

MIDDLE VIEW: REFLECTIONS ON LEADERSHIP IN MIDDLE LEVEL SCHOOLS

Nineteen Minutes

A few weeks ago I was introduced to a new resource being developed to help middle level educators deal with bullying issues. Australian filmmaker Christopher Faull has worked with groups of eight-grade students from Illinois and Nebraska to produce two 23-minute films that highlight the students' experiences of bullying. The storylines and dialogue are that of the students, and it is so realistic that I felt at times I was reviewing a surveillance tape instead of watching a scripted drama unfold in front of me.

While the project is still in the production stage, shortened previews of the films are available to view and online previews of the films will be available at the site during the week of April 7–13 (www.storiesofus.com/launch).

I share this not only because it's an exciting new resource for middle level educators but also because this past week I finished reading a novel that again drove home the important

role leaders must play in stopping the bullying that occurs in our schools. If you have not read the novel *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult, I urge you to do so. It's now available in paperback and tells the story of a school shooting. Although it is a piece of fiction, it is well-researched and tells a realistic story of the bullying, harassment, and peer pressure that can be occurring in the lives of today's students. It is sobering, horrifying, and thought-provoking and should be read by school leaders at all levels.

Are We Doing Enough to Prepare Our Future Middle Schoolers?

The data are clear. The implications are clear. The consequences are clear. However, I must ask a profound question—are we even listening? Research shows that early childhood education is vital for children. If a young child starts out behind educationally, it will be tough for them to catch up to their peers. I know there are a variety of options for pre-kindergarten education. They range from in-home experiences to more formal preschools.

Which ones are best? We will save that debate for another time or forum, but are we placing true importance on early childhood education?

Consider the following information that displays the disparities our children are up against:

Number of words heard at home per hour by 1- and 2-year-olds learning to talk:

- Low-income child—620
- Middle-income child—1,250
- High-income child—2,150

Number of words heard by age 3:

- Low-income child—10 million
- Middle-income child—20 million
- High-income child—30 million.

Visit www.principals.org/middleview to participate in the discussion on leadership in middle level schools. **NL**

Incoming NASSP President

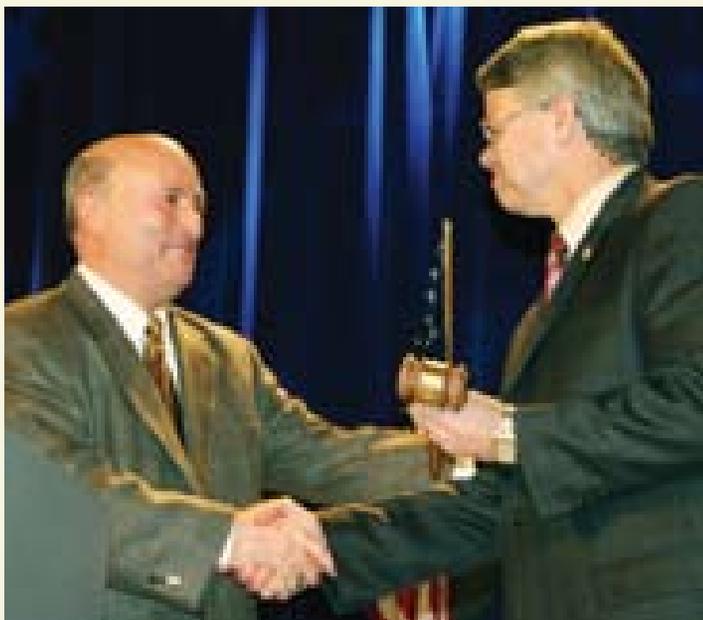


Photo by Jesse Cheng

NASSP President Barry Stark (left) passes the gavel to Larry Bradley at the Closing General Session of the 2008 NASSP Convention. Stark, principal of Norris Middle School in Firth, NE, has served as president since July 2007. Bradley, principal of Pflugerville (TX) High School, begins his term July 1, 2008.

In the April Issue of

PRINCIPAL Leadership

Blurring the Lines: Career and Technical Education Today

The distinction between career and technical education and academic coursework—which once was crystal clear—has now all but disappeared.

By Stephen DeWitt

Double Duty: A Conversation With Pamela Drake and Scott Nielson

Concurrent enrollment is a complement to career and technical education classes and offers a great advantage for students, according to two experienced vice principals.

By Robert Farrace

Sharing the Secrets

Assistant principals' roles are diverse, but 10 practices can help them be more effective school leaders.

By Rebecca Good

And visit www.principals.org/pl for additional Web-only content!

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April 25, 2008

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Rick Wormeli

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