

NEW SUPERINTENDENT UPDATES

By Dr. Richard J. Voltz



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Essentialism

IASA has prepared a new ISBE approved administrators' academy titled "Moving from Vision to Action: Learn How to Become an Essentialist." I highly recommend this academy for all school administrators. I have presented this academy to several school districts and in every presentation participants tell me that it is the best academy they have ever taken.

The primary message of this academy is for participants to reflect on their own professional and most importantly personal goals. Participants learn how to:

- Use essentialists ideals to prioritize, eliminate the non-essentials, learn to say no, and get the right things done to lead effectively and achieve goals.
- Apply the concepts of essentialism to school decision making.
- Utilize self-management principles to determine values and priorities while setting specific boundaries with time and expectations.

The lessons learned in this academy are some that I will need to apply to my life in the next several weeks. I hurt my shoulder in December 2015 and it was diagnosed as a complete full thickness tear of my distal supraspinatus tendon (rotator cuff). I was given the choice of physical therapy or surgery and opted for the physical therapy because of a previous surgery that resulted in a pulmonary embolism. The physical therapy went very well and I returned to full activities. Then about eight weeks ago I had additional pain in my bicep muscle which necessitated another MRI and this showed additional tears of the rotator cuff and a tear in the bicep. Surgery is scheduled for next Monday. I will need to follow some of my own advice about taking care of self before others.

This surgery may result in a temporary break of this newsletter. I will get it up and going as soon as I am able.

Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain

A Principal who was participating in one of my Advanced Danielson academies asked me on a break if I had read the book *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain* by Dr. John J. Ratey (*Spark*). This Principal knew I was a runner and thought I might be interested in the book. I am always looking for books to read (I do not read most of these books; I listen to books on my iPhone while I am running). I recommend this book for all school administrators, all physical education teachers and all teachers.

Author Dr. John Ratey gives detailed scientific evidence about how exercise improves learning in students; Dr. Ratey outlines 7 specific conditions including anxiety, depression, and ADHD among others; which can benefit tremendously with appropriate and adequate physical activity. I believe if you read this book you will transform your schools and make fitness a critical component of your district's curriculum.

Classroom Atmosphere

My son-in-law, David LaFrance is the principal of Oakland Elementary School in Bloomington Illinois. David was showing me around his building this fall and introduced me to second grade teacher Kim Carthans. Ms. Carthans had attended The Ron Clark Academy the previous summer and thus had redesigned her classroom.

Recently the Bloomington Pantagraph wrote an article on Ms. Carthans' classroom titled **In energized D-87 teacher's class, every day is 'best day.'** I invite you to read this article and experience the excitement the students talk about in the article. Ms. Carthans comments on her classroom included the following:

"The school was breathtaking. I described it as teacher heaven," said Carthans. "It looks a little like Disney World, but if you stripped it all away, the core of the school is teachers stepping up. They're more engaged, inviting and building rigor."

The academy teaches educators to build bonds with students, shake up their teaching style and ignite student passion.

"I decided I had to get out of my comfort zone and be bold and different in the classroom," said Carthans. "I learned classrooms can be more student-led. It's more about the teacher being a guide and stepping back to let students take ownership of their learning."

Investigate the website of The Ron Clark Academy and investigate ways to change the ways your classroom looks and functions.

Tip of the Week

I mentioned in an earlier article that the one common problem I see as I visit classrooms today is that teachers talk too much (and do too much of the work) and students talk too little. I recently tweeted an article on this topic. I think the suggestions in this article are very good and I would

recommend sharing the article with your administrative staff and discuss who is doing the most talking in your classrooms. The title of the article is "[8 ways teachers can talk less and get kids talking more.](#)"

The 8 ways are as follows:

1. Don't steal the struggle.
2. Move from the front of the classroom.
3. Teach students signals for your often-repeated phrases and for transitions.
4. Use non-verbal reinforcement for behavior whenever possible.
5. Turn your statements into questions and prompts.
6. Instead of asking, "Does that make sense?" say, "Can you put that in your own words?"
7. Stop repeating yourself.
8. Notice moments when you summarize/review for students and instead get their input.