



BEN WIGGINS
GASSP PRESIDENT

Dear GASSP members,

I trust all of you are extremely busy this time of year as you try to wrap up the school year which consists of testing, spring sports, banquets and more testing. As the school year winds down, it is critical that we as leaders take long, purposeful, reflective looks at this past year. We all get so busy during the year that it feels like an accomplishment when we get to the end of each day.

Summer is a great time to look at the successes and failures that our school has experienced. How do you get this information? First, we have to be willing to ask the questions from each of our stakeholders...faculty, staff, students, parents, community and then have the courage and thick skin to “peel the onion” and find the root causes and more importantly, the solutions/ideas to improve.

Don't take criticism personally. Take it instead as an opportunity to grow.

After you receive your feedback on the successes and failures of your school, what is the next step? Sit down with your administrative and leadership teams and come up with a plan. Don't try to address too many issues. Pick two or three things that you can improve and focus your attention there instead of on thirty different issues.

Do you have a mentor or colleague(s) that you regularly meet with and discuss pertinent issues? Or are you flying solo and trying to figure things out on your own? How is that working out for you? GASSP is a wonderful professional organization that offers mentors and colleagues where you can bounce ideas off of veteran leaders. If you are not already actively involved with GASSP, I would like to invite you to Summer GAEL. GASSP has the best middle and high school principals in the state. They have “been there, done that and got the t-shirt.” Don't miss Summer GAEL where you can meet with, share and steal ideas from some of the best administrators in the state of Georgia. I hope to see you at Jekyll Island in July.

Ben Wiggins
GASSP President, Principal Oconee County High School



UPCOMING CONFERENCES

GAEL Summer
July 9-11, Jekyll Island

GASSP FALL CONFERENCE
November 2017, Savannah



GAEL SUMMER CONFERENCE
 JULY 9-11, 2017
 7/12 Optional Professional Learning Day
 JEKYLL ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER
 JEKYLL ISLAND, GEORGIA
 REGISTRATION INFO



WANDA F. LAW
 GASSP VICE PRESIDENT

Acceleration in Middle Schools

A trend has been happening in Georgia to offer high school courses to students while in middle school. The courses offered seem to vary from county to county. Students enrolled in these courses participate in the Milestones EOC and the score is part of the student course grade. The difference between taking the course in high school and middle school is that parents can decide if they want to take the Carnegie Credit or not for the high school transcript. Courses that are offered in middle school vary from algebra, world languages, physical science, biology, language arts and various music courses. In a few schools, all 8th graders take high school physical science as the norm, while others remain the student's choice.

How is taking these courses in middle school beneficial for students? The courses allow students to be challenged at an appropriate level while still experiencing other activities of middle school age students. It also allows students to get some of the required courses "crossed off" which will provide more opportunities for AP classes and fine arts in high school. What about those students who struggle with academics when they get into high school, yet it is important for them to graduate on time? If the students take a credit or two from middle school, it opens up time in the high school schedule to take remediation/recovery classes and still be able to graduate on time. For the many advantages, there can be some disadvantages for students. Often, middle school high achievers are already stressed and over extended. They take challenging courses in school and are active in many extracurricular activities which allows them little time to just "be a child". Developmentally, middle school students are still growing physically and mentally and they need a balance of work and rest. For the schools offering these courses, it means teachers must be certified at the high school level. This can lead to staffing issues depending on the number of students enrolled in the classes and how many courses the school can offer.

So what is the final verdict of whether or not students should take higher level courses in middle school? As a middle school principal, I believe it is important for schools to offer these courses for students who want and need the challenge. However, it is important for families to make the decision of what will best meet the needs of the children when deciding how many of the courses to take prior to starting high school. The best part of the debate is that there is no harm in taking the classes in middle school.

For principals, spring brings increased focus on testing, teacher evaluations, and pushing those last few students across the threshold for graduation and promotion. And let us not forget spring fever of teens and often the adults we supervise while hoping senior pranks are minimum and do not make the evening news. However, spring also brings time for reflections and opportunities to grow as effective leaders with vision and the ability to impact change. Asking ourselves what went well and what needs to change next year grow our abilities to lead while making large impact on our plans for the upcoming year. We must also show appreciation. Any successful leader knows our work is never done without great people who support our vision.



STEPHANIE JOHNSON - GASSP HS POY
NASSP POY FINALIST

My reflection this year begins with appreciation for opportunities provided as a result of my membership in GASSP and NASSP. Serving GASSP as 2016 Principal of the Year and 2017 NASSP National Principal of the Year finalist have been highlights in my career as an educator. My career as a turnaround principal has always been rewarding; however, I certainly did not have many opportunities to feel appreciated for the sacrifices and hardships endured for my efforts prior to receiving these honors. However, the awards and recognitions for work and contributions in the past year have grown to more than 25 Leader or Principal of the Year awards and recognitions to date. A few of these include Governor Nathan Deal's Georgia Citizen of the Year, Lt. Governor and Senator Nan Orack's Servant Leader of the Year, and the Georgia House of Representatives Community Leader of the Year. Secretary of State Brian Kemp provided a proclamation that I am a Georgia Goodwill Ambassador. Fulton County Commissioners proclaimed March 16th as Stephanie Johnson Appreciation Day, and Atlanta's Mayor Kasim Reid gave a key to the city of Atlanta to me and a proclamation honoring Stephanie Johnson Appreciation Day. Lifetouch even provided an opportunity for me to build a school in Rio Grande, Dominican Republic on the Lifetouch Memory Mission. A recent article in the AJC quotes well-renowned UCLA Professor and author Dr. Pedro Noguera's statement that the Turnaround at Maynard Jackson should be a National Model, and USDOE Deputy Secretary of Education James Cole visited me at school to tour and discuss my transformation model as a possible blue print nationally. And on May 5, 2017, I will be facilitating State Superintendent Richard Woods' 2017 GADOE Solution Summit for leaders across Georgia. The aforementioned are just a few recognitions received, and I attribute the appreciation and accolades to the contacts and opportunities made throughout my membership in GASSP and NASSP.

On April 5, 2017, GADOE announced that I had successfully completed my third school turnaround as a school principal. As I began to receive an influx of congratulatory phone calls, emails, and visits from varying aspects of stakeholders, elected officials, partners, and media personnel, I came to the realization that my role as a principal mattered more than I realized. In spite of knowing and valuing the work and efforts of the cohesive team of leaders, teachers, students, and community advocates who served to turnaround all three of the schools I've been charged to transform, I witnessed how

the principal's role is regarded as the central source of leadership influence in a school community. And I became very proud of myself for taking the role seriously and taking responsibility to lead a vision of academic success for all students, even when people around me challenged my efforts and transformational leadership practices. Creating a culture of learning, cultivating leadership in my school-based and vertical teams, focusing on improving instruction, and focusing on data and processes to foster school improvement made a huge difference in the lives of entire school communities. And after years of working without appreciation and getting beat down by many, I feel more appreciated today than ever in my lifetime.

Hosting the bi-weekly Mission Possible tours and workshops have provided opportunities to meet principals, assistant principals, and school leadership teams across the state of Georgia over the past two years. In addition to paying it forward to share best practices in leadership during these workshops, my team and I have also learned from you. My challenge to every leader is to continue making the "Mission Possible" for children in our schools. On days you feel least appreciated for your best efforts, reflect on my story. I was once called Nanny Mcphee in an article. However, those insults transitioned into appreciation and words of thanks when positive changes occurred for students as a result of never letting go of my vision and mission to focus on equity, access, and opportunity for all.



The Breakout Schools Award is designed to identify, recognize, and showcase Georgia middle schools that are high achieving or dramatically improving student achievement. **Applications are due to GASSP by September 15, 2017.** Winners will be notified by October 13, 2017 as well as receive one complimentary registration to the GASSP Fall Conference in Savannah where our Distinguished School winners will be announced. To nominate a school, complete the application available at gasp.org and submit to GASSP by September 15, 2017.

High School Administration becomes more challenging every year with more responsibility put on school leadership than ever before. TKES, CCRPI, Move on When Ready, and more diverse learners than ever the challenges to manage time and maintain strong student relationships is greater than any time in History. Add to that the ever changing challenges of AAU programs, coaching searches, and community pressure in athletics leaves little time for rest.

I challenge all school leaders to find time to reflect, "sharpen the saw" and have fun with the kids at your school. It is a noble profession because we help and love children and we can not lose that purpose in the quagmire of politics and budgets. I challenge every school leader to maintain balance in your life, enjoy your family, and focus on what matters- the future of children. Take pride in your profession; no one does it better and touches more lives than we do! Many Blessings

Yours in Education,
Dr. Alan Long
Principal- Jefferson County High School



CONGRATULATIONS

Lifetouch 2017 LIFETOUCH
SCHOLARSHIPS WINNERS



Megan Leben
GA Military College Prep



Leah Grace Wiggins
Oconee County HS



Catlin Miller
Bainbridge HS



Carter Lynn Gill
Brantley County HS



Lacey Cummings
Brantley County HS



Ariel Weston
Houston County HS



Read Elliott
Cairo HS



Cage Sanford
Lumpkin County HS



Walker Wing
Lambert HS



Mackenzie Mallard
Eastside HS, Covington



Blaine Thornbury
Murray County HS



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