



**August 16, 2016**

**Welcome 2016-17 New Superintendents to the IASA New Superintendents Update**

We hope your first several weeks on the job has been professionally and personally rewarding. We know it is challenging. For those of you who attended the IASA New Superintendents' Conference on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> we hope you found the conference informative, relaxing (especially the trip to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum for dinner) and collaborative. You met many other new superintendents and hopefully you have continued a dialogue with these new friends. For those of you who did not attend the conference we hope to meet you soon and offer our services to you.

The two days were very busy with presentations from a wide range of professionals. As mentioned at the conference, the real purpose of the conference is for you to meet the various professionals that are available for your consultation. Feel free to access us whenever the need occurs.

This Update is a publication that IASA produces to keep you informed and up-to-date on issues critical to your success as a new superintendent. We hope you find this information useful.

**Current News:**

In the August 16, 2016 edition of the Springfield newspaper The State Journal Register I read three stories directly related to the superintendent's position.

The first is a headline story titled "Gill presents surplus budget." Gill refers to Springfield School Superintendent Jennifer Gill and the article details that "the proposed budget would leave a \$2.6 million surplus in the education fund before contract negotiations with the teachers' union." As I reflect on this article it reminds me that the State of Illinois does not even have a 12-month budget (it does for public education but not for many other state services). It is impossible for any administrator to accurately predict whether the State will in fact fully fund this budget when the State is estimated to be spending \$8 billion more than it will take in for this fiscal year. Your job of predicting revenue from the State of Illinois is a pure guess. This puts all school districts that rely on state funding in a precarious position for making budgets. This seems to be the new norm in Illinois and it did not use to be this way. For many years when the state legislature passed a budget and the Governor signed it, school administrators could count on the revenue.

The second article is titled "New State Law: Freedom of the Press." The article describes a new law passed by the Illinois legislature and signed into law by the Governor basically overturning the landmark school newspaper "Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier" case. In this case the courts supported the principal's decision to exclude a student written story in the school newspaper. The article states "This gives student journalists the same rights as their professional

counterparts – which was not previously the case.” I am not reporting this story to either support or criticize the new law, just to remind how fast changes occur in public education.

The third story headline reads “Judge to issue report on case.” This article is about the pending court “decision about whether to stop transgender students at a suburban Chicago school from using girls’ locker rooms and restrooms lies with a federal magistrate judge.” Again, how times are changing and how we as school administrators need to stay abreast of all these current topics.

### **ISBE Financial Consultants**

The number one request from new superintendents that I have received over my nine years with IASA is help with school finance. I mentioned at the conference that ISBE employs several regional financial consultants serving the various geographical areas of the state. These consultants are top-notch school finance experts. I have worked with every one of them and they do outstanding work. I would recommend that if you need any financial help you email the consultant for your area and schedule an appointment. Obviously, now is the time you should be finalizing your school district’s budget. In addition, ISBE developed an Excel five-year projection software that you may want to use to predict future district fund balances and trends.

You can identify the correct regional financial consultant by clicking on the following link to the ISBE website: [CLICK HERE](#)

### **The Best of Times - The Worst of Times**

K-12 public education has certainly had its share of changes in the past decade. Everything from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to Right to Intervention (RtI) to Common Core to Performance-Based Teacher Evaluation to high stakes student testing to lack of state support for funding public education to changes in teacher and administrative certification to an increase in low income students, etc... All of these challenges require creative and thought provoking solutions.

Recently I was asked if all the changes that are occurring now in education cause the job of the superintendent to be harder, easier or the same as the past. This was an interesting question and as I reflected on my past 25 years in the superintendency, I had to admit that the magnitude and the number of changes administrators are dealing with today are far more complex and difficult than any I can remember from the past. However, I also think that we are at a crossroad for public education and as educational leaders we can truly make a positive difference.

I often ask this question when I am with school administrators, “Are you responsible for ensuring that adults are happy and satisfied or is your first responsibility the caring and educating of students?” Of course everybody agrees to the latter but sometimes we do not exhibit behaviors that reflect this belief and value system. If you remember the following when making critical decisions in your role as a school administrator I think you will find yourself satisfied with your role as an educational leader. “Always make decisions with the best interests of students in mind.”

### **Twitter Messages for School Superintendents**

For those of you who attended the New Superintendents’ Conference you may remember that I briefly mentioned that I send messages to all Illinois Superintendents via the social networking tool Twitter. You can elect to follow me on Twitter by signing up for a Twitter account. It is free. After you get an account you can find me by searching for my Twitter name, which is “rvoltz.”

You also can follow IASA under the name “IllinoisASA.” Both of these accounts have the same information.

Many school districts, schools and individual teachers are now using Twitter and other social media to communicate with their school communities. This is a great way to communicate to others using technology.

Remember you have to go to your Twitter account to view my messages or you may view these on the front page of the IASA website. This will only take a few minutes per day and I think you will find the information helpful to you in your role as a school administrator.

I also write weekly blog articles that I publish on a site titled “Dr. Rich Voltz’s Ed Leadership Thoughts.” You can access this site at <http://richvoltz.edublogs.org>

### **Communication to the Public**

Several years ago when I was campaigning for a building referendum, a prominent citizen in the community asked me why I only communicate to the public when the school district is asking for something like raising taxes to build a building or to balance the budget. He made a very good point. In reaction to this criticism, I started to communicate much more regularly with the public. I arranged with the local newspaper to write a column titled “Superintendent Scribbles,” so I could communicate current education-related topics to the community. In addition, a monthly newsletter was mailed to all registered voters, as well as a more detailed piece to parents of school age children.

Many of the “digital” parents of today don’t read newspapers and many told me they would rather receive the district newsletter online than in the mail. One way to reach these “digital” parents is via Podcasting, Blogging, Twitter, Facebook and other electronic means. Parents and others can electronically subscribe to these communication vehicles and download the information.

### **The Fred Factor**

A superintendent gave me a book several years ago titled The Fred Factor by Mark Sanborn. I thought I would share some of the wisdom from this book for you. Fred is a postal carrier in Denver and he has a great passion for his work and goes out of his way to service his postal customers. The author was one of Fred’s postal customers and Mark uses lessons learned from Fred when he makes business motivational talks around the country.

The Fred Principles:

1. **Everyone Makes a Difference:** “Ultimately, the more valuable you are to others – the more value you create in your work or your interactions with others – the more value will eventually flow toward you. Faithfully doing your best, independent of the support, acknowledgment, or reward of others, is a key determination in a fulfilling career.” Are your school district employees just doing their jobs or do they really care about what they are doing and take pride in their students’ accomplishments?
2. **Success Is Built On Relationships:** “Indifferent people deliver impersonal service.” Do your teachers, administrators and staff really care about the students? Do they build relationships with all students, especially with those who have trouble learning or behaving correctly? Do high school teachers really believe in the high school mantra, Rigor, Relationships and Relevance?

3. **You Must Continually Create Value for Others, and It Doesn't Have To Cost a Penny:** "In today's economy, a high-school or college graduate should expect to be unemployed a few times during his or her career. But that unemployment will be brief as long as the individual is employable." Are we meeting the needs of our students as we head through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Jobs that are not even imagined today will be here tomorrow. Are our students ready?
4. **You Can Reinvent Yourself Regularly:** "I believe that no matter what job you hold, what industry you work in, or where you live, every morning you wake up with a clean slate. You can make business, as well as your life, anything you choose it to be. That's what I call the Fred Factor." Are your employees reinventing themselves regularly? As superintendent, do you lead by example?

### **Tips for the Week**

Just as you desire your principals to visit classrooms on a regular basis and teachers to move around the classrooms and work with students, then you also need to visit classrooms and buildings. Try to make it a point to visit one school per day and, when in that school, to visit one classroom. In addition to talking to classroom teachers and the building administration, please take time to talk to janitors, cooks, secretaries and other support staff. These are the people in your community who are "credible" as to what kind of person you are. Give them some of your time, listen to their suggestions and even act on some of their suggestions. They will sing your praises in the community.