

What's Working in Schools

Failure Is Not An Option[®]

6 Principles for Making Student Success the ONLY Option

The HOPE Foundation

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Leading Through Learning:

Leaders Exemplify Positive Attitudes and Mutual Respect

by Dennis Sparks

Civil school cultures are those in which community members think the best of one another, display positive attitudes, speak with kindness, respect others' opinions, and disagree graciously while candidly expressing their views. Those qualities are unlikely to exist and persist without school leaders who embody them in their day-to-day interactions with staff members, parents, and students.

In *The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude*, P. M. Forni writes, "Whether positive or negative, attitude is destiny. . . . Positivity makes relationships better, and better relationships reinforce positivity. So, if you are inclined to perceive what happens to you through the fog of negativity, make a change of attitude your number one priority." Changing habits of mind and behavior, however, requires that leaders be intentional and persistent in approaching these changes, beginning with themselves.

[Click here to read the entire article.](#)



Dennis Sparks

Dennis Sparks is an "itinerant teacher" who assists leadership teams in developing their capacity to continuously improve teaching and learning in the classrooms. He is emeritus executive director of the National Staff Development Council, where he served as executive director from 1984-2007.

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HOPE's Courageous Leadership for School Success Institute is Life Changing

By Wendy Hite

Last fall I attended a three-day *HOPE Courageous Leaders Institute* in Atlanta, Georgia. My feelings the day I left were mixed. I had been in education for 16 years and knew teaching was my life's calling, yet I was questioning my effectiveness and even wondering if it was time to take a break. I was feeling burnt out and frustrated by all the conflicts in schools these days; budget cuts, stimulus funding constraints and politicians focusing solely on test scores. I desperately needed rejuvenation; and while I was optimistic this conference would be helpful, I had no notion of the amazing experience I was about to encounter.

The conference focused on building a culture of success in your school one individual at a time. Alan Blankstein, founder of HOPE, believes that all students can be successful in both school and in life. All the speakers, including Alan, have lived the HOPE story, coming from poor or difficult backgrounds, yet rising above that to succeed in spite of it. Each one had a message that resonated with me. I can't relate all I learned but I want to leave you with a few ideas I brought back that motivate and help me in my work with my students and coworkers each and every day.

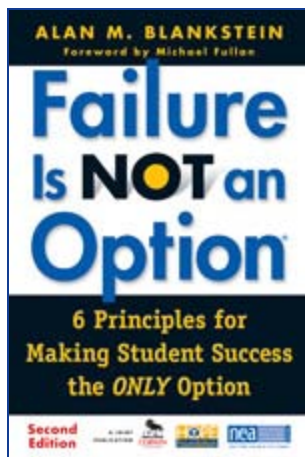
[Click here to read the entire article.](#)



Wendy Hite has been in the education field since 1993 when she earned her BS degree in Special Education at Indiana University. She taught special education at Saint Joseph's High School in South Bend, Indiana, and was the Supervisor of Special Education at Wawasee Community School Corporation in Syracuse, Indiana.

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6 Principles for Making Student Success the **ONLY** Option

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How Fletcher Elementary is meeting the needs and learning styles of all students

By Lisa Drmacich, MS. Ed.

Last year, our school district added some new initiatives; one was to implement an enrichment program in the intermediate building (4th & 5th grade) with the anticipation of the program expanding to the other grade levels in the upcoming years. I set out on a plan to create a comprehensive enrichment program, one that would incorporate creative and critical thinking strategies and utilize differentiation of instruction.

Our enrichment program consists of three levels of service and is based on the work of Dr. Donald Treffinger, an internationally known expert and teacher in the area of creativity and creative problem solving.

Level I services are offered to all students building-wide. This level provides opportunities for students' strengths, talents, interests and potentials to emerge through instruction in such skills as creative and critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making. These services are done on a "push in" basis for all classrooms. Activities at this level involve critical thinking and differentiated strategies such as Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats, and the social justice curriculum based on Robert F. Kennedy's work sponsored by New York State United Teachers (NYSUT).

[Click here to read the entire article.](#)



Lisa Drmacich, MS Ed.

Lisa is an Enrichment Teacher for the Tonawanda City School District, in Tonawanda, New York. She is the creator of the TCSD Elementary Enrichment Program. Lisa has a bachelor's degree in Elementary and Exceptional Education and a master's degree in Differentiated Instruction and Gifted Education.

Smalley Middle School:

Working Hard To Ensure That Failure Is NOT an Option For Any Student

School-wide book study of Failure Is Not an Option® shows results

by Gordon Edwards

Smalley Middle School, located in Bound Brook, New Jersey, has a student body of 250 students. Smalley is currently in its fourth year of existence. Smalley Middle School's student population is comprised of over 50% eligible for free and reduced lunch, over 50% of students proficient on the NJ ASK, and over 50% minorities, representing nine different countries. The school is located in a diverse low income community. Many of the students who enter Smalley Middle School are mainstreamed English Language Learners .

Over the past four years we have been working with consultants from the National Middle School Association (NMSA), New Jersey Middle Schools Association (NJMSA), New Jersey Principals Supervisors Association (NJPSA), University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), New Jersey Consortium for Middle Schools (NJCMS), Apple Corporation, Kean University (NJ), and Rider University (NJ) to increase our knowledge on what is needed to have a middle school that meets the needs of all students. Professional development from these organizations has helped us to understand characteristics of young adolescents, develop an advisory program, incorporate teaming, develop cross curriculum units, expand our exploratory offerings, improve our counseling support, use data to drive instruction, and provide positive behavior supports for all students.

[Click here to read the entire article.](#)



Edward W. Gordon, II

Gordon is principal of Smalley Middle School, Bound Brook, New Jersey. Mr. Gordon has been an administrator in the Bound Brook Public School District for the past five years.

HOPE's *Courageous Leaders Network*



The HOPE Foundation and The School Improvement Network presents the **Courageous Leaders Network (CLN)**. *The focus is on creating a professional learning community committed to improving achievement for all students.*

Courageous Leaders Network is powered by PD 360, home of The Video Journal of Education. The CLN focuses on

the most relevant topics, features top experts and show educators how to put theory into practice.

CLN Membership Includes:

- Access to series of three international webcasts focusing on topics such as 'Closing the Gap' and 'Assessment and Data' and more which are featured in the new edition of *Failure Is Not an Option*®
- Sample complimentary chapters online of the Soul of Educational Leadership series which has featured articles by Jay McTighe, Pedro Noguera, Andy Hargreaves, Michael Fullan, Stephanie Hirsh, Maurice Elias and countless other leaders in our field throughout the world.
- Online access to the complete FNO DVD collection featuring leaders in the field including Rick DuFour, Mike Schmoker, Carol Tomlinson, Linda Darling-Hammond, Ken O'Conner, Jay McTighe, Pedro Noguera, and scores of award-winning schools and practitioners.
- Member discounts for various other valuable tools and resources will be made available to you throughout your membership

Single one-year membership \$250.00

Five membership discount package also available.

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Schools to Watch in Virginia

by our friends with the Virginia Schools to Watch Program in Collaboration with the National Forum

Virginia Middle School Association took the lead in our Schools to Watch Program in 2003 when four people went to Indianapolis for training with representatives from three other states. The training was intense, stimulating, thought provoking, and the basis for the progress we have had in selecting our high performing middle schools in the Commonwealth. At the initiation of the program, the Virginia Department of Education was quite involved; over the years, the demands on that organization became such that they remain supportive, but less involved in many operations.

The four trained leaders returned to the state and began planning for the implementation of the program. First was to get more middle school leaders trained in the STW concept. A group of about twenty formed the core of the application readers and site visitors. Over the years, many more were trained and form an enthused support group across the state.

The four core areas of the STW program: Academic Excellence, Developmental Responsiveness, Social Equity, and Organizational Structures and Processes are the categories which group the 39 characteristics of outstanding middle schools. Schools who want to self-nominate begin the school improvement process by a self-rating document assessing their own school and the implementation of the STW characteristics in their own school. After the assessment, school staff begin to improve in areas which seem to need attention. Then, a written application is submitted to the state STW committee, and readers begin their assessments of the written document. Certainly test scores on the Virginia Standards of Learning are a part of our criteria: this means the school must be fully accredited by meeting the scores in all areas as defined by the Virginia Board of Education. However, the beauty of STW is that test scores are only the starting point. The STW process looks at the entire school community, and looks at the individual school's trajectory toward excellence. The STW criteria are so well done that schools of all sizes,

compositions, and foci are able to seek this designation. Also important is that the designation must be renewed each three years should the school wish to continue to be a School to Watch.

[Click here to read the entire article.](#)

We ensure you receive SIG funds

The U.S. Department of Education has designated four different models to select from for schools receiving Title I School Improvement Grants. The HOPE Foundation has **proven** on-site professional support for schools selecting the Transformation model.

Based on the *Six Principles of Failure Is Not an Option*[®], The *Intensive School Reform Model (ISR)* for Schools and the *Courageous Leadership Academy (CLA)* from the HOPE Foundation is widely recommended by school turnaround professionals.

To access our expertise in getting SIG funds that will get results, click here for more information pds@hopefoundation.org or call 800.627.0232 and ask for our *Professional Development* department.

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