

Last Issue: *Mondays with Mike*

Today is the last issue of *Mondays with Mike*. Over the past 7 years, we have put out over 200 editions. Some editions were better than others, but all contained at least some interesting material. Perhaps, it was the *Far Side Cartoons* or *Wisdom from the Ranch*.

Thank you sincerely, to Arlene, Elke, and many others that helped with the production. Thanks, to the many people that contributed stories, articles, and thoughts through the years.

Contained today are two of my favorite stories. One is thoughtful about our main goal—children. One is about equal vs. equitable. You have seen both before, but I think they still offer a good deal to think about. (Refer to Page 2 and 3 for reprint of these two stories.)

Regaining Our Balance

For the last several years, my Mom has suffered from inner ear problems that cause her to have difficulty with her balance and equilibrium. Many times without warning, something inside her ear is upset and she becomes dizzy. If she tries to sit or stand, her condition called vertigo makes it impossible, and she has to continue to sit or lie down. No amount of effort can compensate for the power of the inner ear to disrupt and disturb. As a very active person, my mother finds these unwelcome episodes very frustrating.

Sometimes life is like that. Something unexpected upsets our world or routine, and we are knocked off balance. Perhaps, a loved one is suffering or is ill, or you receive disturbing news from a doctor. Or perhaps, like in my case, you get bad news about your work or a job being changed.

In each case, our emotional equilibrium is hammered, and we feel as if we cannot stand. Those moments should cause us to turn to family, friends, and for many of us, to God. When we feel we are losing our balance, any and all of these help. They provide the spiritual resources to help us stand.

When life knocks us off our feet, we don't have to be frustrated, alone, or afraid. With the support of friends, family and God's strength lifting us up and protecting us, we can still stand strong.

Most of you now realize that I will soon be leaving my appointment as your Superintendent. This is not something that I would have chosen at this time. However, those that direct me indicate that they wish to go in a different direction. This has caused a state of imbalance. My equilibrium has been impacted. However, the support of my family, my friends, faith, and the kind words and demonstration of support from colleagues has helped me stand proud of the job we have done together. You have or will need that similar support in the future.

Thank you and God Bless our School District: the students, employees, and parents. (By the way, I used God six times in this issue and I'm not sorry.)

Audit and Automated Data Exchange (ADE) Submission for the Year 2010-2011

We have received word from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) that the District's ADE data matches the independent audit and has been accepted by CDE. *"Thank you for your timely submission of ADE data. Submitting ADE data is not a small task. The effort and time put into audit preparation and ADE submission is appreciated. The overall presentation of the Audit and the submission of data through the Automated Data Exchange were excellent. Your finance department should be complimented in providing quality ADE data that matched your audit in a timely manner". Congratulations!*

Job Description Curriculum Revision Committees

The following is a description of those we would like to encourage to volunteer for curriculum review. One branch of the committee, the structural part, will begin this spring after TCAP is complete. We will need 34 committee members including the following: **The numbers in bold say which people are still needed for this revision work.**

- K-5-three members per grade level **3 1st, 1 2nd, 1 3rd, 2 4th, 2 5th**
- English-four members (2 middle school, 2 high school) **1 MS, 1 HS**
- Math-four members (2 middle school, 2 high school) **1 MS, 2 HS**
- Science-four members (2 middle school, 2 high school) **1 MS, 2 HS**
- Social Studies-four members (2 middle school, 2 high school) **1 HS**
- SpEd-four members (elementary, middle, high) to write possible modified exams for **some units**
2 Elem SpEd
- ELL-two members (1 secondary, one elementary) **1 Elementary**

Qualities for Committee Members

- Knowledge of Standards and Assessment best practices
- Ability to work well with others; collaborate; discuss; create consensus
- Teaching experience-should have at least three years; multiple grades a plus
- Ability to have a vertical outlook, rather than just a focus on one grade level
- Ability to be able to look at curriculum as a system, not just parts of a system
- Have training or be willing to accept training in best practices for writing assessments
- Knowledge of good instructional practices
- Have a work ethic that will "do whatever it takes" to get this revision done well
- Be able to look at district view, rather than site-based view

The pay will be \$25.00 per hour. The majority of work will be done outside of school hours and recertification credit will also be given. If more people apply that what we need for a group, we will try our best to get a good mix of school representation, and preference will be given to those who first volunteer. Meetings will be quarterly and we will review units only after everyone has taught them. We will begin this spring after TCAP is complete and will begin by examining some major "themes" of revision we have heard like length of assessments, pacing guides and number of priorities. This is your chance to be heard on how this curriculum can best meet the needs of your students, so thoughtfully consider joining.

Please email Connie Vincent if interested.

AND HOW ARE THE CHILDREN?

A question in Africa and also in Delta

Reverend Dr. Patrick T. O'Neill

Among the most accomplished and fabled tribes of Africa, no tribe was considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It is perhaps surprising then to learn that the traditional greeting between the Masai Warriors...Kasserian Ingera...means *And How Are the Children?*

It is still the traditional greeting among the Masai, acknowledging the high value that the Masai always place on their children's well being. Even warriors with no children of their own would always give the traditional response...*All the Children Are Well*. Meaning, of course, that peace and safety prevail, that priorities of protecting the young and powerless are in place, that Masai society has not forgotten its reason for being, its proper functions and responsibilities. *All the Children Are Well* means that life is good. It means that the daily struggles of existence, even among a poor people, do not preclude proper caring for its young people.

I wonder how it might affect our consciousness of our own children's welfare if in our culture we took to greeting each other with this same daily question...*And How Are the Children?* I wonder if we heard that question and passed it along to each other a dozen times a day, if it would begin to make a difference in the reality of how children are thought of or cared for in this country?

I wonder if every adult among us, parent and non-parent alike, felt an equal weight for the daily care and protection of all the children in our town, in our state, in our country. I wonder if we could truly say without any hesitation...*The Children Are Well*. Yes, *All the Children Are Well!*

What would it be like...if the President began every press conference or every public appearance by answering the question...*And How Are the children, Governor? Are They Well?* Wouldn't it be interesting to hear their answers?

We can bring this wonderful and thought-provoking question to the State of Colorado and Delta County:

And Mr. Colorado legislator: "How are the children? Are they well?"

And Mr. Delta County Superintendent: "How are the children? Are they well?"

And Mr. Principal: "How are the children? Are they well?"

And Mr./Ms. Classroom Teacher: "How are the children? Are they well?"

And Parent and Taxpayer "How are the children? Are they well?"



Equitable vs. Equal

Equitable and equal are on the same page of the dictionary, but have slightly different meanings. Equal means exactly the same measurement; equitable means fair, just, right. In some ways, these two similar words represent the status of our School District: are we equal in all things or do we attempt to achieve equity?

As we look at this School District and attempt to develop a budget solution for the third year in a row that is both equal and equitable, it proves to be a difficult task. Our School District is one with five communities and sixteen schools each with unique characteristics, demographics, and sizes. It is my continued belief we should attempt to have equality for all, but realize that equal does not always represent equity. One equalizing factor is to push some expenditures throughout the District, but may not take into account issues of duty, responsibilities, class preparation, numbers, or even the opportunities for students. Pushing for the same portion of the PPR is a question of equality. Larger schools are more efficient than smaller schools.

Allow me to present a metaphor. I hope you know what a Porterhouse steak is—all cowboys know this is an extra thick T-Bone steak (2 inches). If two siblings, ages 6 and 16, were to share the steak equally, the premium steak could be divided into exactly two parts. An equitable solution may allow the larger portion, the loin, to one sibling, the smaller portion, the tenderloin, to be given to the other.

A similar discussion may be appropriate for this School District. Some would suggest that all resources be equally divided, with less attention to equity.

A working example is the Title I funds made available to our School District. A major criteria of being a Title I school is to have at least 40% Free and Reduced lunch population. Our elementaries range from 65% Free and Reduced to 50% Free and

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Reduced, so all qualify as Title I schools. All elementary schools have full time kindergartens paid by Title I. Having the extra eight teachers are a major effort at equality. However, in the Title I world, *equitable* is not always *equal*. The allocation of funds is determined by a formula, which includes the number of students in the school **and** the number of Free and Reduced. Although all of our elementary schools are 50% F/R or above, our allocation range from \$202,828 in our largest elementary school to only \$28,313 for the smallest even though this small school has 56% F and R. The amount of money for staff development, material, intervention, and parent support is significantly higher at the larger schools. In addition, our three largest elementary schools have had the support of literacy coaches over the past two years, while our smaller elementary schools have not.

There are also differences in the amount of grant money that comes to schools. At one time, all of the elementaries enjoyed support for reading with "*Reading to Achieve*" grants. This huge grant bought books, provided intervention, summer school, and staff development. After 2007, all schools lost that support, other than our largest elementary school, which *at that time*, had lower achievement scores. That school continued to receive \$452,232 over the next three years. Both of our largest elementary schools received a reading grant in 2009 for \$100K each. Those grants provided an outside consultant who worked year around on peer support, RtI, and training (PLC). We also used Title II money to reduce class sizes in the larger schools. However, federal research showed that class size reduction does not significantly improve achievement; thus, we had to change to literacy coaches and mentors. To be fair, having that extra teacher did not significantly

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Equitable vs. Equal...(Continued from Page 2)

improve achievement. It certainly made it easier for teachers to teach, but it did not boost scores over time.

Following the school bond defeat in the fall of 2008, we were determined to address the two school facilities of the greatest need: Garnet Mesa and Cedaredge Elementary Schools. We successfully applied for two major BEST Grants for over \$11 million. As a District, we **gladly** borrowed \$4.1 million (\$1.5 GMES, and \$2.6 CES). This note will be repaid in ten years plus 3.84% interest per year. This is an amazing accomplishment in that the state provided 75% of the support, and we provided 25%. Each year the repayment takes \$444K—\$6K short of a salary step. Is it equal treatment for all schools and personnel? Is it equitable that this effort is committed to address the worst buildings in the district?

In each one of these examples, equal resources for all schools was not achieved. However, a strong effort of equity was attempted. Test scores in the larger schools improved and the two buildings were financed with General Fund money that could have been used for other things.

As you continue to attempt to develop equity in our School District, you must always examine equalizing factors as a goal, but realize, because of our different needs, schools, and communities, equity is also a worthy goal.

Thank you for your support in the effort to continue to unite our School District.

When Life Doesn't Seem Fair

No one likes hard times, but difficulties are even tougher to take if their imposition seems unfair. There appears to be three levels for determining whether hardship is deserved or undeserved.

Level 1—*I deserve it.* Much of the time, we can't assign the blame—for the problems that enter our lives. Often those difficult circumstances are just the natural and inevitable results of our poor choices or foolish behavior.

Level 2—*I don't deserve it, but it's part of life.* We live in a broken world, with hardship, illness, and natural disasters. No one is immune from misfortune. If you are hoping to avoid trouble, the odds are against you. As a resident of planet Earth, sooner or later it is going to get you.

Level 3—*I was doing something good, and this is the thanks I get?* Sometimes trouble comes your way when you're being nice to someone else or engaged in a good cause.

At **Level 1**, bad things happen to bad people, your struggles are compensatory—you brought them on yourself. At **Level 2**, bad things happen to good people; your strife is underserved, but at least it is understandable, so you endure it. But **Level 3** is the hardest to rationalize; this is when bad things happen to good people when they are doing good things.

It doesn't seem right that undeserved grief should be heaped upon you when you are engaged in a noble effort. But it happens.

Here is the irony of why you get involved, because it is the right thing to do. People with less character would have remained on the sidelines; the people of inaction are the ones who are safe and unscathed. But because of your integrity, you were compelled to enter the fray. You were willing to sacrifice time and energy and emotion. In light of what you were willing to give—which others were not—you should have gotten a reward. Instead, you gained nothing but hardship.

But you didn't engage in your noble act for the sake of reward. You did it because it was right thing to do. And that's the perspective you need to maintain when you suffer for doing good.

...In the Tough Stuff

- No good deed goes unpunished.
- Sometimes the criticism of others affirms the propriety of your action.
- Those who don't have the courage to respond often have the nerve to complain.
- If God gives you strength of character, He will also give you skin thick enough to repel the sticks and stones of criticism.
- Integrity means doing what is right, even when it isn't popular. Popularity allows you to live with others, but integrity lets you live with yourself.

God is in the Tough Stuff



Teamwork is connected independence.

Smile and Move Facts.....

To feel good and flourish, researchers say that people need a 3:1 positive ratio. That means they need to hear three positive statements for every complaint.

Having a positive attitude has been linked to mind-body-spirit benefits including:

1. Greater creativity and increased intuition
2. Better cardiovascular health and reduced risk of stroke
3. Increased resilience and happiness

...B. Fredrickson and M.F. Losada

- ◆ Our thoughts go out to **Trish Kendrick**, Teacher at Garnet Mesa Elementary, in the loss of her father.
- ◆ Our thoughts go out to **Deanna O'Brien**, Literacy Coach at Lincoln Elementary School, who is recovering from surgery. We wish Deanna a speedy recovery.



Phase III Curriculum Team



The Phase III curriculum team met on 1/11/12 to continue our work with curriculum alignment. The four elective disciplines, PE/Health, Art, Music and

World Languages, are pushing forward with the process of unwrapping and aligning the state standards. Our groups are in various stages with this process; one is preparing to write assessments while another is still identifying “big ideas”. The staff has been very dedicated to the process and their enthusiasm has been awesome. Although they know this process is a “marathon and not a sprint” they continue to stay focused and committed to the course of action.



Calendar

- January 26** School Board Focus Meeting—Special Education @ 7:00 a.m. at D.O.
- January 26** School Board Meeting—Process for Searching for a Superintendent @ 8:00 a.m. at D.O.
- January 27** School Board Meeting—Special Board Meeting/Executive Session-Followed by Action Related to Personnel @ 7:00 a.m. at Aaron Clay’s office
- January 30** School Board Tour—Paonia Area Paonia Elementary @ 8:00 a.m. DMTC—Paonia Campus @ 9:00 a.m. North Fork Vision @ 10:00 a.m. Paonia Jr./Sr. High @11:00 a.m. Paonia Jr./Sr. High—Lunch
- February 7** Principals’ Meeting at D.O. @ 7:30 a.m. Coordinating Council Meeting at D.O. @ 4:00 p.m.
- February 7** District Accountability Meeting at D.O. @ 6:30 p.m.
- February 23** School Board Meeting, at Hotchkiss K-8, Policy Review @ 6:00 p.m. Regular Meeting @ 7:00 p.m.

Lucky Layoff

Nathaniel dreaded telling his wife he’d just been fired from his clerking job, but, to his amazement, she was thrilled by the news that he’d lost his livelihood and couldn’t support her. “Now you can write your book!” she exclaimed.

Nathaniel had long wanted to devote himself to literary pursuits, but practical matters prevailed. He was touched by her enthusiasm, but reality kept him from sharing it. “Yes,” he replied. “And what will we live on while I’m writing?”

His wife went over to the bureau, opened a drawer, and pulled out a bundle of cash. “Where on Earth did you get that?” he cried.

She smiled. “I’ve always known you’re a genius and would someday write a masterpiece. So every week, I’ve put aside some money. I’ve saved enough to last a whole year.”

By demonstrating her faith in his talent and willingness to bank on his success, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s wife inspired him to spend that year writing *The Scarlet Letter*, one of the great novels in American literature.

....Joe Griffith

