaker Richard Elmore's work to focus on the level and types of tasks teachers are asking students to complete or master. Administrators and teachers question whether tasks require higher-order thinking and construction of new knowledge or if the tasks are just fact recall.

After hearing Lisa Carter address the subject of Total Instructional Alignment, Carter was brought to Missouri Valley for a professional development day. The school has been working to align the Iowa Core Curriculum's essential skills and concepts, instruction, and assessment practices horizontally and vertically. Missouri Valley administrators reported that based on observations, students are demonstrating a higher level of engagement and ownership of their learning. Through these and other efforts, teachers are clearer on what students need to learn and are utilizing a variety of student assessment practices for students to demonstrate their learning in relevant and meaningful ways.



Pleasant Valley Junior High principal Brian Strusz shared, "First and foremost, the networking that comes from ILA has been invaluable. In addition, every year the presenters provide thought-provoking ideas that challenge our professional thinking and leadership.

"I still remember our first ILA in Dubuque when Roland Barth talked about how we can be certain that our teachers and students are experiencing 'off-the-chart learning.' Dr. Barth also challenged us to think about what data points could be collected to demonstrate we have reached off-the-chart learning (through classroom observations, discussions with students and colleagues, observable increased engagement, and an increase in active leading learners)."

Strusz added that in approaching the Iowa Core implementation with the faculty, he found himself reflecting on Richard Elmore's presentation on the Instructional Core and how the teacher, student and content all work as one. None of the three components can be changed without it having a direct impact on the other two.

College Community School District has sent all principals and assistant principals to the Principals Center each year. Superintendent Dick Whitehead has encouraged their participation and conducts quarterly conversations about the goals they set at the Summer Institute. Executive Director of Learning Services Ying Ying Chen reported that they regularly review and apply what they learn in their administrative sessions. For example, Elmore's research is applied in their "Instructional Rounds," a shared practice of observing, discussing, and analyzing learning and teaching, which is also being used with the ILA Superintendents' Networks.

Chen continues, "Lisa Carter's research is fully embedded in our ICC implementation process. These common ILA learning experiences anchor our focus as we pursue school improvement as a system. Our principals value the opportunity to learn, share and set new SMART goals at the summer institute. They benefit from the thought-provoking speakers, time to collaborate with their teammates, and the opportunities to network with other administrators."

Principals, please give serious consideration to enrolling in this summer's event to build on your learning and professional practice. It will be well worth the investment.

"Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning."

~ Benjamin Franklin

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## Executive Director's Message from Dan Smith

# The Natural

“Students perform better in school when they and their teachers believe that intelligence is not fixed, but can be developed.”

~ Carol Dweck, Stanford psychologist

How many of us have marveled at someone with “natural” talents? Throughout my career, I have had the joy of witnessing students gifted in academics, the arts, athletics, speaking, social skills and many other areas. As educators we know that children have differing abilities. But have we allowed ourselves to develop a “fixed mindset” belief that certain abilities are inherent and student success is predicated on these innate abilities? Basically, that belief holds that some students are smart and some are not, and that’s that.

Research by Carol Dweck of Stanford (2009), indicates that the opposite of the fixed mindset is the “growth mindset, in which they (educators) believe that intelligence can be developed by various means—for example, through effort and instruction. A growth mindset doesn’t imply that everyone is the same or could be Einstein, but does imply that everyone’s intellectual ability can grow—and that even Einstein wasn’t Einstein before he put in years of passionate, relentless effort.”

Dweck’s research is consistent with the major theme of Malcolm Gladwell’s book *Outliers*. In the book, Gladwell presents extensive research on extremely successful individuals who he calls “outliers,” and the factors associated with their success. It is an extremely provocative book. He identifies three factors associated with extreme success. Two of the three are being in the right place at the right time and innate ability. But the third is the effort expended by the successful individual.

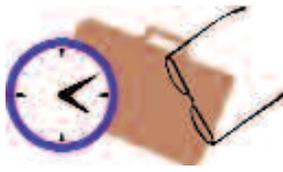
Gladwell states “achievement is talent plus preparation. The problem with this view is that the closer psychologists look at the careers of the gifted, the smaller the role innate talent seems to play and the bigger the role preparation seems to play.” (p. 38)

Gladwell cites the work of Daniel Levitin that indicates among professionals who are accomplished in their field and who often seem to be “naturals,” people such as composers, athletes, writers, etc. require 10,000 hours of practice to achieve the level of mastery.

As educators we must embrace a growth mindset. Dweck lists four messages that promote a growth mindset:

- We believe in potential and are committed to helping everyone get smarter.
- We value (and praise) taking on challenges, exerting effort, and surmounting obstacles more than we value (and praise) “natural” talent and easy success.
- Working hard to learn new thing makes you smarter – it makes your brain grow new connections.
- School is not a place that judges you. It is a place where people help your brain grow new connections.

This research is certainly information that you’ll want to share.



# In Brief

At its January meeting, the SAI Representative Council:

- discussed possible changes to Evaluator Renewal Training. A list of proposed modules and content was provided. Job-alike groups offered their views on the recommendations.
- heard that Lynn Erickson and Jean Donham will facilitate a focus on students, their learning and their tasks in the classroom at the Iowa Leadership Academy Principals Center Summer Institute. Participants will receive resources to replicate their learning in their buildings.

Also, funding to sustain ILA Superintendents' Networks continues to be sought.

- was informed that Jan. 27 Mentor-Mentee meeting participants will discuss expectations, ISSL 6, work/life balance and Fierce Conversations;
- learned that the Attorney General's Office is proposing to change Iowa law regarding sexting crimes for children ages 14-18. SAI staff will review and provide recommendations on the proposal, and inform members of any changes.
- received information on Wallace activities:
  - One of the major efforts is addressing sustainability issues. Most of the Wallace work has been written into the RTTT application. Iowa is also applying for the Invest in Innovation Grant for the SAMs project. An Investment Prospectus listing the work done so far and what remains to be accomplished has been created to use to secure other funding sources.
  - Nearly 70 administrators and administrator preparation professors will participate in the development of a mentoring curriculum to be used beginning next year at the local level for assistant principals and associate superintendents.
  - Dr. Allan Odden will present May 12 and 13 in Des Moines on aligning human and financial resources with 10 strategies that have the most impact on student achievement.

## School Administration Managers

Twenty-two Iowa SAM/Principal teams attended the national SAMs conference last month thanks to underwriting from The Wallace Foundation's grant to Iowa. Attendees heard from Susan Scott, author of *Fierce Leadership*; Andy Hargreaves, author of *The Fourth Way*; and Iowa's Carol Lensing, who facilitated a dialogue on "competing commitments" based on Tony Wagner's work in leading change.

## Give us your feedback\*

### ? January Results

**How do you collect feedback from students regarding school and what it has to offer?**

Survey respondents indicated that responses are collected with a survey.

Also, view results of the Gallup Poll on student engagement, [www.gallupstudentpoll.com](http://www.gallupstudentpoll.com)

**This month's question:**  
**Are you currently examining your grading practices?**

Provide your answer, <http://bit.ly/a4iMyC>

*\* This is an unscientific survey of volunteer participants and is not a valid statistical sample.*

## Public Sense of Urgency Work Continues



A task force created to elicit public support for educational innovations that prepare kids for success in the 21st century met Jan. 28.

The group is made up of representatives from the AEAs, SAI, IASB, ISEA, DE, the Wallace grant and a public representative.

Three work groups were established, one to gather and assess baseline data to assist in the group's planning and to measure success; a second to develop a clear message; and a third to develop resources.

The initial work will be presented to the Leadership Partnership on March 1.

### In Memoriam

**Dale Black**, retired superintendent, Lawton-Bronson Community Schools (1-24-10)

**Edward Bleeker**, retired superintendent, Ruthven-Ayrshire Community School District. (12-26-09)

## Upcoming Events

### February 2010

2 - Advanced Technology Boot Camp for Administrators - Scheman Center, Ames

24 - School Law Conference, Sheraton West Des Moines

Find registration information and learn about future offerings at [www.sai-iowa.org/events](http://www.sai-iowa.org/events)

## sai REPORT

The *SAI Report* is published for association members and selected community and business leaders by School Administrators of Iowa. The views expressed in the *SAI Report* do not necessarily reflect SAI opinion nor does acceptance of advertising imply SAI endorsement.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

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by Matt Carver, Director of Legal Services

## Grading 101: Make sure they cut off the fringies

This article is intended only as a reference in regard to the subject matter covered. It is furnished with the understanding that SAI is not engaged in rendering legal advice. If a legal opinion is desired, private legal counsel should be consulted.

The Carver family has now entered the wonderful world of middle school show choir. After attending my inaugural competition, I can already tell you that I may end up being one of those conspiracy theorist/show choir parents before long. Coming from sports, where you know whether your team has more points than the competition based on a ball going through a hoop, or something else of the sort, this whole subjective grading thing is going to turn me into a basket case.

How is this show choir grading done anyway? As I watched one of the other middle school teams perform last weekend, I noticed the knot on a young man's tie drop to mid-chest. Poor kid, I thought, that's surely going to cost 'em. Our group ended up getting second place by a mere few points. A couple of days after the competition, my daughter shared that word had it around her show choir group that they were docked five points because of their bass guitar. However, the trouble is . . . they don't have a bass guitar. Dun, dun, dun. The plot thickens. Anyway, hopefully none of you will have to escort me out of one of your auditoriums at a future show choir competition.

On the topic of grading, I have received a number of e-mails or calls recently concerning grading practices. What may teachers use for extra credit? How may student misconduct or attendance affect grades? May a teacher deduct points for fringies left on spiral notepaper? Now that we have your brain juices flowing, let's get after it.

### Student misconduct

Relating to student misconduct, the following excerpt from the State Board of Education's policy, titled "Statement of the State Board of Education Concerning Academic Sanctions of Penalties Imposed for Student Misconduct," ("Academic Sanction Policy") provides a good starting point:

While recognizing behavioral facts, such as the degree of participation in class, although not "graded," may influence a student's academic grade, the State Board of Education nevertheless strongly discourages the reduction of grades or punitive measure when the misconduct necessitating discipline does not involve academic performance. Inasmuch as possible, a student's academic grade should accurately reflect the quality of work performed rather than extraneous factors related to misbehavior. Instances such as cheating and plagiarism constitute academic-related offenses for which reduction of grades or loss of credit may be appropriate. In re Hakes, 13 D.o.E. App. Dec. 332 (1996)(emphasis added)

In Hakes, the State Board reversed a school board's decision, which provided a 50% reduction of three students' daily grades during the length of their suspension for severely vandalizing a teacher's car in the school parking lot. Likewise, in Nielsen, the State Board shared that a school district should not have withheld several students' grades in band for leaving the carcasses of dead animals on their band director's driveway. In re Dean Nielsen, 13 D.o.E. App. Dec. 284 (1996). That's right, dead animal carcasses. Reasonable school discipline in such cases is justified, as it would be if students egged a school employee's house (and it wasn't just coincidentally a school employee), but the withholding of grades crosses the line. In an even earlier decision, the State Board commended school administrators for deciding not to reduce students' grades 2 percentage points for each day of suspension, due to passing notes at school. In re Jori Ekis, 3 D.P.I. App. Dec. 174, (1983). Such a practice would have been a big NO-NO. I realize that I am not telling you veteran administrators anything you don't already know, but the note-passing problem in Ekis, and the harassing content of those notes, was eerily similar to the texting issues that we sometimes run into today.

Bottom-line, concerning student misconduct and grade reduction, if the misconduct is not cheating, plagiarizing, or something else of that ilk, grade reduction is likely unreasonable.

### Teacher Grading Practices

OK, now for something more near and dear to my heart. What about teacher grading practices? Let me start by stating I was one of those students who found a way to accidentally put a crease in an assignment before it made its way to the teacher. You know, the kid who takes the assignment out of his bag and tries to flatten it out on the desk with his hands, or by smashing the paper between a couple of textbooks. Some of us just have this gift.

While there are not a great number of State Board decisions in Iowa on the topic of grading practices, the few that are present for our review have considered the "fairness" of a grading policy. In re Casey M., 22 D.o.E. App. Dec. 28 (2003). In determining whether a grading policy is "fair" the State

Board asks:

1. Was the policy fair “on its face?”
2. Was the grading practice known to students? Consider whether grading practices are covered in your district policies, student handbook, classroom policies or instructions and provided to students in advance of the assignment.
3. Was the grading policy consistently applied?

Since the State Board will overturn local board decisions if they are “unreasonable and contrary to the best interest of education,” I would also ask: Is the grading practice or policy reasonable in light of the particular class, assignment, and age of the student?

While perhaps I’m being a bit of a Pollyanna, some other questions one might consider regarding a teacher’s grading practices include

1. How is the grading practice or policy related to assessing the student’s performance in the given class?
2. Does the grading practice or policy appear to be more punitive or even a “gotcha” exercise?

On that note, back to the fringies, or docking points for a student failing to write his/her name on an assignment. I think we all understand that attention to detail and following directions are important things to learn. Having stated that, does it seem reasonable to you for a 4th-grade teacher to dock points from a student’s essay, on which the student worked extremely hard, when the student turns the essay in with fringies, or without the student’s name? Some of you are likely answering: “Yes, the grade should be reduced.” From my standpoint, being the bleeding heart that I am (that was a bit of a joke for those who don’t know me well), I would not see the harm in the teacher asking the student if s/he forgot something, and perhaps pointing to scissors or a pencil. Alternatively, I would imagine that some teachers have students team up and review work together, perhaps checking for fringies, names, or other teacher specific requirements, before assignments are handed in. I know that there are several pairs of eyes that review my column before it is sent to SAI members.

There may be other areas, such as shop class (relating to safety issues) or chemistry (understanding that there is a big difference between labeling something as 15 L vs. 15 mL), where attention to detail may be a necessity. Mr. G., my wise, old high school science teacher used to say: “What are those? Chickens? Ducks? Label them suckers.” Fair enough. Attention to detail is sometimes essential. Again, whether labeling answers in a science class or cutting fringies off of an elementary school paper, I would ask: How fair, reasonable, and integral to assessing the student’s performance is the teacher’s grading practice?

### Academic freedom

But Matt, what about the teacher’s academic freedom? Consider the State Board’s approving use of the following quote from Parate v. Isibor, where the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals (of which Iowa is not part) held that school officials violated an instructor’s rights to academic freedom when [the school] ordered the grade change:

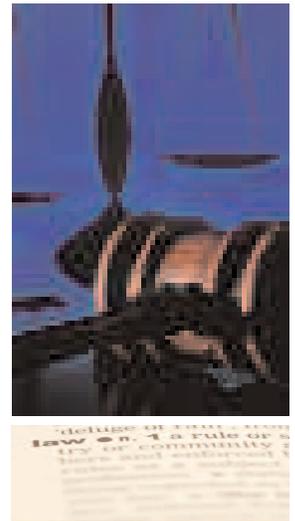
To effectively teach her students, the professor must initially evaluate their relative skills, abilities, and knowledge. The professor must then determine whether students have absorbed the course material; whether a new, more advanced topic should be introduced, or whether a review of the previous material must be undertaken. Thus, the professor’s evaluation of her students and assignments of their grades is central to the professor’s teaching method. In re Casey M. (quoting § 8.05[2][b], Rapp, Education Law (2002))(citing Parate v. Isibor, 868 F.2d 821, 828 (6th Cir. 1989).

The State Board further noted that “differences of opinion do not provide grounds for challenging student evaluations.” In re Casey M. For instance, in the opinion of Casey M., a high school senior, his Spanish teacher’s grading practice was unfair, due to the teacher weighting one quarter of a semester more heavily than the other quarter, without giving notice to the students of this weighting difference. In affirming the policy of the teacher, the State Board shared:

[I]t is not unreasonable for [the teacher] to decline to specify to her students at the beginning of each semester how many points are available for each quarter as a matter of certainty. She cannot know for certain how quickly her class will be capable of mastering one unit before moving on to the next. Inasmuch as no one is more capable than the classroom teacher of making the types of determinations written of by the Parate court, there is no basis for the local board or for this Board to overturn the judgment of Ms. Paar. In re Casey M.

While PK-12 teachers indeed have some degree of academic freedom, school administrators maintain authority to review a teacher’s grading practices to ensure the above standards of fairness and reasonableness are met, and/or even to modify grades, “in cases involving clerical or mechanical (e.g. mathematical) mistakes, fraud, incompetence, or bad faith.” In re Casey M. (Remember that grade altering is a crime if not done for the appropriate reasons, so please involve the teacher and/or other administrators if it appears a grade is deserving of modification.)

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### 2010 School Law Conference Feb. 24

Some of the topics will include

- reduction procedures and rights regarding staff, including teachers and administrators;
- addressing staff behavior outside of school and/or on social networking sites or with student;
- issues surrounding camera and video camera use on school property (to include surveillance cameras on buses); and
- a legislative update.

Register to attend at [www.sai-iowa.org/reghtml](http://www.sai-iowa.org/reghtml)



# Homework Practices: Part 2 of 3

Ed Redalen, Director and Tracey Adamowski, parent, Iowa Statewide PIRC

The January article on homework practices related to homework guidelines from the school perspective. It included suggestions on the roles of parents/primary caregivers relative to the value and importance of homework, expectations and encouragement for homework completion. This article expands on these ideas.

Parents/caregivers need to tell their children that homework is important. They also need to be aware that there are two important attributes to promote with their children to effectively complete their homework: **effort** and **self-reliance**. The types, complexity, and amount of homework are determined by the teacher. However, the amount of effort is determined by your child.

Your child's efforts in accomplishing homework assignments needs to be reinforced by providing feedback. For example, it is more appropriate to say, "you were successful on the assignment because you focused on the work and avoided distractions." This is more reinforcing than saying, "Good job," as it identifies more specifically what your child did.

The second important attribute is self-reliance. Self-reliance is looking within yourself to identify strategies and accomplish things. It is how your child plans, problem solves and approaches tasks. It is helping them to be proactive in their approach to tasks and learning. It is dependent on learning skills that can be taught by parents/caregivers. For example, by teaching your children how to organize things at home, or asking them to tell you the things they need to do before they go to bed, you are helping them to be organized and self-reliant.

**Effort Tips:** Effort is defined as exerting hard work and making a serious attempt to try.

- Identify with your child two or three things they do well or enjoy: a school subject, extra-curricular activity or hobby. With each one have them explain how they apply effort to these activities. Tell them that their hard work is what made them successful. Ask what they are doing to get even better.
- Provide reinforcement on things your child does to help the family – clearing the table, yard work, sharing ideas, promoting fun.
- Feedback needs to be specific instead of general, for example:
  - "You helped organize your room by taking one thing at a time, and we got it done."
  - "You had a hard work day – from school to soccer practice to homework, and you even wrote a note to grandma."
  - "You stuck with practicing that song on the piano and were able to perform it without hesitation."
  - "When you started your history assignment I heard some moaning and groaning – then things got quiet – later you explained to me the two major causes of all wars. I sure learned some things."
- Discuss with your child how effort leads to new skills and learning. These things make us feel competent, that we have good brains and can learn new things. One example, "You are learning so much – at the start of first grade you were mainly reading words and now you read whole sentences!"
- Explain how your efforts at work, problem-solving or completing a job have helped you.
- At least once a week share with your child something you are learning. (Some families make a regular practice of sharing what each member has learned that day.)

**Self-reliance Tips:** Self-reliance is defined as being able to figure things out by yourself, to be proactive.

- Tell your children if they don't know what to do, there are at least five things they can do:
  1. Re-read or study the material again.
  2. Contact a classmate. (In some cases teachers provide their phone numbers to students)
  3. Identify what you do know.
  4. Think about it and wait awhile. Don't panic, brains slam shut when we panic.
  5. Identify problem parts of the homework you need to ask your teacher about the next day in class.
- Discuss and provide a regular homework routine such as where to study, time to study and have materials available. If there is no homework assignment, then use that period of time for reading. (Have a family reading time for everyone – even the youngest non-readers can look at books, parents may read the newspaper or other written material.)
- Help your children organize their work – based on first, second and third areas of importance so that all work is prioritized.
- Discuss with your children how distractions interfere – cell phones, TV – and they need to learn how to set aside the distractions during homework time.
- At times your child may be overwhelmed with homework, "shut down" and have trouble getting started. Have them decide two things they can start now and then discuss the next steps later.

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## Many Service Jobs will Become Globalized Piece Work

by Scott McLeod, CASTLE director

I'm reading a fantastic book right now called *Futurecast* by Robert Shapiro (<http://bit.ly/futurecastshapiro>). In the section on globalization, Shapiro notes that the first waves of globalization primarily affected manufacturing. Millions of American jobs went overseas in the 1970s and 1980s as global companies set up factories overseas instead of here in the U.S. For all of the current rhetoric about 'Benedict Arnold' corporations that offshore jobs, they essentially have to since their competitors are doing so. Few companies can survive in a hypercompetitive global economy when they're paying labor rates 5 to 25 times that of the competition. FYI, the average manufacturing worker earns between \$21 and \$25 per hour in the USA, France, and Japan. Contrast that with the average hourly rate of a manufacturing employee in Korea (\$14), Taiwan (\$7), or Mexico (\$3). Or recognize that factory workers in China or India earn an average of less than \$1 an hour. It's easy to see why any manufacturing job that can be offshored will be offshored.

Although manufacturing has been an important component (about 20 percent) of the American economy, the services industries are a much larger segment (about 60 percent) of our economic productivity. Shapiro notes that in the next 10 to 15 years, we're going to see this employment sector dramatically impacted by globalization and offshoring due to advances in software. It is now possible to take many complex service jobs and break them up into component parts, much as we did in previous decades for manufacturing work. Once these tasks are disaggregated, it becomes much easier to train lower-skilled workers to do these discrete components of the overall work, facilitated by software. In other words, instead of companies needing highly-paid American workers, developing countries 'will be able to train millions of their young people to carry out discrete subsets of those jobs' (p. 103). Corporations 'can divvy out the pieces of larger service jobs to any number of professional staffs, connected through Internet networks, and then assemble the results in one place' (p. 104) [again, as in manufacturing]. As you can imagine, the impacts of this on the American economy are going to be quite significant. Yet another reason to teach our students to be adaptive and for them to spend as much time as possible on higher-level cognitive work (i.e., the kind of work that can't be turned into piece work).

### Van Meter students wow the Iowa legislature

On January 28, several Van Meter students demonstrated to Iowa legislators the work that they are now able to do as a result of the district's 1:1 laptop initiative. Sandra Dop, the Department of Education's 21st Century Skills Coordinator, wrote about the encounter (<http://bit.ly/8YZfKn>):

"When the legislators asked, 'So what can we do to get out of your way and let you go?' I nearly cried. I will forever be proud to have witnessed it!"

### Iowa 1:1 Institute and Network

Iowa's first-ever conference dedicated solely to laptop programs, the Iowa 1:1 Institute (I11I), will be April 7 at the Polk County Convention Complex. All Iowa administrators, teachers, and technology staff are encouraged to attend. Registration is FREE. More details are available at the Institute Web site, <http://bit.ly/iowa1to1institute>. Also, the Iowa 1:1 Network is growing rapidly. To join, visit <http://bit.ly/iowa1to1network>.

As always, please stay in touch ([mcleod@iastate.edu](mailto:mcleod@iastate.edu))!

*"When the legislators asked, 'So what can we do to get out of your way and let you go?' I nearly cried. I will forever be proud to have witnessed it!"*

- From DE 21st Century Skills Coordinator Sandra Dop's blog.

## Grading 101

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### Extra credit

- May a teacher give students extra credit for bringing in gift cards to buy supplies for the class pet? No.
- May a teacher give a student 1 point of extra credit for every dollar that student raises for children in Haiti? No. Great thought, bad idea tying it to grades.
- May a teacher give extra credit when students bring in boxes of Kleenex? No.
- On a similar topic – may a teacher have a fundraiser in which students may buy passes to get out of doing homework? NO.

Are you seeing a trend? I hope so. In addition to the obvious implication of students seemingly buying grades, also consider the equity issues that would arise. With any extra credit assignment, hopefully the teacher is asking: How is the extra credit related to the material being taught?

### Excused and Unexcused Absences & Grades

Can we differentiate in treatment between excused and unexcused absences? The Hakes decision also shared the following language from the State Board's Academic Sanction Policy:

“Any distinction between approved/excused or unapproved/unexcused absences should not affect a student's grade, the potential for credit, or right to make up missed assignments.”

As stated in the Tami Marie Schmidt decision 14 D.o.E. App. Dec. 52, (1996), absences may lead to grade reduction in the following situations:

- a. Failure to attend make-up sessions as assigned for the completion of make-up work;
- b. If points or percentage for attendance and participation are given, the denial of those points or percentages for absenteeism is a reasonable practice. (1987 St. Bd. Pol., par. 10.)
- c. Additional work may be assigned to compensate for class time lost due to absences. However, the failure to complete make-up assignments satisfactorily within a reasonable time is a separate act and constitutes grounds for reduced credit. (1987 St. Bd. Pol., par. 6.)
- d. The report card should indicate whether grades have been reduced for absences. This answers the criticism that a district's grading system is a misrepresentation of the student's academic achievement. In re Tami Marie Schmidt.

While this may be a little off topic, another common problem that I hear is that districts are still combining excused and unexcused absences in determining academic consequences. Remember, districts may have attendance policies, which provide that students will receive no credit and be dropped from a class after exceeding at least five UNEXCUSED ABSENCES. Excused and unexcused absences MAY NOT BE COMBINED. Also, remember that if students are dropped from a class under your attendance policy, the district should “make reasonable provisions for alternative classes or activities within the parameters of the district's resources.” In re Tami Marie Schmidt.

**Choir & Band** - What about teacher grading practices of reducing grades for a student's failure to perform in a choir or band concert outside of the school day? In 1999, the State Board upheld a high school choir teacher's practice of giving a failing quarter grade due to an unexcused absence from a choir performance. In re Victoria Smith, 18 D.o.E. App. Dec. 10 (1999). Sixteen years earlier, the State Board similarly supported the fairness of a teacher's grading practice, under which students were given an “F” “for missing a performance without notifying the director before the performance time with a legitimate excuse.” In re Newell, 3 D.P.I. App. Dec. 113, (1983). In that instance, a teacher reduced the grades of two brothers (grades 7 and 9) for missing a choir performance without a legitimate excuse. Initially, the teacher was not going to reduce the grade because the boys' mother told the teacher that the absence was due to a “family matter.” As it turns out, the “family matter” was a Little League baseball game. Thus, a reasonable excuse was, after further investigation, determined to be an unreasonable justification for the boys' absence.

**Carver Disclaimer** - For those young, energized administrators out there, I am not suggesting that you make it a personal crusade to challenge every teacher's grading practices when s/he deducts points for leaving fringies on papers. I might get some personal vindication out of your efforts, but you may find yourself in an unnecessary and time-consuming battle. Perhaps there is another time when administrators and staff may talk about the pedagogical benefits or disincentives of certain grading practices. [Boy that sounded flowery. I must be hanging around administrators too much.] On the other hand, there may be times when something is giving you a bad feeling in your gut, such as students donating money for extra credit points, when immediate action is required. Whatever the case, don't hesitate to contact your school attorney.

Shameless promotion – Finally, don't forget to sign up for the SAI School Law Conference, which is February 24, at the West Des Moines Sheraton. You may do so online at [www.sai-iowa.org/events](http://www.sai-iowa.org/events).

## SAI August Conference Keynoter Michael Horn to Speak August 4, 2010



Michael Horn is the executive director of education and co-founder of Innosight Institute, a nonprofit think tank devoted to applying the theories of disruptive innovation to problems in the social sector.

He recently co-authored *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns* with Harvard Business School professor and best-selling author Clayton M. Christensen and bestselling author Clayton M. Christensen and Curtis W. Johnson, president of The Citistates Group.

*Disrupting Class* uses the theories of disruptive innovation to identify the root causes of schools' struggles and suggests a path forward to customize an education for every child in the way s/he learns. Horn has been a featured keynote speaker at many conferences including the Virtual School Symposium and Microsoft's School of the Future World Summit.

Read thoughts from Horn before hearing him speak in August at the Disruptive Innovation blog - <http://bit.ly/15Y0N>

## National Associations' Events

**AASA** - National Conference on Education, Feb. 11-13, 2010, Phoenix. Register and make room reservations at [www.aasa.org/NCE/NCESection.aspx?id=1880](http://www.aasa.org/NCE/NCESection.aspx?id=1880)

A joint reception of SAI and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators will be held in Phoenix Friday, February 12 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, third floor Terrace from 6 to 8 p.m.

AASA will maintain an online newspaper at the Conference, providing daily coverage of key speakers, topical sessions and award presentations. The Conference Daily Online can be accessed at [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org), during the event's four days. The site also will provide a photo gallery of scenes from each day at the conference plus a blog involving three AASA members who will post observations of their conference experiences each day.

**NASSP** - Annual Convention, March 12-14, 2010, Phoenix. Registration and hotel room arrangements are available at [www.nasspconvention.org](http://www.nasspconvention.org)

**NAESP** - Annual Convention, April 8-11, 2010, Houston. Register and reserve a hotel room at <http://s15.a2zinc.net/clients/NAESP/naesp10/Public/Enter.aspx>

## NAESP State Representative/NASSP State Coordinator Election

Elementary principals who are members of SAI and NAESP are eligible to run for NAESP State Representative. Secondary principals who are members of SAI and NASSP are eligible to run for NASSP State Coordinator.

The term of office for each position is July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2013. The position will provide a link between the respective national organizations and SAI regarding mutual goals and issues of common concern. Performance responsibilities are to

1. fulfill the duties and responsibilities mandated by the NAESP or NASSP bylaws;
2. fulfill the duties and responsibilities as mandated by policy, affiliation agreements, or Delegate Assembly rules and procedures;
3. fulfill the responsibilities the NAESP or NASSP Board of Directors recommends be assumed; and
4. fulfill the duties and responsibilities as determined by SAI's Rep. Council, working in collaboration with SAI's Executive Committee

and Executive Director and as a liaison between NAESP or NASSP and SAI.

If you are interested in serving, please submit the following to Dan Smith at SAI by February 15 in two pages or fewer (layout/format of your choice):

1. A brief summary of your educational background.
2. A brief outline of your professional career.
3. A listing of awards/honors you may have earned while serving in K-12 education.
4. A listing of your involvement with SAI and NAESP or NASSP (e.g. committees, offices held, etc.)
5. A brief statement as to why you want to serve in this office.
6. A brief statement as to why you should be selected for this office.
7. A signed statement from your superintendent that you may serve in this office if you are the person selected.



### Homework Practices, *continued from page 6*

- As a parent/caregiver, share how you do "homework for work or life."
  - preparing for a meeting
  - learning a new activity
  - reading articles about your work
  - planning for family events
  - preparing for a teacher conference
  - learning how to fix something

#### Questions to ask your child:

- What are your homework assignments?
- When are they due?
- Do you have the materials you need?
- Have you started any of the assignments? Finished any of them?
- Do you have any long-term assignments (term paper, science project, book review)?

#### Other ways parents/caregivers can help:

- Look over the homework, but don't do the work or make corrections. Gently guide them to anything that is wrong.
- Learn about the school's/teacher's homework guidelines.
- Meet with teachers early in the year or semester to find out about homework guidelines.
- If your child cannot solve a homework problem and has asked the teacher for help, consider contacting the teacher.