

The Green Mountain Principal

LAST CALL: NOMINATIONS FOR DISTINGUISHED PRINCIPAL/LEADER. Go To VPA WEB SITE WWW.VPAONLINE.ORG FOR NOMINATION FORMS. NOMINATIONS DEADLINE: MARCH 1

No One *Really* Knows What You Do... Except Other School Leaders

By the time some of you read this, you'll be into your school vacation, or for some, just back from yours. I hope that you use the time for a little personal renewal. It has been an intense time for most, with budget cuts, the release of the NECAP results and, of course, the school budget vote at town meeting.

We hear from leaders that they are working as hard as possible and, yet, they still can't do enough to feel like they are gaining ground. This brings me to my main point: As school leaders, we all need each other because "No one really knows what you do except other school leaders."

I know it seems impossible for you to get out of your building, but, the reality is that if you don't, you will not realize the possibilities. You will become that silo that you speak about.

The Vermont Principals' Association Strategic Plan has a Networking Vision that says that

VPA will develop a strong networking system for members including: active regional groups, collaboration with other organizations and joint planning and peer associations .

So consider these opportunities coming up to get out and associate with other leaders:

Activity Name	Date	Place	Time	Cost	Contact
Courage to Teach/Lead Dinner meeting	3-8	St. Michael's College	5-8 p.m.	free	Wscott@vpaonline.org
Courage to Teach/Lead Dinner meeting	3-10	Dummerston, SE VT Learning Collaborative	4-7 p.m.	free	Wscott@vpaonline.org
Courage to Teach/Lead Dinner meeting	3-15	Castleton State College, Old Chapel	5-8 p.m.	free	Wscott@vpaonline.org
Courage to Teach/Lead Dinner meeting	3-17	Lyndon State College, Burke Mt. Room	5-8 p.m.	free	Wscott@vpaonline.org
Active Bodies/Active Minds(at capacity-wait list only)	3-16	VPA Office, 2 Prospect St., Montpelier	10-1		Wscott@vpaonline.org
Writing For Understanding	3-22-10	VPA Office, 2 Prospect St., Montpelier	9-3	\$50 inc book & Lunch	Wscott@vpaonline.org
Aspiring Principals' Workshop	3-25	VPA Office, 2 Prospect St., Montpelier	10-2		Wscott@vpaonline.org
Leadership and "Parentship" Conference	4-13	Capitol Plaza Hotel, Montpelier	9-3	\$30 inc. lunch	Wscott@vpaonline.org
Parker Palmer Luncheon for School Leaders	4-30	St. Michael's College	10 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	free	Wscott@vpaonline.org
Talk About Wellness	5-26	St. Michael's College	5-8 p.m.	free	Wscott@vpaonline.org



Encourage your high school sophomores, juniors & their parents, to attend a VSCA College Pathways event:

March 13 at St. Michael's College

March 27 at Castleton State College

April 10 at Lyndon State College

These FREE all day workshops offer tip on applying to college, admission essay writing to searching for scholarships and financing college.

Consider posting the URL to your's Web site or e-mailing the link directly to your families. www.vsac.org

SIG-One Size Fits All: The Principals' Nightmare of the School Improvement Grants

Back in the end of September, in the Green Mountain Principal #3, I wrote a letter to Arne Duncan in response to the School Improvement Grants that were proposed by the U.S. Department of Education. At the time, I wrote that the methods for fixing the ailing US schools amounted to a one-size-fits-all approach with all of the options resulting in the replacement of the school principal.

Never in my worst nightmares did I think that this draconian and inane approach to fixing schools would ever make its way to Vermont. But, I was wrong. As you may have heard, this is beginning here in Vermont. A couple of weeks ago, Commissioner Vilaseca spoke to superintendents representing both Tier 1 (elementary and middle) and Tier II (high school) schools that were the lowest performing schools in Vermont. Regrettably, the unthinkable has happened, and some principals have begun to hear that their contracts are not being renewed.

Before you jump to the conclusion that you may be next, I want to tell you that that Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner of Education and Rae Ann Knopf, Deputy Commissioner of Education have been *entirely supportive of Vermont principals*. They have done their best to wade through the mountain of regulations to see if it is conceivable that Vermont take another approach. No go.

(By the way, if you'd like to read the School Improvement Grant regulations, I have listed a link here: [SIG Regulations](#) or go to www.vpaonline.org under Short Cuts

Likewise, the affected Vermont Superintendents to whom I have spoken, have also been *entirely sympathetic and understanding* of this undoable situation. They are doing what they can to try to make reasonable changes to help people retain jobs.

But, the fact remains that principals are destined to lose their jobs, if not this year, sometime in the future.

So, what can we do as an organization to make a difference?

1. We can advocate for ourselves by contacting Senators Leahy and Sanders and Congressman Welch's offices and letting them know how vulnerable you feel as a school principal. By the way, I did this last week and had a great conversation with the representatives of our delegation. Here is the contact information for each:

Kathryn Toomajian, Legislative Assistant to Sen. Patrick Leahy,

Kathryn.Toomajian@leahy.senate.gov

Emily Bishop, Legislative Assistant, Se. Bernie Sanders, Emily_bishop@sanders.senate.gov

Patricia Coates, State Director to Congressman Peter Welch, Patricia.Coates@mail.house.gov

2. We can remain focused on results. I know that there are tons of distractions, but we are in an age where accountability is paramount. Clearly, this does not mean that we should not do things that we know are right for kids. But, we all need to put a majority of our time on instructional leadership. That's our primary job. Earlier this week, I sent an article called "The Power of the Principal." In it, the author, Michael Fullen clearly gives great suggestions about what leaders should be doing.
3. We can help each other by seeking out other leaders who are making things work and asking they what they are doing.
4. We can share the responsibility for school improvement with staff, the board and community. No longer can the silo approach work. I know that the school leader is the focus, but even this intense pressure on the leader distracts us from our real purpose of school improvement. Bottom line-we should demand more from others, especially the kids who are underperforming.
5. We must as an organization stay strong. Now, more than ever, principals need professional organizations to go to bat for them and to keep them informed. But, as you have heard me say, we at VPA are only five people in an office here in Montpelier. Our real strength comes from you.



See Page 5 For Jostens Renaissance Review Snippets.

Parker Palmer in Vermont: Three events on April 30-May 1

School Leader Luncheon: “*Schools That Work: In Whom Do We Trust?*” 10-1 on Friday, April 30th in the International Commons at Saint Michael’s College in Colchester.



Principals and Superintendents from Vermont and New Hampshire join with Parker Palmer for lunch and conversation. After a brief talk on what we know about the role of trust in helping schools (and all institutions) pursue their missions more effectively, we will have an open dialogue on such topics as the nature of trust, the elements that go into it, what school leaders can do to nurture it, and how and why it creates better educational outcomes. Cost for the luncheon is \$50, and registration is being handled on-line by CVEDC (Champlain Valley Educator Development Center). *Space is limited, so register now.* Priority will be given to Vermont and New Hampshire residents.

Free Public Address: “*Finding True North: Reclaiming Integrity and Courage in Professional and Public Life.*” 7 p.m. on Friday, April 30th in the Chapel at Saint Michael’s College in Colchester.

“A principal is a model without a runway.”

-Todd Whitaker

In every line of work -- from skilled craft to education to business, from health care to religion to public service -- the best people sign on because they have a passion to serve some high purpose. But those people often learn that the primary obstacle to their mission is the institution that houses their work. We pay a great price for this -- from the demoralization that leads fifty percent of teachers to quit the field within the first five years, to the fact that consumers, students, patients, parishioners and citizens are often not well-served. The changes we need in our institutions will come only as we find ways to reclaim integrity and courage in our professional and public lives, becoming agents of creative change. Naming some of those ways and exploring what they require of us is the focus of this lecture and discussion. More information about Dr. Palmer’s work on this topic can be found at the website of the Center for Courage & Renewal <<http://www.CourageRenewal.org>>.

Day-long Retreat: “*A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life.*” 9-6 on Saturday, May 1 at All Souls Interfaith Gathering in Shelburne (near Wake Robin). Lunch will be provided, and all participants are invited to stay for dinner from 5-6. (Please indicate whether you intend to stay for dinner.)

This retreat, based on Parker J. Palmer’s book of the same title, offers an opportunity to gather in a “circle of trust” and explore ways to “rejoin soul and role” in our work and in our lives. To welcome the inner teacher—the most important teacher any of us has—the day will include solitary and silent reflection times as well as small- and large-group dialogues, and explorations of poems and stories from various wisdom traditions as well as key ideas. The day will give us a chance to make progress on our own inner journeys and to learn more about creating settings that welcome the soul at home, in the workplace, and in the larger world.

Cost for the retreat is \$200, and registration is being handled on-line by CVEDC (Champlain Valley Educator Development Center). *Space is limited, so register now.* Priority will be given to Vermont and New Hampshire residents. Vermont teachers pay \$125.

Lifetouch Photographic Studios are putting together Division 1 Girls and Boys Basketball Programs to be sold at the Semi-Final & Final Games at UVM.



FREE WEBINAR: Middle School Strategies for Success

Don't miss this upcoming SchoolsMovingUp webinar! [Santa Fe Middle School: Strategies for Success](#) Wednesday, February 24 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Pacific Time (1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time) Ron Letourneau, Rick Crosby, and Yvonne Koskela, administrators at Santa Fe Middle School, a Los Angeles County middle school, will share the actual steps they and their staff have taken to help their high poverty, high minority student population perform well above the statewide average and maintain a decile 10 state ranking for the last three years. To sign up for this webinar, please visit <http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/webinars/santafe>

Unable to attend? You can view the [archived webinar](#) at any time. Our archives enable you to watch and listen to the presentation; read the participant questions and discussion; and access the accompanying resource materials. Our archive technology allows you to navigate to specific parts of the presentation and pause the presentation. This is an excellent way to view the presentation with a group. [Archives are available one day after the live webinar. Even if you do not plan to participate in the live webinar, we recommend that you register to receive notification about and instructions for the archive.] Contact We look forward to your participation. For more information, email schoolsmovingup@wested.org or call 510.302.4248 About Us [SchoolsMovingUp](#), an online [WestEd](#) initiative, provides quality resources to help educators make sound decisions and take tangible action in their school improvement efforts.

<http://www.aigvalic.com>



"I don't think that we can win every game-just the next one."

--Lou Holtz

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 10, 2010
Contact: Barbara Leber
Phone: 802-828-2272
E-Mail: bleber@leg.state.vt.us
Subject: Consolidation of School Districts and Supervisory Unions

Supervisory Union and School District Consolidation

The House and Senate Committees on Education will hold a public hearing on the consolidation of school districts and supervisory unions.

Wednesday February 24, 2010
5:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Room 11 of the Vermont State House



MARINES
THE FEW. THE PROUD.

The Vermont Writing Collaborative

The Vermont Writing Collaborative is a group of teachers in Vermont (and elsewhere!) whose mission is to help all students, K - 12, write thoughtfully and effectively. We work with schools throughout Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and elsewhere in the country offering courses and school-based professional development in Writing for Understanding instruction.

The five founding members are: **Jane Miller** of Burlington, **Karen Kurzman** of Derby Line, **Eloise Ginty** of Thetford, **Joey Hawkins** of Strafford, and **Diana Leddy** of Strafford. Among us, we have over 130 years of public school teaching experience at all grade levels — which translates to a lot of students.

Those students have taught us everything we know about understanding and writing. Their triumphs and struggles have given us food for thought. They have sparked new ideas and new approaches to teaching. They have reminded us, over and over again, of the incredible power of the written word in making sense of the human condition.

To learn more about the Writing for Understanding process, the book, and our courses. <http://www.vermontwritingcollaborative.org/>

"It's what you learn after you know it all that counts"

-Harry S. Truman

Live each day like it's your last, cause one day you are going to be right"

--Ray Charles



"The art of being wise is knowing what to overlook."

--William James



<http://www.horacemann.com>



Concerned about Your School's Writing NECAP Scores?
On March 22, the Vermont Principals' Association will sponsor a workshop from 9-3 for educational leaders around the state. All are invited to come to Montpelier to learn about the principles of Writing for Understanding. The workshop will be led by members of the Vermont Writing Collaborative, authors of the book Writing for Understanding: Using Backward Design to Help All Students Write Effectively. Come and learn how this approach can be helpful in your school.
Cost: \$50 includes beverages, morning snack, lunch and a copy of the book Writing For Understanding. Register by e-mailing Wendy Scott at wscott@vpaonline.org or by calling 229-0547

Josten's Renaissance Review Snippets

Educator Services Website Provides information about Jostens Renaissance. Register and get full access to all the program information. www.jostens.com/edserv

Jostens Renaissance Review Archive Provided to you on our website: http://www.jostens.com/edserv/renaissance/ren_400_20.asp

Black History Commemorative Poster To order, please e-mail norma.christenson@jostens.com. Include quantity of posters, your name, school name, address. \$1.00 per poster plus postage. An invoice will be included with your order.

Post Cards - Personalize Recognition for Students We've made post cards out of the three student related motivational posters. The cards are 5" x 7" and are packed individually. Cost is \$.10 per card. To order, email norma.christenson@jostens.com and list the number of cards you'd like and the address to ship them to. We'll put an invoice with the shipment.

Starfish Story Link Send a powerful message to the faculty and staff of the important role they play each day. Every member of the faculty and staff can make a difference in every life that they touch. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wuSaNCIde4> If you'd like to purchase a copy of the Star Fish DVD, email Norma Christenson at norma.christenson@jostens.com. Cost is \$12.

Platinum Program Coupon Books The 2009 - 2010 Jostens Renaissance Platinum Program Coupon booklet is bigger and better than ever! You can order yours now by clicking on this link - http://www.jostens.com/edserv/renaissance/ren_500.asp

LOOKING FOR FIELD TRIP GUIDELINES
I am wondering if there are schools (middle schools, in particular) that have created guidelines or parameters for field trips--distance allowed, cost per student, cost overall, or any other criteria that must be met. If so, I'd appreciate a response sent to: <chrisco@wsesu.org> This information is requested by Ingrid Chrisco, Principal of Brattleboro Area Middle School. Thanks in advance for any and all responses!



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We're on the Web!
See us at:
www.vpaonline.org

Student Voice Initiative Conference

Learning-in-Place conference we will share and expand our vision of schools which prepare students to become caring, competent and involved citizens, including:

- * The power of youth as central players in school and community change
- * preserving our cultural heritage
- * being "localvores"
- * linking learning to life

Vermont College of Fine Arts, in Montpelier
Friday May 7, 2010 • 8:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Supported by the Vermont Department of Education, The Bay and Paul Foundation and the Vermont Principals' Association.

Conference Cost: Adults \$25; Students \$10 Registration by April 30, 2010
Contact <mailto:lynntalamini@hotmail.com> 802-563-2289 ext. 220

VPA Bronze Sponsors:

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