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District Administration®

May/June 2024

The DA

TOP 100

IT'S HERE: Our first annual list of the
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"Getting information about students thinking of hurting themselves or others is the very best outcome. *Say Something* has had an incredible impact and it works."

- **Jeremy Culley, Superintendent,**
Jay County District School, Indiana

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FIRST TAKE



The Summer (Un)Wind

It's the end of yet another academic year. As it winds down and we segue into summer, I want to congratulate all leaders for navigating the crazy obstacle course known as K12 and coming out the other side with success and pride. It's your unwavering dedication and leadership that allows our children to not just succeed, but thrive.

The end of every school year marks a time of achievement and transition. It's also a crucial period for you, leaders, to step back and savor a well-deserved break. The importance of self-care and its role in mental and physical wellness cannot be understated, especially after a year of commitment and hard work.

Summer break is not just for kids. It's also an opportunity for you to decompress and relax. Whether that means reading a book on the beach, taking a road trip (with notifications on your phone silenced!), having cookouts with the family or whatever it is that boosts your dopamine, these moments of leisure are essential for rejuvenation. They provide the space to reflect on the past year's accomplishments and recharge for the journey ahead.

While it's difficult for so many of us to downshift from high gear to chill mode, it's a skill worth mastering. Your well-being is integral to your ability to inspire and lead, yet it's something we all seem to take for granted. As you unwind and enjoy the summer, know that your efforts are greatly appreciated and have made yet another year of significant impact on the lives not just of students, but educators as well.

Lori Capullo
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

“A lot of superintendents fall into the mindset that there's never time for self-care and stress management. ‘I don't have time’ is code for ‘I don't care.’ It's not OK to say you don't care about your wellness, whether that's physical, emotional or spiritual wellness.”

—SUPERINTENDENT QUINTIN SHEPHERD, VICTORIA ISD, TEXAS

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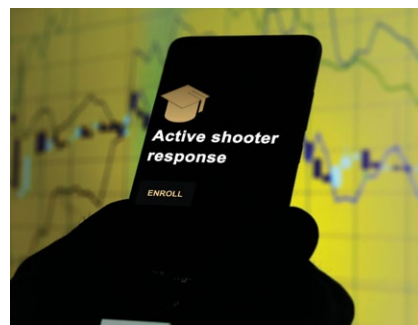
Introducing our annual list of the 100 most influential, impactful leaders in every aspect of K12 education, from coaching to edtech to the superintendency.



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“I feel like I **don’t know what’s going on sometimes, even though I tell my teacher that I **understand.**”**

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LEVEL UP CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

to Prepare the Future Workforce

According to the U.S. Department of Education, students who focused on Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses while in high school had higher median annual earnings eight years after their expected graduation date than students who didn't. A reason for this is that CTE courses gave them the opportunity to learn valuable workplace skills like communication and time management.

So, how can school and district leaders help ever-evolving student populations graduate from high school and enter high-demand, high-wage jobs or continue with postsecondary education? **Develop a long-term strategy for CTE that allows your program to grow and adapt over time.**

To help, we've put together **three ways you can enhance CTE offerings** to ensure your decisions are driven by what employers want to see paired with what students are excited about.

Provide Students with Opportunities to Gain Employability Skills and Industry Certifications

With fewer students interested in completing a four-year degree and high-demand, high-wage job opportunities more readily available, it's important that educators help students learn the technical skills needed while also teaching them the value of employability skills.

A great place to start is the U.S. Department of Education's Employability Skills Framework, which includes three overarching skill categories for employability - applied knowledge, effective relationships, and workplace skills. The best way to ensure your students are grasping these skills is through different assignments, quizzes, and more.

CTE courses can also prepare students for **industry certifications**. They're valuable to employers because they verify a job candidate's technical skillset - giving your students a leg up when applying for jobs.

Partner with Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs)

CTSOs are an integral component of curriculum and instruction, building upon employability skills and concepts through the application and engagement of students in hands-on demonstrations and real-life and/or work experiences. There are eight CTOSs, including DECA (formerly Distributive Education Clubs of America), TSA (Technology Student Association), and FFA (Future Farmers of America).

Students within these organizations have the opportunity to gain real-world job experiences,



including working with their peers, creating resumes, networking, and more.

Refine and Expand Your Career and Technical Education Course Catalog

Just like the employment landscape changes, so do your students' interests, which is why it's critical to refine your CTE offerings each year. The top three questions to ask yourself every year include:

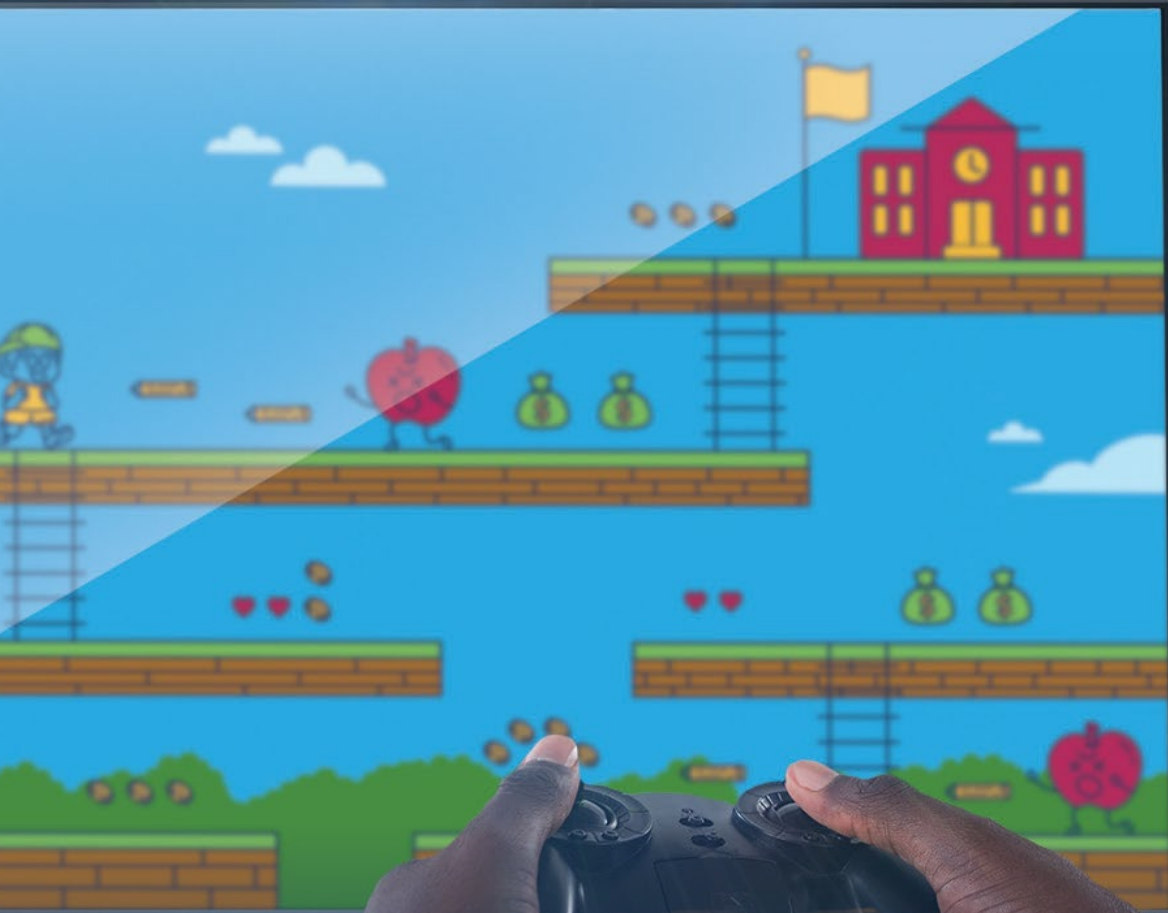
- Over the next five years, what are the top three to five occupations for your county/state?
- What employability skills are employers most looking for in the next three years?
- How has your student population changed over the past year?

Once you answer these foundational questions, you can start looking at your current CTE course offerings. For example, if you're a rural school or district and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is estimating an increase in agriculture jobs over the next five years - do you have a program of study related to agriculture? If not, it may be time to start investing in that program of study.

To help school and district leaders take their CTE program to the next level, our team developed a free guide.

Download the Free Guide at FlexPointEducation.com/CTEGuide





LEVEL UP

Your Students' Future-Ready Skills

With more than 20 years of experience, FlexPoint knows that CTE offerings look different for every school and district based on student population and the employment landscape.

Download our **free** guide to discover how to enhance your CTE program so it grows and adapts over time.



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GUIDE



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No one talks about superintendents' mental health. Leaders want that to change

In an era of high stress and continuous turnover at the top, leaders are sharing their strategies for remaining energized and in touch with the reasons they became educators.

BY MATT ZALAZNICK

Even amidst high turnover, superintendent mental health is often left out of wider conversations about student and staff wellness in K12 schools. The good news is that leaders are sharing their strategies for remaining energized and in touch with the reasons they became educators.

School board meetings, even when they go smoothly, are a source of stress for many superintendents. That's why Superintendent Quintin Shepherd of Victoria ISD in Texas schedules elementary school visits for the morning after meeting days. He spends his time reading to kindergarteners and serving as a teaching assistant.

"A lot of superintendents fall into the mindset that there's never time for self-care and stress management," says Shepherd, a regular contributor to District Administration's Leadership Institute. "I don't have time' is code for 'I don't care.' It's not OK to say you don't care

about your wellness, whether that's physical, emotional or spiritual wellness."

Shepherd focuses on wellness by mentally dividing his daily commutes in half. On the way to school, he thinks about how smoothly he left his house during the first half of the commute and spends the rest of the time focused on how he wants to show up for work.

Along with cycling, running, boxing and weight training, the number 168 is also an important part of Shepherd's self-care regimen. He recommends listing seven or eight priorities, such as work, exercise and your spiritual life, and using "168"—the number of hours in a week—to determine how much time you would like to spend on each activity every month. You can then go back through your calendar to determine how much time you spent on each endeavor and see if you're satisfied with how the two figures match up.

Two important aspects of superintendent mental

“By addressing self-care through mindfulness, through mindful movement and moments of presence, it allows teachers to all be there for their students and to provide that security for their students.”

health at the office are delegating and staying out of the way. Superintendents don't have to be involved in every district project. “You have to be close enough to whatever action is going that you're still informed and still have influence but you should also realize superintendents can be too close,” Shepherd advises. “Most superintendents walk into a room thinking they're the 180-pound executive when they are the 600-pound gorilla.”

REMEMBER YOUR PURPOSE

Superintendent Barbara Malkas' response to the stress educators have been dealing with post-pandemic was to get teachers practicing yoga at North Adams Public Schools in Massachusetts. But it's not only helping staff: A teacher who adopted yoga said that last school year she did not send any students to the office because of behavioral problems.

“It's very hard for teachers or any human being to be responsible for the social-emotional health and wellbeing of another person without first attending to themselves,” says Malkas, Massachusetts' 2024 Superintendent of the Year and a certified yoga instructor. “By addressing self-care through mindfulness, through mindful movement and moments of presence, it allows teachers to all be there for their students and to provide that security for their students.”

For her training, Malkas chose Breathe for Change, a yoga and social-emotional learning program specifically designed for classroom educators. Over the last few years, about 45 of her teachers have also been certified. Malkas and some of her staff now offer weekly yoga classes to community members. “The discipline referrals in classes where teachers are using mindfulness and mindful movement have decreased substantially,” Malkas notes. “One teacher reported she had not had one significant office referral the entire year last year, which was revolutionary compared to the years prior.”

First-year superintendent Neil Gupta of the Oakwood School District in Ohio says he had to be intentional about embedding health and wellness into his new practice. Regularly spending time with students is at the top of his list of strategies. “It's really easy to sit in my office and sit in meeting rooms constantly, doing a lot of work,” Gupta notes. “If we don't block out time to walk through classrooms and cafeterias and talk with students, we forget our purpose, we forget our why.”

Gupta makes a point of meeting with principals at their schools (rather than at central office) and he adds time on either side of those meetings to visit classrooms and students. He has also formed a close relationship with a

pair of out-of-district, out-of-state colleagues whom he can text regularly and discuss the challenges of running a school district. “They can say things to me I don't want to hear from other people, as far as ‘Hey, Neil you're wrong,’ ‘Hey, Neil you should've done more,’” Gupta notes.

Superintendents need passion projects to avoid falling into a rut. Gupta is about to launch STEM initiatives and gather community input for the district's strategic plan. Finally, Gupta has found that expressing appreciation keeps him charged and thinking positively. He has supplied his administrators with a large set of blank greeting cards and has tasked himself and his team of 15 with sending out gratitude cards each week to staff and students.

He describes the exercise as a tangible way to count your blessings. “There's something mentally that happens to you when you're writing an ‘Appreciate You’ card to somebody else,” he explains. “By the time I leave the kitchen table after writing 15 cards, I'm in a better spot mentally and in how I feel about my district.”

TAKE OWNERSHIP OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Former superintendent Baron Davis says the key to wellness is designing a self-care routine and blocking out time so work doesn't intrude. But that doesn't mean handing off your job responsibilities or waiting for the school board to set time aside for superintendents' mental health. “The trap you fall into is you start assigning the responsibility of your care to other people,” declares Davis, the founder and CEO of The Noegenesis Group, an education think tank and consulting firm.

But superintendents can find an accountability buddy who can help keep them on track with their self-care routines, which can be as simple as meditating in the office for 15 to 20 minutes a day or taking short walks. When Davis was a superintendent, he kept a small putting surface in his office and continued hitting golf balls until he got six in a row into the hole. He also kept a chessboard and periodically played a piece on both sides.

Leaders should try to devote 10% of each month—or 72 hours—to self-care (not including sleep). Book golf outings regularly, for instance, and use your vacation time if you love to travel. It boils down to prioritizing activities that bring leaders joy and allow them to shift their focus from day-to-day responsibilities and stressors that accompany the work.

“Stay connected to colleagues, lean on people—vulnerability is not a bad thing,” Davis concludes. “If you're not practicing self-care, you're actively practicing self-harm.” DA



The DA 1000

Introducing *District Administration's* first annual comprehensive list—in no particular order—of some of the country's most influential, impactful leaders and innovators in K12 education. Collectively but in varying capacities they're helping shape the future of students across the country— and around the world—by turning their passions into actions.

JONATHAN HARBER. Founder of EdTech Week, an annual gathering of entrepreneurs and innovators who are working to transform education, and co-founder of Schoolnet, Inc., which helps school systems use data to increase academic achievement. He also teaches edtech entrepreneurship at NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development.



KARIM ABOUENAGA. CEO and co-founder of PRACTICE, which creates school leadership programs for students in urban schools in efforts to close opportunity gaps. PRACTICE's programs encompass academic enrichment and mentoring, and its team works with principals to tailor its culturally responsive instruction to the specific needs of individual schools.



KATY ANTHES. As director of the Public Education and Business Coalition's FORWARD initiative, Anthes is working against polarization in education to help leaders improve student outcomes. She served as Colorado's Commissioner of Education from 2016 to 2023 and founded the Third Mile Group, an independent education and policy organization.



ADAM BELLOW. A star of the Future of Education Technology Conference's annual—and wildly popular—TechShare LIVE keynote, Bellow is the CEO and founder of Breakout Edu, a provider of gamified lessons on soft skills, social-emotional learning and career-readiness for students in all grades.



EIRIK BERRE. Co-founder and COO of Curipod, which allows teachers to plan and deliver interactive lessons on any topic with help from AI. Berre, who says he's "on a mission to make students curious and give teachers more time with their students and families," has also been an educator in Norway and Mozambique.



DAWN BRIDGES. Vice President of Educational Affairs for Right At School, which operates "locally inspired" before- and after-school enrichment programs and summer camps at school sites, Bridges has been a teacher, reading specialist, special education coordinator, principal and assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.



JEAN-CLAUDE BRIZARD. President and CEO of Digital Promise, a global, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization focused on accelerating innovation in education, Brizard was formerly a deputy director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and superintendent of Rochester City School District in New York.



MIGUEL CARDONA. The sitting U.S. Secretary of Education has focused on academic recovery in the wake of the pandemic, closing the digital divide, creating a more equitable education system and reducing the cost of higher education.



RON CHANDLER. Leader of U.S. education customer engagement at Apple, Chandler previously served as the company's leader for U.S. education. Before that, he was the CIO of the Harvard Business School. He has 30+ years of experience leading technology and cybersecurity in corporations, professional services firms and educational institutions.



LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND. The world-renowned education researcher serves as president and CEO of the Learning Policy Institute, a nonprofit and nonpartisan think tank focused on creating equitable access to education. She is a professor of education emeritus at Stanford University, where she founded the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.



K12 thought leaders **DANA GODEK** and **MICHAEL MOORE**. Experts in residence for the District Administration Leadership Institute, Godek and Moore co-author a column on leadership strategy, policy, funding and other critical areas of K12 management. As the CEO of EduSolve, Godek, a former K12 administrator and teacher, helps communities solve a wide range of educational challenges. Moore has been a national leadership and organizational development consultant and executive coach for 20 years, following stints as a high school principal and superintendent.



SHARIF EL-MEKKI. As founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development, El-Mekki and his team are working to rebuild the Black teacher pipeline. One of the organization's key focuses is working in high schools to encourage students to pursue careers in education.



CHRISTOPHER EMDIN is the Maxine Greene Chair for Distinguished Contributions to Education and a professor of science education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He is also the director of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship at the STEAM DREAM and Ideal Lab and created the HipHopEd social media movement, Science Genius BATTLES and the CREATE Accelerator, which funds nonprofits focused on culture and education.



Long-time superintendent and K12 thought leader **QUINTIN SHEPHERD** recently took the helm at Pflugerville Independent School District in Texas after having led Victoria ISD since 2018. He has also served as superintendent of Lin Mar Community Schools in Iowa and at two districts in Illinois.



LINDSAY E. JONES is the CEO of CAST, where she works with educators and researchers to design learner-centered, flexible and accessible education systems rooted in the Universal Design for Learning. She previously served as president and CEO of the National Center for Learning Disabilities and senior director for policy and advocacy at the Council for Exceptional Children.



JOHN KATZMAN is founder and CEO of The Noodle Companies, an education startup whose search engine helps students and parents find educational resources and schools. Previously, he founded and ran 2U, which works with research universities to create online degree programs. He also founded *The Princeton Review* in 1981.



SAL KHAN is CEO and founder of the groundbreaking Khan Academy, a nonprofit whose free online learning platform is now ubiquitous in K12 education. He is also the founder of Schoolhouse.world, Khan Lab School and Khan World School, all nonprofits focused on expanding access to education. While an undergraduate at MIT, he developed math software for children with ADHD and tutored fourth- and seventh-grade public school students in Boston.



AL KINGSLEY is an edtech guru, speaker and the group CEO of NetSupport Limited, a global provider of evidence-informed solutions for education and business. He is an active edtech advisor, mentor, author and was named the 2023 Edufuturist of the Year.



WENDY KOPP is CEO and co-founder of Teach For All, a global network of independent organizations that prepare the next generation of educators to serve marginalized communities in 53 countries on six continents. Kopp also founded Teach For America in 1989 to combat educational inequity in the United States.



JASON MCKENNA is an author, speaker and director of global educational strategy for VEX Robotics where he oversees curriculum development and classroom integration for the company's wide range of platforms. In his book, *What STEM Can Do for Your Classroom*, he describes how teaching STEM in elementary school changed his classroom and his life.



ERIN MOTE is the CEO and founder of InnovateEDU, where she leads the nonprofit's technology product development and works on data interoperability and its urban education fellowship



for new educators. She and her team created Cortex, a personalized learning platform, and Landing Zone, a service data product. She and her husband, Eric Tucker, are the founders of the Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School.

HADI PARTOVI is a tech entrepreneur and the CEO of Code.org, whose computer science classes now reach 30 percent of American students; he also developed the most broadly used K12 computer science curriculum platform. Hundreds of millions of students have participated in its global Hour of Code movement.



HARRISON PETERS is the CEO and co-founder of Men of Color in Education Leadership (MCEL), a mentoring and PD organization that encourages men of color to aspire to principalships, superintendentcies and other administrative positions. The organization also works with districts to diversify building and central office leadership.



Los Angeles Unified School District Superintendent **ALBERTO CARVALHO'S** latest achievement is the launching of Ed, a personalized AI assistant for each of his district's 540,000 students, continuing the quest that led to him being named one of the nation's Top 10 Tech-Savvy Superintendents by eSchool News as far back as 2011.



JULIA RAFAL-BAER is the co-founder and managing partner of ILO Group, a women-owned education strategy and policy firm that is helping district leaders tackle some of K12's most pressing challenges. A respected education thought leader, she also created Women Leading Ed, a national network of female education leaders.



LAUREN RHIM. Rhim is the executive director and co-founder of The Center for Learner Equity (CLE), a nonprofit that aims to provide students with disabilities equitable access to high-quality public education. Her vision has been instrumental to the success of the organization's research, advocacy, coalition development and field-based capacity-building projects.



JAVOID SIDDIQI. Formerly Virginia's secretary of education, Javid Siddiqi is president and CEO of The Hunt Institute, which seeks to inform elected officials and policymakers about key matters in education. Siddiqi is responsible for guiding the institute's strategic vision and developing relationships with key partners and funders across the country.



DAMIEN SWEENEY. The director of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at the Kentucky Department of Education, Sweeney's passion for change agency and social justice dates back to his experiences as a special education teacher, English teacher and high school counselor in Jefferson County Public Schools.



TOM VANDER ARK. The CEO and partner of GettingSmart, a hybrid of entities that bridge organizational gaps to accelerate innovation in teaching, leading and learning, Vander Ark has also authored several books, including *Getting Smart: How Digital Learning is Changing the World* and *Difference Making at the Heart of Learning*.



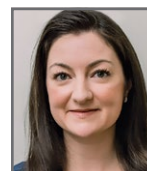
ROBERT JAGERS. The vice president of research at the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Jagers is spearheading work with partnering districts to uncover how SEL can foster equitable learning environments and developmental outcomes for students from historically underserved groups.



AMANDA BICKERSTAFF. The co-founder and CEO of AI for Education, an organization that provides workshops, training, resources and consulting so educators can unlock AI's full potential. Bickerstaff routinely serves as a resource for educators across K12 and higher education who seek to expand their understanding of AI.



MONICA BURNS. An edtech consultant and founder of Class Tech Tips, which hosts a variety of resources designed to help educators leverage edtech more effectively. Burns is a well-known name for her blog posts, podcasts and books.



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JIMMY CASAS. The CEO of J Casas and Associates, an educational leadership company that serves teachers, principals and superintendents in school districts through coaching support, Casas is a best-selling author, speaker, leadership coach and a state and national award-winning principal.



HOLLY CLARK. The owner and chief learning officer of The Infused Classroom, an education technology blog designed to provide teachers resources and professional development on AI in education and other edtech innovations.



GEORGE COUROS. An author and highly sought-after speaker in innovative leadership, teaching and learning, Couros' sessions often delve into transformative education practices that inspire educators and leaders to create empowering learning environments.



ERIC CURTS. The technology integration specialist for SPARCC in North Canton, Ohio, Curts oversees Google for Education implementation, training and support. He is also an authorized Google Education Trainer and Innovator and runs the award-winning blog "ControlAltAchieve," where he shares a host of edtech resources and tools for educators.



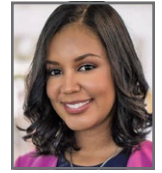
DIANE DOERSCH. The senior director of information technology at Digital Promise, which brings together solutions across research, practice and technology to shape the future of learning and advance equitable education systems, Doersch is also the board chair of the Consortium of School Networking (CoSN).



KIMBERLY VAUGHT. The former principal and current executive director of leadership development at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina is considered a trusted advisor to teachers and staff who lean on her to collaborate and motivate them.



STEPHANIE ESPY. The founder of MathSP, an Atlanta-based coaching business that helps young people to excel in their academics and gain access to college and graduate school programs, Espy has authored several books and created the STEM Gems Clubs, which brings STEM careers and role models to young women in communities and schools around the globe.



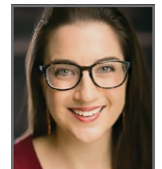
LESLIE FISHER. The director of Fisher Technologies Inc. specializes in K12 educational technology conferences and event presentation services in addition to on-site and online professional development. For 27 years, she's been a keynote and featured speaker sharing engaging educational technology with educators.



DAN FITZPATRICK. An international keynote speaker and author of the best-selling book *The AI Classroom: The Ultimate Guide to Artificial Intelligence in Education*, Fitzpatrick works with schools, colleges, universities and businesses empowering teams to embrace AI in ways tailored to their unique needs.



JULIA FREELAND FISHER. Julia Freeland Fisher is the director of education at the Clayton Christensen Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank where she leads a team of researchers to uncover the effects of disruptive innovation on the public and private education landscape. Her research focuses on emerging tools and practices that leverage technology to expand students' social capital.



MICHAEL FULLAN. The co-leader of the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning global initiative, which works alongside educators to transform the role of teachers to that of activators of learning. Fullan has also authored several books, including *The Principal 2.0: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact* and *Coherence: Putting the Right Drivers in Action*.



JENNIFER GONZALEZ. Gonzalez is the creator of Cult of Pedagogy, a host of resources including blog posts, a podcast and instructional videos designed to support educators in their pursuit of excellence in the classroom.





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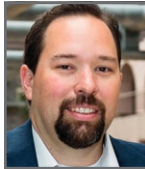
The founders of Complexly, home to over a dozen educational YouTube channels like Crash Course, SciShow and PBS Eons. Combined, the channels have garnered more than 18 million subscribers. The content is free and used by teachers and learners in schools around the world.



MARY HEMPHILL. The CEO and founder of The Limitless Leader, a leadership coaching and consulting firm that helps people learn how to better serve their community, company and personal careers, Hemphill has two decades of experience as a teacher, administrator, state director and adjunct professor.



CARL HOOKER. An educational speaker and consultant with more than 25 years of teaching experience, Hooker was director of innovation and digital learning for the Eanes Independent School District for more than 12 years, spearheading an initiative that put iPads into the hands of all K12 students in the district.



STANLEY LITOW. A professor at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, Litow once served as the deputy schools chancellor for the New York City Public School System. He’s authored several books, including *Breaking Barriers: How P-TECH Schools Create a Pathway From High School to College to Career*.



BARON DAVIS. An educational leader with more than 24 years of experience, Davis serves as the chief executive officer of The Neogenesis Group, a solution-focused and outcomes-driven educational strategy think tank. He’s also the senior advisor for Digital Promise, a global nonprofit that works with educators, researchers, tech leaders and communities to design, investigate and scale up innovations to empower learners.



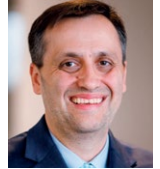
LAURA MCBAIN. McBain is the managing director of the K12 Lab at Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, which seeks to remove opportunity gaps in elementary and secondary education by creating more equitable models and sharing design approaches with students and educators.



THOMAS MURRAY. Director of innovation for Future Ready Schools (All 4 Ed), Murray has dedicated the last 10 years to helping school districts apply evidence-based practices that result in student-centered learning environments. He also hosts the podcast “Leading Through Unprecedented Times,” inviting K12 leaders to discuss the sector’s leading issues.



WILLIAM ROBINSON. Executive director of the University of Virginia Partnership for Leaders in Education, Robinson has helped countless school systems and school leaders advance research-proven practices conducive to stronger student outcomes while exploring new frontiers for future systems change. He’s consulted with various education organizations, including the D.C. Public Education Fund, the Center for Better Schools and Stand for Children.



BRETT SALAKAS. Education ambassador at HP, Salakas is an international bestselling author and keynote speaker at conferences in Australia, Asia, Europe and North America. He founded #aussieED, Australia’s largest online education network and is credited for connecting Australian and American pedagogy.



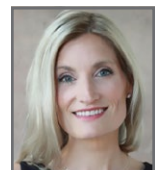
JOE SANFELIPPO. Keynote speaker and author Sanfelippo helps school districts, boards and principals reshape their narratives and unlock their potential through community relationships. The retired 12-year superintendent was recognized as a preeminent K12 leader by the U.S. Department of Education for advocating personalized learning.



ERIC SHENINGER. CEO of Aspire Change EDU, keynote speaker and author, Sheninger has worked with thousands of schools to develop innovative and practical ways to transform teaching and lead more effectively. His consultancy group, Aspire Change EDU, provides personalized support for all education systems.



CONSTANCE STEINKUEHLER. A professor at the University of California, Irvine, Steinkuehler works in UCI’s Department of Informatics, focusing on multiplayer online video games and their ramifications on culture, cognition and learning. She also served as an advisor under the Obama administration on video games and digital media.





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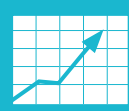
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MIKE THOLFSEN. The principal group product manager for Microsoft Education, Tholfesen leads the company's product strategy, including for AI in education experiences. He also leads all Immersive Reader products, helping students with dyslexia, ADHD, non-native speakers and emerging readers learn and has a YouTube channel devoted to "how to" videos explaining Microsoft product features.



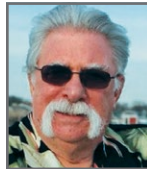
CATLIN TUCKER. Tucker is a former teacher who's fueled her award-winning 16-year career into becoming an inspiring keynote speaker. A teacher in Sonoma County, Calif., she has also authored award-winning books focused on blended learning, such as 2022's *The Shift to Student-Led*.



ADAM WELCOME. Former principal Welcome is a seasoned keynote who has spoken at over 400 events. Topics he usually delves into with guests are kids, teachers, innovation, creativity and relationships. He also hosts the popular podcast "The School District."



TOM WHITBY. A popular internet and radio personality who facilitates education conversations on X through #edchat, Whitby is a senior consultant for Ideamapper, a tool that helps users bridge visual learning with documentation.



JILL SILER. Deputy executive director at the Texas Association of School Administrators, Siler is a former Texas superintendent who trains other K12 leaders through her career as a keynote speaker and author. She also leads Texas' Aspiring Superintendent Academy and Texas' First Time Superintendents Academy.



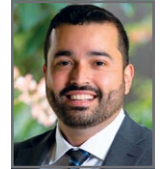
EVANGELINA MENDOZA. As the chief information technology officer at San Antonio Independent School District in Texas, Mendoza has developed and led financial and implementation strategies for her district to purchase technology in over 3,000 classrooms, upgrade network infrastructure and increase device availability.



ROBERT DICKSON. Chief information officer at Wichita Public Schools (Kan.), Dickson oversees the district's virtual school, Education Imagine Academy, which was recognized as Microsoft Showcase School in its second year. He also oversees the digital literacy and citizenship instructional training department to help empower students with 21st-century skills.



JOSE GONZALEZ. Chief technology officer at the Los Angeles County Office of Education, Gonzalez helps the agency oversee 80 public school districts by creating infrastructures supporting the help desk, software development and device management.



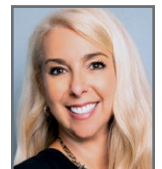
TAMI LUNDBERG. CTO at Fresno Unified School District (Calif.), Lundberg brings 30+ years of experience in private practice to FUSD. She has been a vocal advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion for the district's IT department, a line of work traditionally dominated by men.



NEIL WEAVER. Chief information and strategy officer at Santa Fe Public Schools (N.M.), Weaver is a thought leader on student engagement and the changing K12 learning environment, helping leaders create impactful strategies. He is also an advocate for responsible technology use in the classroom.



EMILY RAMSEY. CIO of Fulton County Schools (Ga.), Ramsey leads a team of 250 IT members who support 100 buildings for 100,000 students and staff members. She represented fellow CIOs at the White House Back to School Safely Cybersecurity Summit for K12 Schools led by First Lady Jill Biden.



NORMAN FLEMING. Chief information technology officer at Chicago Public Schools (Ill.), Fleming brings 30 years of private sector experience to his role. He is an advocate for better diversity, equity and inclusion practices in the technology space, helping students envision STEM-based careers through volunteer work with 100 Black Men in Chicago.





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MARCIA ANDREWS. A board member of the School District of Palm Beach County (Fla.), Andrews is a staunch supporter of equal opportunity and consistently prioritizes students in the western part of the county, which consists of farmworkers and laborers.



GREG BAGBY. As coordinator of instructional technology at the Hamilton Department of Education (Tenn.), Bagby is considered one of the savviest IT leaders, bloggers, podcasters and social media personalities in the K12 space. He is recognized as a Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert and an edtech aficionado.



MATTHEW JOSEPH. Assistant superintendent of teaching and learning at New Bedford Public Schools (Mass.), Joseph is a nationally recognized professional development specialist helping district leaders drive impact in a changing K12 landscape. He hosts the “Stronger Together Podcast,” which focuses on sharing leadership best practices.



REBEKAH KIM. Associate superintendent of teaching and learning at Kent School District (Wash.), Kim is an active community partner who works with local organizations to advocate for educational opportunities among underserved groups.



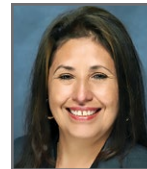
JEFF MCCOY. Associate superintendent of academics at Greenville County Schools (S.C.), McCoy oversees a multimillion-dollar annual budget while specializing in curriculum development, project management and software training. He is also an avid proponent of ethical AI use in the classroom.



JERMAINE DAWSON. Deputy superintendent of academic services at the School District of Philadelphia (Penn.), Dawson is a passionate school system leader with a proven track record of raising student achievement and improving outcomes for school districts.



LIZA CARABALLO-SUAREZ. The president of the National Association of Elementary School Principals 2023-24 and a National Task Force on Race & Equity committee member at the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), Caraballo-Suarez has been serving K12 for more than 20 years.



AARON HUFF. New National Association of Secondary School Principals President Huff is in his fifth year as principal of Benjamin Bosse High School in Evansville, Ind. The variety of education roles Huff has held—working in elementary, middle and high schools with a broad range of demographics—has given him a well-rounded perspective on school leadership.



ANGEL RODRIGUEZ. Named Principal of the Year by the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, Rodriguez led Lyman Hall Elementary School in Hinesville, Ga., to graduating record numbers of EL students from language programs and being identified as gifted. The school now has one of the highest EL gifted percentages in Georgia and the nation.



GUSTAVO BALDERAS. The Beaverton School District (Ore.) superintendent's track record of increasing his students' academic success and social-emotional growth earned him the 2021 Champion for Equity Award from the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, 2020 Oregon Superintendent of the Year Award from the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators, and the 2020 National Superintendent of the Year Award from the American Superintendents Association.



DARIN BRAWLEY At Compton Unified School District, Superintendent Brawley has increasingly been eliminating the student opportunity gap in technology by focusing on STEAM initiatives with partners such as Digital Promise, Apple, Verizon, Boeing, Microsoft and Google. The district has since been named among L.A. County's top-performing public schools and Blue Ribbon Schools.





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JOSE DOTRES. Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS, Fla.), the third-largest school district in the nation, Dotres is known as an innovative thinker who galvanizes his teams through strategic programs centered around teacher leadership and effectiveness and for cultivating the teaching profession from within the organization.



ZANDRA JO GALVÁN. Superintendent of the Greenfield Union School District, Galván has implemented a strategic plan with an LCAP-aligned vision, mission core values. She has also board of trustee priorities and designed innovative LEGO & Apple learning lab spaces for students to innovate, create and prepare for their successful college and career futures.



LATONYA GOFFNEY. Since taking over the superintendency at Aldine ISD in Texas, Goffney's district has added PreK for 3-year-olds, a dual-language program, two Accelerated Campus Excellence Schools, two single-gender schools, and launched Additional Days School Year campuses. In January, she announced the addition of the HEAL (Health Education and Learning) Program, to open in fall 2024.



CHRISTINA GRANT: Grant's education career started more than 20 years ago as a public school teacher in Harlem. Since then, she has been the superintendent of the Great Oaks Foundation and deputy executive director at the New York City Department of Education. Today she is the superintendent of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education in Washington, D.C.



NEIL GUPTA. Gupta's passion for administrative leadership, coaching and working with teams has led the former math teacher to his current position as the superintendent of Oakwood Schools in Ohio. He's a member of the Finalsite Superintendent Collaborative and an associate with Creative Leadership Solutions.



JOSEPH GOTHARD. Superintendent of Madison Metropolitan School District in Wisconsin, Gothard was named the 2024 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year and the 2024 National Superintendent



of the Year by AASA, The Superintendent Association. He's also the current president of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators.

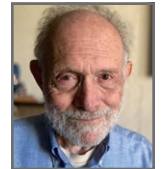
ALEX MARRERO. Denver Public Schools superintendent Marrero has led his district to a historic rise in graduation rates and spearheaded the development and implementation of the district's first-ever equity-based strategic plan. He has also been instrumental in negotiating contracts that raised teacher salaries to the most competitive levels in the state.



SCOTT MURI. Ector County Independent School District (Texas) superintendent Muri has held several leadership roles, including more than 10 years as a tech leader and administrator at Disney's Celebration School. Muri's secret to success is, in part, due to viewing children as individual learners who require personalized instruction designed to meet their needs.



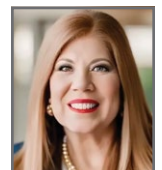
MICHAEL NAGLER. Professor emeritus of Classics and Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley, where he has taught for 58 years and founded the Peace and Conflict Studies Program (where he still teaches), Nagler has spoken and written widely for campus, religious, public and special interest groups on the subject of peace and nonviolence. He recently co-founded Educators for Nonviolence.



GLENN ROBBINS. Superintendent of the Brigantine Public School District in Brigantine, NJ, Robbins is the best-selling author of *Calm in The Chaos: Ancient Stoic Wisdom for Successful School Leadership*. His numerous administrative national and state recognitions include the National Exemplar of Education Award and Samsung Solve for Tomorrow winner.

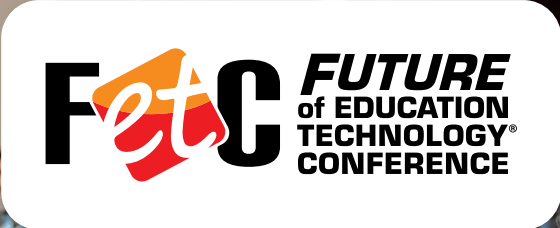


MARTHA SALAZAR-ZAMORA. Salazar-Zamora has been an educator in Texas for over 36 years and the superintendent of schools in Tomball ISD in Texas since 2017. She is the first female and the first Hispanic superintendent of Tomball ISD. Under her leadership, Tomball ISD has become a consistently A-rated district.





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BRENT JONES. The Seattle Public Schools superintendent is dedicated to ensuring all students thrive by transforming organizational culture and redesigning preK-12 systems and supports. In his former position as Seattle Public Schools chief equity, partnerships and engagement officer, he developed the district's strategy for eliminating opportunity gaps and the roadmap for realizing racial equity for students and families.



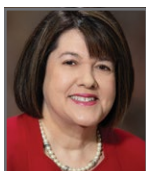
JERMALL WRIGHT. Little Rock Schools' Superintendent Wright's path to his current station included leading the Mississippi Achievement District, where he stepped in as superintendent in 2019. He is an advocate of choice for all students and his work reflects his philosophy of providing a path for all students to break out of the cycles of poverty and other generational issues.



MARY ELIZABETH DAVIS. Davis is the new superintendent of Cherokee County School District in Canton, Georgia. She was formerly superintendent of Henry County Schools, where she oversaw an 11-point growth in state accountability measures, moved all "F" schools off the governor's failing schools list and made progress toward meeting targets set by the Georgia Department of Education for closing achievement gaps.



MARIA VAZQUEZ. The daughter of Cuban immigrants, Orange County Schools (Fla.) Superintendent Vazquez has served at every level of the education system. She has expanded access to advanced coursework for underserved students and recruited top-notch teachers to the most vulnerable schools.



WAYNE VICKERS. With more than 30 years of experience as a teacher and administrator in public education, Alabaster City Schools (Ala.) Superintendent Vickers extends his contributions beyond the campus, having coordinated various capital improvement projects across the state such as new school construction, classroom additions and athletic complexes.

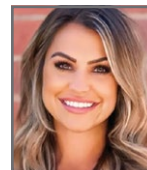


ANGELA CHAPMAN. The 25-year educator and current superintendent of Columbus City Schools considers a top-value education a "civil right." She started as the

Ohio district's chief of transformation and leadership and has driven the successful implementation of her district's Strategic Plan ensuring equal opportunities for all students.



KATE KOCH & COURTNEY ORZEL. The duo behind "Unsupervised Leadership," a keynote presentation theme and podcast that seeks to demonstrate how new-age leadership can instill stability, confidence and professionalism in a constantly evolving educational landscape. Each possesses impressive credentials: Koch is a school principal and has been an assistant principal and teacher. Orzel is the associate director for professional development for the Illinois Association of School Administrators and has served as a superintendent, principal and teacher.



NAMYA JOSHI. At 16, the Sat Paul Mittal School (India) student and Microsoft's official Minecraft student ambassador has been designing and delivering free coding workshops for tens of thousands of teachers and young people for five years. She's won numerous prestigious awards and competitions, including the UNESCO World Youth Multimedia Competition.



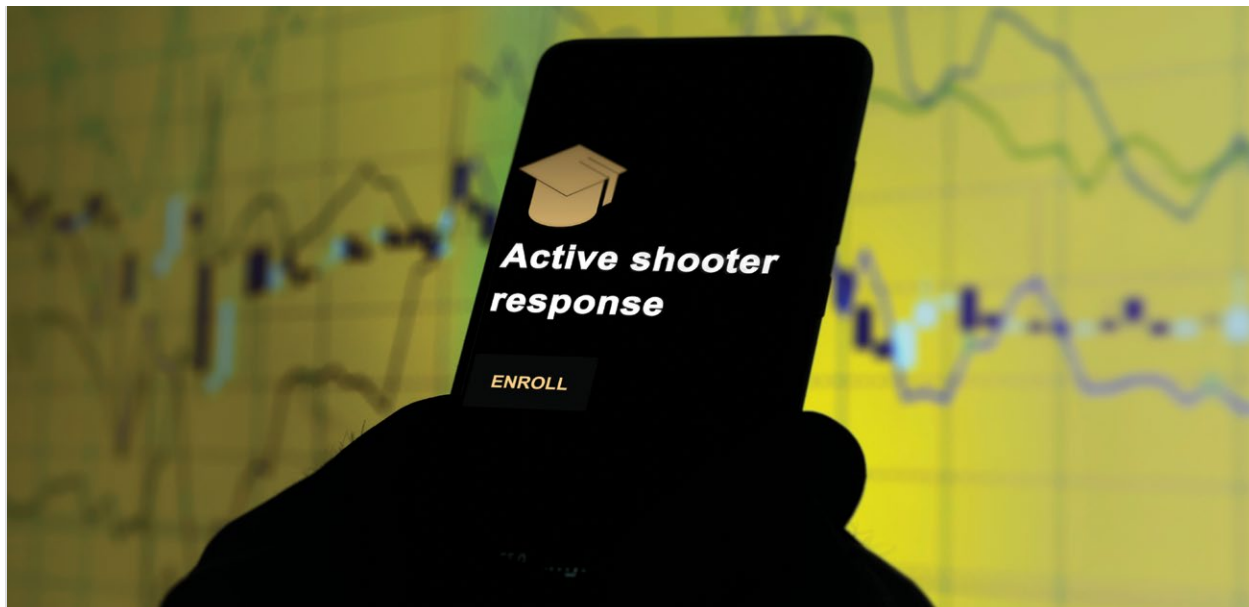
SHANNON MCCLINTOCK MILLER. An international speaker, consultant and author, McClintock Miller—the pre-K12 district librarian at Van Meter Community School District in Iowa—has an award-winning blog, "The Library Voice," has 12 children's books under her belt, authors pieces for education blogs and publications, and has been recognized for her work with numerous industry awards over the past 13 years.



JENNIFER VALOPPI. The former Emmy-winning news anchor and author has channeled her passion for education into her Women of Tomorrow program, in which accomplished professional women from varying industries mentor at-risk female high school students to prepare them for college and careers. The program has been in force and growing since 1997.



— District Administration Staff



Schools need faster emergency response technology. What's the holdup?

Shooter Detection System sensors pick up a gunshot's acoustic and infrared signals, pinpoint the shot's location, and automatically alert law enforcement and first responders without the need for a 911 call.

School shootings were at a record high in 2023, and this year isn't shaping up to be any better. As psychologically burdensome as the threat may be, the incidents are usually over in an instant. In the 14 minutes it takes for someone to call 911 until an officer arrives, an average of 56 shots will have already been fired, potentially killing 14 and wounding more, according to the ALICE Training Institute, a security service dedicated to mitigating active shooter casualties.

Despite the swiftness with which these tragedies can occur, institu-

tions have been slow to update their security systems, frustrating vendors who believe higher education leaders are letting practical campus solutions run right through their fingertips.

"It's kind of weird to think that customers are buying a system they hope they never use," says Kendra Noonan, the director of communications for Shooter Detection Systems, "but the forward-thinking ones know it's going to be there if the worst happens."

State legislators are proposing new security and safety funding to introduce new technology like

sensors, cameras and AI-driven analytics that detect unusual activities or anomalies, Karin Marquez, chief public safety brand officer at RaptidSOS, an intelligent safety platform, told Officer.com. However, the community is failing to see these changes. The 2023 K-12 School Safety Report by Motorola Solutions found that while 71% percent of teachers say their school has adopted new safety technology in the last two years, 54% of parents say they haven't seen new technologies implemented.

Noonan believes burdensome bureaucratic pipelines, regulations and political plays are restricting federal money from reaching the most in-need districts. Despite Congress approving up to \$1 billion in aid for K12 through the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), only 38 districts had received any money in the following nine months, Education Week reported.

"The federal government is setting the tone for the states on funding, but it's really important for

schools to recognize that shooting incidents aren't going away and that they need a multi-layered approach," says Noonan.

Noonan also believes that while institutions are rightly focused on preventing this kind of crisis through prevention methods like addressing mental health, mitigation technology is falling by the wayside. "I've always wondered why schools aren't as interested as they should be. There is a mindset. Some law enforcement loves the technology while others think they have it handled and don't necessarily think they need sophisticated security technology."

Shooter Detection System sensors pick up a gunshot's acoustic and infrared signals, pinpoint the shot's

location, and automatically alert law enforcement and first responders without the need for a 911 call, saving valuable time. The average 911 call takes 75 seconds from dialing to providing dispatch with enough information. Similarly, K12 districts and college campuses that use the SafeDefend Personnel Protection System automatically trigger law enforcement when clients attempt to gain access to an emergency storage kit in the event of an active shooter.

K12 districts aren't alone in failing to improve emergency detection systems. The state of Michigan is mourning as it comes up on the first anniversary of the gunman who took three students' lives at Michigan State University. While police arrived on the scene two minutes after the

initial 911 call, it took 10 minutes for MSU to dispatch an emergency alert to campus community members. By that point, the shooter had already left his second shooting location and was leaving campus.

"These events are over so quickly that they need instantaneous alerts," says Noonan.

After that tragic day, the community was promised several campus safety and security upgrades to address any faults or lapses in response time and effectiveness. However, the university is still behind on implementing some of the most vital measures it's promised thus far, drawing concern from the community, the *Detroit Free Press* reports.

—By Alcino Donadel



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"Our biggest priority is the safety of our students. The parents being able to get that information at six o'clock in the morning and being able to see that bus or knowing when their student is coming home, that is a big priority for us."

Suzanne Ramirez, Transportation Director
Los Fresnos CISD, Texas



Supervisor plays key role in driving district to technology to solve challenges, keep parents in the loop

Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District (Los Fresnos CISD), TX, located about 20 minutes from the Mexican border, covers nearly 487 square miles and transports about 10,700 students.

As a heavily rural area spread over a vast region of South Texas, the Los Fresnos transportation department is faced with transporting students over long routes and dark roads, often in cold and rainy weather conditions.

"The biggest challenge that we see is how long the routes are," said **Suzanne Ramirez**, transportation director at Los Fresnos. "Because our routes are so rural, there are no sidewalks. We are going from house to house, with some homes over half a mile out from any other houses, and we don't want our children standing outside in the dark for 30 or 45 minutes waiting for a bus."

Ramirez came on as Los Fresnos transportation director nearly 14 years ago and, along with colleague and supervisor **Leo Rojas**, has been focused on finding an effective solution to safely transporting their students.

"Our biggest priority is the safety of our students," Ramirez said. "The parents being able to get that information at six o'clock in the morning and being able to see that bus or knowing when their student is coming home, that is a big priority for us."

Several years ago, Ramirez and Rojas began discussing potential GPS systems and student tracking application options. For both, having effective and efficient routing and tracking software was essential to running a successful transportation department.

What did they come up with?

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3 takeaways from the launch of the digital SAT

In recent years, K12 education has gone increasingly digital, including test-taking. Here’s what students and staff had to say after completing the digital SAT for the first time.

More than 200,000 students took the first digital SAT and they overwhelmingly approved of the updated exam, reads a news release from the test’s administrators, The College Board.

March 9 marked the U.S. launch of the new digital exam. How’d it go?

“I thought it was an easier process than the paper SAT,” Emily, a student from New Jersey, told The College Board. “It took less stamina and since there was a timer right in front of you I thought it was very useful. This format allowed me enough time to get through each section and feel confident in my answers.”

Doreen Ciccarini, a paraprofessional and proctor of 17 years, echoed Emily’s thoughts despite feeling uncertain about the new format.

“I was very nervous leading up to this, but the experience was very easy and self-explanatory,” Ciccarini said. “I didn’t have any issues. I would 100% do it again.

This digital version of the SAT was first available to students outside the U.S. in the spring of 2023. Since

then, more than 300,000 tests have been administered globally.

According to The College Board:

- 84% of students and 99% of staff reported having a better experience with the digital SAT compared to the traditional style.
- 97% of students reported that the Bluebook testing app—the platform used to take the exam—was easy to use.
- 95% of students said they felt comfortable taking the test on a digital device.

These sentiments reflect the organization’s decision to transition to digital, noted Priscilla Rodrigues, senior vice president of College Readiness Assessments at College Board.

“We made the transition to a digital SAT in response to what students and educators were telling us,” Rodrigues said in a statement. “Students do a lot of their learning and testing digitally these days. Our goal was to provide a testing experience that is more relevant to today’s students.”

By Micah Ward

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How to determine the college- and career-readiness of your school system

Students can experience preparation across the K12 span, building on a developmental progression.

BY DR. DANA GODEK AND MICHAEL MOORE

While accountability is a good reason to improve your college- and career-readiness approach, the most important reason is evident in a recent Gallup poll that found students “are least positive about how well their school fosters excitement about learning, serves different learning styles, teaches about potential careers and provides mental health support.”

Students can experience college- and career-readiness across the K12 span, building on a developmental progression (Callahan et al., 2019).

5 ELEMENTS THAT ADDRESS THIS SPECTRUM

1. Self-discovery. Students, especially those from under-resourced communities, will struggle to meaningfully engage with any planning about their future unless they understand their interests, skills and values. Programs such as AVID and Leader in Me and tools such CareerOne Stop provide opportunities for self-discovery.

The most important support for students’ self-discovery, though, is how adults—teachers, coaches and mentors—talk to them: Do students hear encouragement rather than just praise? Do students get actionable feedback? Are their successes celebrated? Do students get to talk about and share their experiences outside of school?

2. Academic foundation. Students need the academic skills to engage with college coursework and career training. Beyond literacy and math, this includes technology skills, reading comprehension and problem-solving.

Academic pathways from middle school through high school are filled with locked gates: early access to algebra, the disparate impact of screening processes for gifted or acceleration programs, intervention models that take place during Tier 1 instruction, and so on. You can begin to assess the equity of your academic program by measuring subgroup enrollment in every program or course from Advanced Placement courses to CTE pathways to remedial courses to disproportionate identification of students with disabilities.

You can start with small but effective changes. We recently saw a high school principal using a “principal permission” exception to enroll students with a weak middle school math background in the core Algebra I course rather than the district “required” remedial math course. Students and families approved this upgrade.

The principal distributed these students across all the algebra sections and immediate tutorial support was available for all students. It put students on a path to suc-

cess and effectively closed a math achievement gap.

3. Essential skills development. Students will need both self-management and teamwork skills to thrive in the workplace. They can learn these through project-based learning, service-learning opportunities and simulations such as mock trials. Many schools include these skills in their “portrait of a graduate” document. It is important to connect each of these skills to the school’s program and instructional expectations.

4. Real-world experience. It is never too early for students to visit college campuses, local industries and career fairs. Local business owners, tradespeople and leaders are usually willing to build connections with classrooms and schools, connecting academics to the real world.

Many high schools offer problem-solving opportunities for teams of students to work with local businesses on short-cycle problems. There are also examples such as the Homegrown Talent Initiative for providing real-world connections even in rural areas. And programs such as GripTape allow students to focus on their specific vision and interests in designing long-term projects.

5. College and career planning support. While some families have the resources to work with college admissions counselors, most students and families can benefit from a planning process beyond simple ‘college counseling’. This support can begin by matching student interests and skills to their academic accomplishments and then generating a menu of options—short- and long-term, low and high-cost, local and distant—to test out.

The transition planning process already required for students with disabilities by IDEA offers a strong, personalized approach that could be

DA leadership

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scaled to include all students.

System leaders can reset on their federal and state financial resources to ensure they are highly aligned and responsive to local workforce needs. This affirms your local Perkins V plan. It also serves as robust compliance evidence in Perkins V, the local comprehensive needs assessment.

Finally, it can unlock additional streams of income from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Here are a few system-check questions to pose to your teams:

- What industries are projected to grow the most in our local area? What occupations?
- Are our CTE program offerings broad enough to expose students to all the in-demand industry sectors or occupations in our region?
- How do our CTE program enrollments match projected job openings? Where are the biggest gaps?
- What opportunities exist in our

local labor market for students with disabilities, English learners or other special populations?

- What are the emerging occupations in our area to which students should be exposed?
 - What skill needs have industry partners identified as lacking in our programs?
 - Which graduates of our programs are thriving in the labor market, and why?
- As debate continues about how best to retool the high school, there are many proven models that address all five of these elements. They provide examples that can be adapted to your local context. These include Summit Public Schools, High Tech High, P-TECH, and Academies of Nashville.

Ready to move forward? Focus on the student experience. Keep aligning instructional expectations toward real-world application. Personalize. Build partnerships. And make data-based decisions based on outcome data. **DA**

Dr. Dana Godek is a seasoned expert in educational policy, social wellness and community engagement. As the CEO of EduSolve, she applies her wealth of experience to tackling intricate educational challenges in collaboration with local communities.



Michael Moore has been a national leadership and organizational development consultant and executive coach for 20 years, following a successful career as a high school principal and Superintendent of Schools. He works in school districts with "Directors and above" to prioritize strategy, manage change and build organizational capacity. He coaches executives and their teams across a wide range of organizations. Michael is a partner at the Urban Schools Human Capital Academy and works frequently with the Partnership for Leaders in Education at the UVA Darden School of Business.



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Emergency planning: 9 tough questions you need to answer

Leaders are tasked not only with preparing for the unthinkable—they must also be ready to address parents’ fears and answer their valid questions regarding emergency preparedness planning.

BY JASON RUSSELL

As we head deeper into 2024, fears concerning school safety are running exceptionally high among parents. According to a poll of parents taken at the start of the school year, 38% say they fear for their child’s safety at school. Although this is lower than the 44% of parents who said the same immediately following last year’s Uvalde school shooting, it is still the highest level of concern reported since Columbine, more than two decades ago.

School leaders and district administrators are on the front lines of keeping students and staff safe, and as we have seen far too often, tragedy can strike anywhere. Leaders are therefore tasked not only with preparing for the unthinkable—they must also be ready to address parents’ fears and answer their valid questions regarding emergency preparedness planning.

9 QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ANSWER

Parents are turning to leaders for information regarding school response plans for active violence. But you should also have answers ready regarding emergency responses to extreme weather events, fires, police activity and more. And it should go without saying that those answers must reflect actual plans in place.

Here are the tough questions that parents want answered:

1. What are your emergency plans for

different scenarios? Since sharing response details is viewed by experts as bad practice, you should not reveal specific plan measures. But you do have the responsibility to let parents know that plans exist, that they are regularly reviewed and updated and that security experts have signed off on them.

2. What type of emergency training does your staff receive? You should be able to say that the school is prepared for all types of emergencies and that all staff members are regularly trained in these measures.

3. What is your schedule of drills? The scheduling of drills is something you should share with parents. They can then help reinforce learnings with their children and continue safety conversations outside of school. They can also help to reduce any anxieties around the drills.

4. How are before- and after-school activities addressed? As children spend more time on campus for sports, extracurriculars and events, you should be able to tell parents that your security plans and procedures cover off-hours activities.

5. Where should I plan to reconnect with my children if the school is evacuated? It is essential to include evacuation procedures in all information packets for parents, including where reunification will occur.

6. How do I securely access the school? Again, this is information

that every parent should receive. Security-informed parents will respect that schools require robust security procedures to govern access to facilities.

7. How will the school alert parents in case of an emergency? Make sure to explain how you plan to manage notifications in an emergency. Parents may want to opt-in to alerts if the school offers different tiers of alert urgency.

8. What information will you provide to students around safety? Information about emergency procedures can be confusing and upsetting to students, especially younger ones, and parents often want to discuss these issues at home. Consider what you will share with students and make sure parents know what is available and when it is given to their children.

9. How is personal information handled? Data security is a critical aspect of the broader security conversation. Be ready to explain what personal information is stored, where it is stored and how it is used.

Parents today have legitimate questions about their children’s safety at school. We must provide them with clear, accurate and reliable answers. In doing so, we demonstrate our ability to meet our greatest responsibility as school administrators and leaders — to protect the safety of those entrusted to our care. **DA**



Jason Russell is the founder and president of Secure Environment Consultants. A former Secret

Service agent, Jason founded SEC in the wake of Sandy Hook to bring White House-level threat assessment and protection to schools and businesses.

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