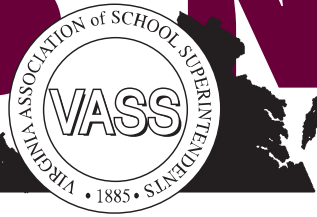


VASS NEWS



VOLUME XXII
NUMBER 2
WINTER 2009

PUBLISHED BY THE
VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

VASS PROVIDES STRONG PRESENCE AT BUDGET HEARINGS

Below: Members of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees listen to scores of testimonies on proposed state budget cuts at recent public hearings. From left to right: Delegate Ingram, Senator Houck, Delegate Sherwood, Delegate Landis, Delegate Dance, and Senator Marsh.



Superintendents turned out last week to express their concerns about the state budget cuts at five public hearings held last week by members of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees. VASS President Don Ford, Albemarle County Superintendent Pam Moran, and Nelson County Superintendent Roger Collins spoke at the budget hearing held at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville. Senators Houck and Marsh and Delegates Dance, Ingram, Landis, and Sherwood were present to hear their testimonies.

All three superintendents highlighted the 2009 VASS Legislative Priorities in their remarks giving specific examples of how the proposed budget cuts would affect their school divisions. Pam Moran presented some interesting statistics about the effect of reporting require-

ments on support staff in her school division. The following is an excerpt from her testimony:

“Our educators in the classrooms and support staff have lived in a cycle of increased monitoring and reporting requirements. The support staff whom the governor proposes to cut by adjusting the ratio for each school division are the very people who take on the work associated with the:

186 state superintendent’s memos we have received this year just since July 1 and are expected to address locally—that’s more than 1 memo per day by the way since school began, the 88 data reports we are required to file and verify (an increase of 26 since 2004-05 or 1 every 4 days year-round), and the 33 SOL assessments (an increase of 8 new tests since 2004-05) we administer to

students in grades 3-12.”

This represents a kind of trickle-down economics that has significantly increased both the work load and the support staff needs in Albemarle County

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INSIDE

Practical Findings From the Virginia High School Safety Study	3
VASS Briefing On HR Policies To Help With Budget Cut Decisions	3
Personal Reflection Improves Administrative Practice and Is Effective Development ..	4
Mumbai Massacre Measures Members Character	5
Special Assistance For Tough Budget Decisions	6
Mark Your Calendar	6

Published as a Service of the
**Virginia Association of School
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and other divisions. In the proposed Governor's budget, the caps on Basic Aid support positions will result in cuts in state funding for 133 support positions currently in place for Albemarle- from 365 in the current year to funding for only 232 positions in FY10.

Let me share one example of the work load increases associated with new reports or more detailed reports- I have many more that staff shared with me beyond these.

The On-Time Graduation report which was new this year requires tracking students who have left the division or who have transferred to another state school division. It also assumes and requires other school divisions to correctly assign State Testing ID's to transfer students. This past year, central support staff spent about 40 hours to prepare this report, and high school staff spent about 80 hours in follow-up work to correct registration mistakes made when students registered in other divisions. It took over 4 hours of time to address a correction for 1 student transferred to a high school in another district. The student was miscoded as a second grader and showed up as a dropout affecting our high school's on-time grad rate. This example can be multiplied over and over just for follow-up- not the time verifying each student record one by one. Total new hours spent = 120.

The Va. School Safety report which is new in the last 5 years takes about an hour per principal and about 3 hours from a central support director to verify. Total new hours spent= 30.

The Discipline Crime and Violence Report reporting requirements have significantly increased in the last 2 years. We used just to give a raw total in certain categories, now they want reports by



Albemarle County Superintendent Pam Moran provides compelling statistics on how reporting requirements have affected the work of her support staff, during the public hearing on the state budget held in Charlottesville.

specific definition and data element. Support staff who work with SASI- student information management- in schools and who are partially funded by the state revenues currently now spend about 257 hours on this report - more than double what it took to complete this report 3 years ago. Total new hours = 128.

I have seen NO proposals to remove any of these requirements from the plates of local educators - just the money that funds support staff who accomplish this work and much more. Albemarle County Public Schools is significantly decreasing central support staff in 2008-09 as a result of the loss in state and local revenues. Permanent reductions in state funding for support staff will lead to a shift in the burden of monitoring, reporting and communicating work to the very people that we protect from these requirements so that they can do the increasingly difficult work of educating young people to graduate workforce ready, college ready, and citizenship ready."

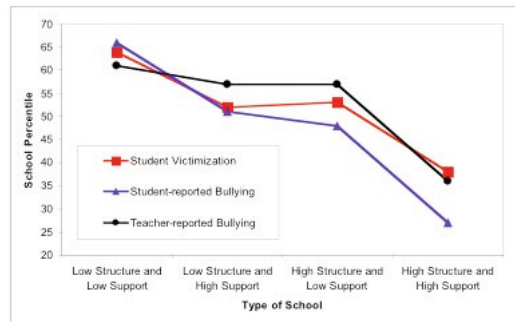
A final public hearing on the proposed state budget will be held at 1:00 p.m. on January 19 in House Room D of the General Assembly Building.

Practical Findings from the Virginia High School Safety Study — Be Strict or Be Supportive?



By Dewey Cornell, Director,
Virginia Youth Violence Project

Debates about school safety often contrast strict discipline against more supportive approaches, but our study found support for *both* strategies. Schools that scored highest on measures of structure (students report that rules are strictly and fairly enforced) and support (students report that adults are supportive, caring, and willing to help) had lower levels of student victimization (such as theft, threats, and assaults) and bullying. As depicted below, schools low on structure and support were highest (61st to 66th percentiles) in measures of student victimization and bullying whereas schools high on structure and support were much lower (27th to 38th percentiles).



Practical Suggestions. In the safest schools, 9th grade students said that rules are strictly and fairly enforced, and that students were likely to be caught for infractions such as cutting classes, coming late to class, or smoking. At the same time, students also perceived that adults in the school really cared about all students, listened to what they had to say, and treated them with respect. However, zero tolerance policies were not associated with safer schools. Like a good parent, school staff members should be *authoritative rather than authoritarian*: communicating both high expectations and warm regard for their students.

Study Overview. The Virginia High School Safety Study was designed to identify effective policies and practices in Virginia public high schools. Safety

conditions were measured using school discipline records, safety audit surveys, and surveys of approximately 7,400 9th grade students and 2,900 9th grade teachers in 294 schools. Study findings controlled for differences in school enrollment, percentage eligible for free/reduced price meals, and minority composition. This is a correlational study that can support, but not prove, causal relationships. The VHSSS was conducted by Dewey Cornell, Anne Gregory, Xitao Fan, and Peter Sheras of the Curry School of Education in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education and Virginia Center for School Safety of the Department of Criminal Justice Services. The study was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Study conclusions do not necessarily reflect policies or recommendations of these state and federal agencies.

For more information, see the website for the Virginia Youth Violence Project: <http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>

VASS Briefing On HR Policies To Help With Budget Cut Decisions

On Jan. 22 from 12:30-2:00 p.m. in the Richmond Downtown Marriott, VASS will hold a luncheon briefing on HR policies to assist superintendents and their HR staff with their budget cut decisions affecting school division personnel. McGuire Woods Attorney Craig Wood will present the briefing entitled: “Downsizing: Policies, Procedures, and Problems.” He will be joined by Chesterfield

County’s HR staff, who will discuss the exemplary process and regulations they developed to address their RIF policy.

There is a \$50.00/pp fee for the luncheon and the briefing for which participants will be invoiced. Individuals must register for the briefing by emailing VASS Administrative Assistant Sybil Roberts at ssh8q@virginia.edu.

Personal Reflection Improves Administrative Practice and Is Effective Professional Development



**By Dr. Denise Perritt, PhD,
Assistant Professor Ed. Leadership,
JMU and Former Assistant
Superintendent for Instruction,
Essex County**

Successful leaders must understand their own beliefs, goals and mission before effectively working with others (Gardner, 1983; Covey, 1989). Gardner refers to this concept as intrapersonal intelligence, the ability for self analysis and reflection; and, Covey includes this idea as his second of seven highly effective habits: begin with the end in mind, which refers to shaping one's own destiny through a true understanding of what one believes is important (Gardner; 1983 & Covey; 1989). Beginning with this thought in mind is what aspiring educational leaders are doing to ensure they foster a school environment which reflects what is important.

Thus, in developing future educational leaders we must be sure to allow time for individual reflection, not only upon how theories will apply to future practice, but also how individual lives, experiences, beliefs will impact how, where and why they lead. It is this latter practice that seems to fall between the cracks as we hurry to do so much with less resources and time in public schools. It is the hope of this author to give the reader at least a few minutes while read-

ing this article to contemplate and reflect upon his/her own beliefs and values while reading another's.

"Your leadership, by example, makes us want to do our best because we know you are there to support us." This was said to me at a school banquet in honor of my leaving an administrative position to join the professorate. Of course I was pleased my leadership was appreciated and noticed and had the effect I intended, but as I began to reflect upon this comment and then one that followed, "I am worried we (the teachers) will not have the support and voice we have had in the central office", I more critically evaluated my tenure and impact.

In light of the first sentence of this article, I feel it necessary to share my beliefs at this point. I prefer to operate more often via Theory Y, which assumes employees are: ambitious; self-motivated; anxious to accept greater responsibility; and, exercise self-control, self-direction, autonomy and empowerment (McGregor, 1960). I am prefer more leadership than managerial tasks (Bennis, 2003) and strive to be transformational, which inspires and motivates followers (Burns, 1978). Although, realizing the best leadership is both transformational and transactional as transformational leadership augments the effectiveness of transactional leadership (Bass, 1997), I see the value in the interchange between the two. I also strive to function in the legitimate, expert and referent power bases (French & Raven, 1968). This is easy to claim, but it came through much deliberate reflection and practice over twenty years experience in the field of education and the accumulation of four college degrees. I also believe in creating learning organizations and

communities (Senge, 1990) and in collaborative patterns of personal leadership (Telford, 1996)

Now, back to the reflection on the two telling comments made to me by teachers. The first, "Your leadership, by example, makes us want to do our best because we know you are there to support us" simply affirms my leadership style was a good match for that particular teacher while the second, "I am worried we (the teachers) will not have the support and voice we have had with you in the central office", alludes to a perception made by many and brought forward by one. The teacher smiled as she made the first statement and then her face took a serious edge as she shared her concern with me in her second statement. This stuck with me long after we finished dinner. Teachers should have multiple ways to be heard by central office staff. How did I, as the one responsible for personnel, not ensure this was in place? What a wake up call! I thought I was doing such a fabulous job of staying connected with building level personnel. I was in the schools practicing what Frase and Melton (1992) refer to as MBWA (Management by Wandering Around) effectively gathering informal data about how things were going and showing by example the importance of being visible to constituents. Had this one brave teacher not made this telling statement to me, I might not have realized the disconnect in my purposeful leadership. Further, had I not reflected on her comment, I would not have grown professionally from the encounter.

This self-reflective piece is offered as a means to demonstrate the value of self-awareness in developing our skills and abilities as educational leaders. Yes, it

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Mumbai Massacre Measures Members Character

When 10 terrorists attacked the Victoria Train Station, a police precinct, and two historic hotels in Mumbai on November 26 killing 171 people and wounding 280, it reminded many Americans of 9/11 and the malaise the country experienced for months afterward. But after the initial anger and clamor for war with Pakistan, life has pretty much returned to normal in India with the exceptions of intensified airport and hotel security.

The differences in the responses may be attributed to the facts that bombings occur regularly in India, or that the proportion of the casualties in Mumbai to the local population were much smaller than in the U.S., and that the physical damage to the city was not as apparent as the damage done to New York and Washington DC on 9/11. Nevertheless, many Indians felt that the terrorists had attacked their symbol of prosperity, the Mumbai Financial District, similar to an American symbol of prosperity, the World Trade Center.

Although half way around the world, the attacks directly affected VASS by forcing the cancellation of travel by twenty VASS members in the *India as a Global Partner Program*. The burning Taj Mahal Hotel, which was the last holdout of the terrorists, was the image most seen on televisions and in newspapers everywhere. It was the same hotel in which VASS members were scheduled to stay for three nights beginning the day the explosions and the shootings stopped. To put it simply – it was a very close call.

There are two responses by the members of the VASS program that are noteworthy – the response when the news was first heard about the attacks and the response several days later. At noon on Wednesday, November 26, Suhail Farooqui, VASS affiliate member and CEO of K12 Insight, called the VASS

Office and told Associate Executive Director Andy Stamp to go on-line to an Indian news sight. Farooqui's brother, who lives in Mumbai, had called Suhail and tipped him off about shootings in the oldest section of the city.

Over the next two hours, both Farooqui and Stamp monitored the story on different newsites and watched as the story changed by the minute. At first, the shootings were reported as gangland murders of which the city had a recent history. Then reports became confused as news bulletins flashed announcements of multiple shootings and explosions in different sections of the city. The number of killed and wounded continued to climb as the situation kept changing.

After two hours of watching and continuous calls between Farooqui and Stamp, the news went world wide as CNN reported that hostages had been taken at the Taj Mahal Hotel. At that point the decision about what to do was obvious and Stamp started emailing and dialing to set up a conference call among as many group members as he could contact.

The conference call was set for 4:00 p.m. and Farooqui's brother, Assif, was patched in from Mumbai for a live report. After Assif's thorough briefing, Stamp asked members to express their opinions and for 45 minutes fourteen members took their turns expressing well-thought out and non-emotional viewpoints. When everyone had his or her say, a roll-call vote was taken and the decision was made to cancel.

In the opinion of the program leaders, the insightful discussion and decision-making reflecting the experience and intelligence of the group, was commendable. The leaders agreed that the decision-making process was well-done and very professional.



The Taj Mahal Hotel was the scene of the longest siege during the November 26 terrorist attacks in Mumbai. It was the hotel where VASS members were scheduled to arrive two days after the attacks began.

The second response that was worth noting was the decision several days later to cancel the trip permanently or to go at some time in the future. Given the stories of the terrorists singling out Americans and Brits, the pictures of the carnage, the images of the groups' burning hotel, and the fact that a father and daughter from Nelson County were shot in the lobby of their hotel, it would be easy to understand why the group would decide to cancel permanently.

But that was not the case. Every one of the VASS members decided to go at some point in the near future. After the attacks, the group seemed to bond even closer as members shared emails of support for each other as well as heartfelt concern for the people of India. The group leaders remarked how the VASS members' courage and concern reflected the strong character of the members in our organization.

On February 27, eleven VASS members will leave for India and follow the original itinerary. Sometime in the fall, another group of nineteen will go. The hosts in India are elated that they are coming and they are extremely grateful to the members of the VASS *India as a Global Partner Program*, who have already contributed to international goodwill between India and the U.S. even before they have left.

takes time, but better to reflect and gain insight, than proceed less effectively. I consider this reflective practice “sharpening the saw” (Senge, 1990) an imperative for high levels of effective administrative practice. It is demonstrated weekly in the classes I teach as many discussions involve this cyclical process: read and internalize an understanding of the theory; connect it to specific and practical situations, which may occur when one is a practicing administrator; and, reflect upon personal beliefs, values, and behaviors, which may enhance or detract from the effective theoretical application.

Indeed, in the situation I shared, my values and beliefs enhanced my ability to Manage by Wandering Around (Fraser & Melton, 1992), but my behaviors diminished the effective implementation of this idea because I did not specifically speak with other administrators about the theoretical basis for my practice. Teachers were appreciative of my presence and interest in what they were doing and noticed the frequency with which I visited their schools and classrooms. My visits were both a means for me to know, first-hand what was happening in the schools, but also an avenue for teacher concerns, successes and enthusiasm to be communicated to the central office administration and local community.

Good leaders make people feel they are at the very heart (center) of the success of the organization and their work has real meaning (Bennis, 2003). So, my hope in sharing this personal reflection is that current administrators will heed my call to spend quality time both listening to teachers (in a variety of settings) and reflecting deeply upon what they say. Teachers will fully communicate their heartfelt desires and beliefs if they know we are truly listening and will respond reflectively.

2009 VASS Calendar of Events

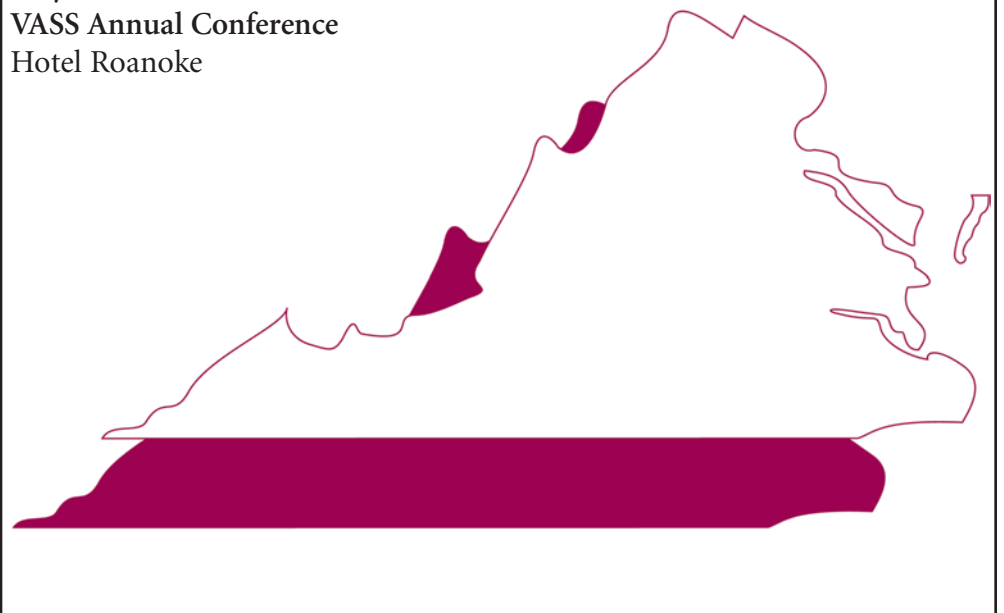
January 22
VASS Annual Press Conference
State Capitol Building, Richmond

January 22
HR Briefing: “Downsizing: Policies, Procedures, and Problems“
Richmond Downtown Marriott

Feb. 19-21
AASA Convention
San Francisco
VASS Reception — February 20
Carnelian Room

March 31
School Division Leadership Retreat — Part II:
“Developing a Division Framework for 21st Century Learning”
Hotel Roanoke and Convention Center

May 3-6
VASS Annual Conference
Hotel Roanoke



Special Assistance For Tough Budget Decisions

K12 Insight 
driving strategic business

In light of the difficult budget situation facing district leaders, VASS partner, K12 Insight, has created a set of Budget Shortfall Surveys. These surveys help effectively communicate the challenges faced by district leadership teams and provide insight on the community’s priorities and preferences. For a very limited period, these surveys are being offered at a highly discounted price. For details of this program use link provided below:

<http://www.k12insight.com/k12-budget-shortfall-surveys.html>