

STRATEGIES FOR OPENING NEW SCHOOLS: A PLANNING GUIDE FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL*

Kenneth Lane

This work is produced by OpenStax-CNX and licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License 2.0[†]

Abstract

Too often the principal is left without the benefit of a plan or the awareness of how to deal with the problems that inevitably arise when opening a new school. The school facility is an instructional tool and as such, it may either enhance or detract from the educational program. The success or failure of how a new school opens or is perceived to open depends in a large measure upon the ability of the principal to open the new school. This document provides a listing of the problems, strategies to deal with those problems, and an informational bank from which principals could draw plans to aid them in effectively opening their respective schools. The information would serve to enable the principals to foresee problems and correct them before they become issues that appear unsolvable and have the potential of dividing the community.



NOTE: This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a scholarly contribution to the knowledge base in educational administration.

A person can walk into a lawn equipment store and easily invest over \$1500 in the purchase of a new riding lawn mower. With the lawn mower comes an eighty-five page owner's manual detailing how to operate and maintain the mower. On the other hand, a school system can invest millions of dollars in a school facility. When the principal takes control of the facility, the owner's manual is usually a handshake and a vote of confidence through the great words of all time—"Good Luck!" It is absolutely amazing that there are detailed instructions on starting a riding lawn mower, but no instructions are received on how to open the new school facility!

Too often the planning of a school facility stops when the mortar dries and the human elements, students and faculty, occupy the facility without the benefit of a plan or the awareness of how to deal with the

*Version 1.2: Nov 25, 2008 12:35 pm -0600

[†]<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>

problems that inevitably arise. In fact, the planning for a school facility usually does not even consider the actual opening and occupation of the school facility.

The physical completion of a new school facility is not an end, but a beginning. The purpose of constructing the new school is to provide a better educational environment for students; however, such a purpose will not occur naturally. Effective planning for the opening of a new school produces an environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn effectively and efficiently. The school facility is an instructional tool and as such, it may either enhance or detract from the educational program. Effective planning is the key component in opening the new school if it is to provide optimal support for the total educational program.

The opening of a new school requires an organized well-planned and logical approach to the actual occupation of the facility. A new school does not begin its first day of classes without prior preparation. The success or failure of how a new school opens or is perceived to open depends in a large measure upon the ability of the principal to organize, prepare and communicate effectively with teachers, parents, students, community, and central office administration. The successful and effective opening of a new school indicates to the community that the school is being conducted in a manner that is in the best educational interests of the students and that is a positive influence on the community as well as on the students.

Well-conceived and well-developed strategies for opening new schools provide principals with a plan that can be adapted to their individual schools, so as to allow for an efficient, effective opening of their respective schools. These strategies serve to help eliminate mistakes, which would jeopardize the relationship that a principal needs with the community, staff, students, and parents. Conversely, a haphazardly-planned opening can serve to destroy the morale of the community as well as that of the students and teachers. The long term effect is that it may take years, if ever, for the new school to be considered a strong academic institution by the community.

A listing of the problems, which principals have encountered in opening a new school along with the development of strategies to deal with those problems, provides an informational bank from which principals could draw plans to aid them in effectively opening their respective schools. The information would serve to enable the principals to foresee problems and correct them before they become issues that appear unsolvable and have the potential of dividing the community. This insight would minimize the obstacles to the efficient use of time and manpower in opening a new school.

In order to attain these goals, the sections that follow are organized to allow the principal and other school personnel to plan effectively for the opening of the new school facility. The initial section addresses the use of synergistic planning to build a foundation for the successful implementation of the timetable, checklist, and strategies. The next section presents a timetable to be used for coordinating the implementation of strategies with the checklist. The checklist section insures that an important area in opening the new school has not been overlooked. The strategies section presents various solutions to the problems faced in opening a new school. Additionally, a section on recommendations is presented to enable the principal to prepare for the opening of the new school.

The information contained must be adapted to the individual school and its unique situation. With this adaptation, the information can be used for moving into a new school, moving into an addition to a present school, and using a school while it is under renovation.

Please note that the timetable and the checklist are in total agreement; however, the strategies are not in total alignment with the timetable and the checklist. This is due to the number of strategies, which are ongoing throughout the opening of a new school. It also is due in part to some items on the checklist and timetable being completed as administrative tasks without much strategy involved, for example, programming the bell system. The decision was made to include all items in order to provide a complete bank of resources from which school officials could draw information.

1 Synergistic Planning

The educational system is presently characterized by multiple centers of decision making. The planning of any new school facility may involve several layers of decision makers—the local district, the county, and the

state. While it is important to involve the proper agencies on these levels in the planning of the new school, there is the need to confront and solve problems on their lowest level, moving up the organizational hierarchy only as necessary to deal with overarching concepts or issues.

One of the major problems in planning the opening of new schools is that the leadership cannot articulate the importance of total involvement in opening the new school. In too many instances, the opening of a new school is a "top down" or "trickle down" decision making process with the expectation that students and teachers will show up the first day of school in the new building and everything will function perfectly. This decision making process does not work. It will result in a disenfranchised faculty and student body.

The policy questions in planning then becomes one of who has the right and/or the responsibility to intervene in the planning process. Our contention is that with improved information, technical assistance, research, evaluation, consensus building, and investment in the infrastructure of the school, intervention will not be a factor. The challenge then for school personnel, especially the principal opening the new school, is to make use of this information to provide important and indispensable support for an integrated planning function at the local school level. There needs to be recognition that issues are interrelated, not functionally separate.

The use of synergistic planning will serve as an invaluable resource for school personnel, especially the principal, in opening a new school. Synergistic planning is a method of planning wherein all groups or levels work together. This means for the school district that parents, students, community persons, faculty, administrators, and central office personnel work together to plan the opening of the new school. The old concept of the local school community being told from "the top" how to open the new school is ineffective and hostile.

To this end, school personnel must face three challenges in utilizing information to best plan for the opening of the new school. First, synergistic planning and related methodologies must be used to determine how problems can best be addressed. Second, an effective and integrated system for monitoring and collecting data needs to be established. Third, a means of assessing and distributing the data in an appropriate and timely manner needs to be determined. These challenges are best faced by the involvement in the planning process of all parties associated with the new school. In this manner, they then "buy into" the school and develop a feeling of ownership about it.

Once all parties concerned with the opening of the new school are involved together in the planning process, several outcomes will occur. First, there will be the recognition of collegial relationships between school personnel and the stake-holders in the school—students, parents, and community. A sense of "we are all in this together" will develop. Second, the burden of a successful opening for the new school does not rest on the shoulders of the principal alone; it becomes a team effort. Third, human resources at the local school can be mobilized more effectively for not only the current school opening, but for future school and school district issues.

In summary, use synergistic planning to involve all of the stake-holders of the new school in the process of planning its opening. The sections which follow—timetable, checklist and strategies—can all be shared in this planning process as a means of best determining how problems are to be addressed, what strategies to solve them are selected and when those strategies are implemented. The net result will be a successful school opening and a school principal who is secure in having the support of school personnel, students, parents, and community.

	Months prior to first day of school	Weeks prior to first day of school	First day	Weeks after first day of school	Months after first day of school
<i>continued on next page</i>					

Checklist Items	987654321	4321	0	1234	123456789
--------------------	-----------	------	---	------	-----------

Table 1**CHECKLIST**

The principal who is to open a new school should use a checklist to insure that an important area in preparing the physical move into and the occupation of the new school will not be forgotten or overlooked. The following checklist is not all inclusive and thus, the principal may well want to add items to the checklist and delete others. Some of the items on the checklist may not apply to the opening of an elementary school. Additionally, the checklist is presented in a manner to coordinate with the timeline. A suggested checklist for opening the school is:

- ____ Define your role in opening the new school
- ____ Hire administrative staff
- ____ Hire counseling staff
- ____ Hire secretarial staff
- ____ Hire librarian
- ____ Hire department heads
- ____ Hire classroom teachers
- ____ Hire extracurricular staff
- ____ Hire custodians
- ____ Hire food service personnel
- ____ Determine courses to be taught based on building the school to fit the curriculum
- ____ Plan course registration for next school year
- ____ Distribute course information to students
- ____ Register students for next school year
- ____ Develop master class schedule
- ____ Print student schedules
- ____ Distribute student schedules
- ____ Select cheerleaders
- ____ Select drill team or dance team
- ____ Print maps of the school facility
- ____ Determine student traffic flow within the cafeteria
- ____ Determine bus loading/unloading of students
- ____ Determine private vehicle loading/unloading of students
- ____ Organize student handbook
- ____ Print student handbook
- ____ Distribute student handbook
- ____ Organize teacher handbook
- ____ Print teacher handbook
- ____ Distribute teacher handbook
- ____ Receive and store supplies, furniture and textbooks
- ____ Distribute supplies, furniture and textbooks
- ____ Send information to community newspaper on school opening date and registration procedures
- ____ Send information to community newspaper on times for students to pick up class schedules
- ____ Set time for students new to the school to register
- ____ Conduct monthly tours of the school
- ____ Receive keys
- ____ Organize keys for distribution to staff
- ____ Distribute keys
- ____ Receive as-built drawings for the school facility

- Receive instruction on how kitchen equipment operates
- Receive instruction on how heating/cooling equipment operates
- Have telephones installed
- Receive warranties on equipment from architect and/or contractor
- Clean the school facility completely
- Determine landscaping needs
- Complete landscaping
- Program bell system
- Test bell system
- Move principal into school office
- Move administrative staff into offices
- Move teaching staff into the new school
- Move counselors into school
- Plan in-service
- Conduct in-service
- Elect student council
- Elect class officers
- Hold review sessions with administrative staff

2 STRATEGIES

Two additional aids are presented. One, the time a strategy needs to be implemented is noted at the beginning of each strategy. Second, a note page is presented with each strategy to enable the user to make comments for future reference and use.

It should be noted that some of the strategies presented here are not found on the timetable or checklist. The rationale is that those strategies are ongoing rather than for specific time periods only. Thus, they do not fit neatly into a timetable or checklist.

Just as a wheel fits a particular car, strategies must fit the particular situation and school. Finally, there may well be other strategies, which work better than the ones listed. Use them if they fit the specific situation—and let others know about them!

Architect: Making Changes in Design as Requested

Implementation: Ongoing

A determination must first be made as to whether change orders in a school under construction are to be handled directly with the architect or through the superintendent and/or the school board. The individual school district needs to make that decision. Then the strategies can be employed.

(1) If the architect is contacted directly, a meeting can be held with the architect to discuss the procedures for instituting a change order. Each change order requested needs to be in writing with the original given to the architect and copies given to the superintendent, the members of the school board, and the principal. It is helpful to outline specifically where the change order is to be made in the school and the reasons for the change order. Communication with the architect is needed to insure that the change order has been completed at the appropriate stage in construction.

(2) If the superintendent and/or the school board work with the architect on change orders, requests for a change order need to be submitted to the superintendent in writing with copies for the members of the school board and the principal. As indicated in the first strategy above, the information must be specific and follow-up to insure the change order has been completed is necessary.

Notes:

Architect: Cooperation on Design Problems

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) The strategies listed under "Communication with the Architect" also apply here.

(2) Design problems must be written with specific details as to the problem. The written memo should be sent to the architect and the superintendent of the school with a copy for the principal. When the design

problem is corrected, a follow-up memo stating when the problem was corrected and thanking the architect for giving attention to the problem should be sent to the same people.

Notes:

Cafeteria: Service

Implementation: 3 weeks prior to opening day

The best strategy to employ in working with cafeteria service is to know all of the cafeteria staff. In terms of staff groups, which can help you prevent unnecessary problems, they are second in line—right after the custodial staff.

(1) To cut down on traffic jams, two lines for food service should be considered. One line can serve the regular hot lunch and the other line can serve snack foods.

(2) If space is limited, consideration may be given to separating the snack line from the cafeteria. This would allow for the hot plate lunches to be served in the cafeteria line with a snack line available in an adjoining hallway or room.

(3) Whenever possible, all food deliveries need to be directed to one central receiving location at the school to facilitate the management of supplies.

Notes:

Cafeteria: Traffic Flow

Implementation: 3 weeks prior to opening day

(1) Separate the hot plate lunch and snack food lines from each other. Where space permits, provide a location in the cafeteria to purchase drinks only.

(2) Develop a lunch schedule based upon the master class schedule for the school and class loads. Where possible, equalize the number of students per lunch period to facilitate traffic flow and enable the cafeteria staff to plan and serve lunches.

(3) If traffic flow cannot be handled with different serving lines and/or matching lunch schedules with the master class schedule, consider allowing some grade levels to leave the school campus for lunch.

Notes:

Cafeteria: Pupil Circulation

Implementation: 3 weeks prior to opening day

This is similar to "Cafeteria: Traffic Control." Therefore, please see strategies under that title.

Notes:

Cheerleader/Dance Team Selection

Implementation: 5 months prior to opening day

The selection of cheerleaders and dance team members is a cause of stress to many principals. It is one of those moments in the school year in which some of the parents of the students, who do not make either squad, will be upset and openly question the selection procedures. In addition to using one's human relations skills, plans should be made to ensure that the selection process is fair. The processes described below generally seem to work best for many principals.

Cheerleaders

Designate a date for which students must submit an application for trying out for the cheerleader squad. The application must state the requirements for trying out including academic standards. The application must then be reviewed to ensure that the information contained is correct.

Every applicant must tryout on a date designated before a team of judges with expertise in cheerleading abilities. This team should include representatives from national cheerleading organizations in order to show that the process is fair.

Serious consideration should be given to having the cheerleader sponsor abstain from serving as a judge. The rationale for this action is that it saves time in terms of having to defend the impartiality of the judging panel.

After the judging panel has reduced the applicants to a number appropriate for tryouts before the student body, a date should be designated for the tryouts and voting. The students should be given the opportunity to select the cheerleaders, since the purpose of the cheerleaders is to incite the student body to cheer at

athletic events. A cheerleader who is not selected by the students may be ineffective in accomplishing this task.

Dance Team

Designate a date for which students must submit an application for trying out for the dance team. The application must state the requirements for trying out including academic standards. The application must then be reviewed to ensure that the information contained is correct.

Every applicant must tryout on a date designated before a team of judges with expertise in dance team abilities. This team should include representatives from national dance team organizations in order to show that the process is fair. Dance team sponsors from schools outside the school district serve as a pool of possible judges.

Serious consideration should be given to having the dance team sponsor abstain from serving as a judge. The rationale for this action is that it saves time in terms of having to defend the impartiality of the judging panel.

The judging panel makes the final decisions as to the squad members. The rationale for this action is that the dance team is based on ability rather than the ability to lead the student body in cheers.

Notes:

Classroom Assignments: Staff

Implementation: 2 weeks prior to opening day

The principal might want to consider allowing the department heads to assign rooms. This allows each department to deal with room assignments and factors influencing those assignments of which the principal might be unaware. Of course, room assignments cannot overlap into another department unless there is a sharing arrangement. The principal needs to be involved in the final decisions, so as to make sure there are no scheduling problems and so the master class schedule can list the correct room assignments for each class.

Notes:

Classroom Assignment: Students

Implementation: 1 week prior to opening day

(1) A day is selected prior to the first day of school for students to pickup class schedules. At this time, each student and parent is provided with a map of the school and the opportunity to walk through the school locating the rooms on the schedule. Maps also are posted in different locations throughout the school. The posted maps have a marking such as "You Are Here" to indicate where the individual is within the school. The staff is on duty in the classrooms and hallways to answer questions concerning classroom locations.

(2) If the occupation of a new school occurs during the school year, a different strategy is needed. Prior to the actual occupation of the new school, the staff is convened at the new school for a tour of the facility and the location of their classrooms. The teachers then tell their respective classes the new room number and location of that class in the new facility. Sometime during the school day before the actual move into the new school, all of the students are transported to the new school. As the students disembark from the bus upon arrival at the new campus, each is handed a map of the school. The staff reports to their assigned classrooms and the students report to their first period class. Instructions are given to the students by means of the public address system, the teachers, or both as to how the schedule will work during the school day. The class schedule is then followed allowing five to ten minutes per class with a passing time between classes equal to the actual passing time on a normal school day.

Notes:

Cleaning: Prior to Opening Day

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) If the school is completed and has been released to the school district prior to the opening day of school, cleaning is usually simpler to manage. Assignments can be made with the custodians and school district maintenance to clean windows, floors, carpets, and walls where needed. A time schedule with a checklist to indicate areas cleaned is useful to insure the entire campus has been covered. The time schedule with the checklist works best when the lead or head custodian has input.

(2) If the school is partially completed and certain areas are released to the school district by the contractor, cleaning is more difficult due to the tracking of dirt and dust in the air. It is not unusual for areas to

be cleaned more often than normal until construction is completed. When the areas completed are released to the school district, a time schedule with the checklist as mentioned above can be designed. The schedules must be revised each time an additional portion of the school is released to the school district.

Notes:

Communication: with the Architect

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) The superintendent needs to designate a person to be the school district's facility planner to be responsible for communicating with the architect on matters concerning the construction of the new school. This communication should include discussion of the means by which they wish to communicate, how to handle change orders, what to do about problems in design, and how to handle problems which arise in general.

(2) The principal may want to be the superintendent's designee. In this case, the principal will have excellent insight into the design and construction of the school. The drawback is allocating time to oversee the project.

(3) A journal should be maintained to keep a record of meetings with the architect, memos to and from the architect, and any other information relating to the architect, which aids in providing information on the school or in clarifying any questions arising as to what happened in the previous stages of the contract when requested by the superintendent and the school board.

(4) Take the architect out to breakfast or lunch periodically for the purpose of getting to know each other as people instead of as positions only.

Notes:

Communication: with the Contractor

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) The superintendent needs to designate a person to be the school district's facility planner to be responsible for communicating with the contractor on matters concerning the construction of the new school. This includes discussion of the means by which to communicate and how to handle problems which arise in general.

(2) The principal may want to be the superintendent's designee. In this case, the principal will have excellent insight into the design and construction of the school. The drawback is allocating time to oversee the project.

(3) The contractor is approached with the idea of the principal having access to the construction site for the purpose of learning how the school is being built and the progress in construction. This provides the opportunity for the principal and the building superintendent to know each other as people instead of positions only.

(4) A log should be maintained indicating observations of the activities taking place at the construction site and memos to and from the contractor.

(5) A chart can be developed indicating the phases of construction, the deadline for each phase, the first day the phase is actually needed, and the day the phase was actually completed. This chart enables the school district's facility planner and the building superintendent to communicate graphically on the total picture of school construction. Additionally, the chart enables the facility planner to provide a construction update to the superintendent and the school board when requested.

(6) Take the building superintendent out to breakfast or lunch periodically for the purpose of getting to know each other as people instead of positions only.

Notes:

Communication: with the School Board

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) The school board should be provided with a monthly update of the progress on the construction of the school. The update should be typed and made to fit into a folder or journal. In this manner, the school board has on file a constant update on construction progress.

(2) A personal presentation before the school board should be made periodically for the purpose of providing a personal touch to the update as well as providing visual evidence that the facility planner is

performing the job as outlined.

(3) Telephone calls, memos, and letters from and to the school board should be recorded in a journal for reference.

(4) The school board should be invited to tour the construction site on a regular basis to see personally the progress on construction.

Notes:

Communication: with the Superintendent

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) Frequent communication with the superintendent on problems in design, change orders, construction progress, and personal concerns is an important factor in terms of preventing, alleviating, or solving problems with the new school. A regular time should be designated for the facility planner and the principal to meet with the superintendent to discuss the above items.

(2) A journal should be maintained including memos to and from the superintendent, notes on meetings with the superintendent, telephone call information, and any other information provided by the superintendent.

(3) The superintendent should be invited to tour the construction site on a regular basis to see the progress on construction.

Notes:

Community: Acceptance of the New School

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) Members of the community should be invited to be on a committee to have input into the various aspects of the school program. It is well worth the risk to invite people who are suspicious of the school and the staff to serve on the committee. Likewise, it is wise to include people new to the community. The committee needs to include people who do not have children in school, such as the elderly and non-parents. Business and local government representatives should also be included. This committee can provide the principal with information on what the community expects from the school and can deal with issues confronting the school and community before they become major problems. The committee should meet every other month or as needed.

(2) A pamphlet can be developed to explain the purpose of the new school, the curriculum, maximum student capacity, address, telephone number, and the philosophy of the school. This pamphlet should be mailed to all families and business in the attendance zone for the new school.

Notes:

Contractor: Cooperation on Construction Problems

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) The strategies listed under "Communication with the Contractor" apply here also.

(2) Construction problems must be written with specific details as related to each problem. The written memo should be sent to the contractor, the architect, and the superintendent of schools with a copy for the principal. When the construction problem is corrected, a memo to the same people stating when and how the problem was corrected and thanking the contractor for giving attention to the problem should be sent.

Notes:

Counselors: Involvement in Opening the New School

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) Work closely with the counselors in terms of where academic departments are located and any new staff hired, so that they can communicate well with parents and students about changes in class schedules or routines.

(2) Have the counselors develop a pamphlet outlining their responsibilities and how they can be of service to students and their parents. With a new school, student and parent expectations may change, and the pamphlet is one means of providing students and their parents with a view of what the counselors will be doing in the new school setting.

Notes:

Custodians: Aid in Preparing School

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) A lead or head custodian should be designated by the principal. The principal should work closely with the lead custodian in preparing the facility for the first day of classes. A list of areas to be cleaned, furniture to be moved, and items needing custodial attention should be discussed with the lead custodian to prioritize the list and hear concerns, which the custodians have. The lead custodian should have the responsibility for assigning the custodial staff tasks to be completed.

(2) Give the lead custodian responsibility for distributing keys to the custodial staff.

(3) Have the lead custodian report to the principal only any construction problems discovered in the process of cleaning or when the school year is in progress.

Notes:

Design Flaws: Noticed after Opening School

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) If the flaw is one of improper construction, a meeting needs to be called with the superintendent of schools, the architect, and the contractor to discuss the problem and how to correct it. A record of the meeting needs to be put in writing with copies for all parties involved including the principal. Once the flaw is corrected, a memo needs to be sent to all parties including the principal stating when and the flaw was corrected and thanking the parties involved for correcting it.

(2) If the flaw is one of design, the principal has to work around the problem since the school board previously approved the plans for construction. If the flaw is major, the superintendent needs to be involved to determine if the school district will physically correct the problem, contract to have it corrected, or require the principal to provide solutions to the problem without the physical corrections. If the principal has to provide solutions without physical corrections taking place, it is best to involve the staff and the students in developing procedures to deal with the flaw. If the flaw is minor, the principal can deal with it or involve the staff and students in creating a plan to deal with the flaw.

Notes:

Drawings: Receiving of As-Built

Implementation: 1 month prior to opening day

A copy of the as-built drawings of the school should be obtained through the architect. This can be requested by the superintendent and/or the school board and should be kept at the school for reference. The copy should be included in the contract with the school board as a part of the services of the architect. The as-built drawings are important in terms of handling mechanical or electrical problems, which may arise after the new school is occupied.

Notes:

Equipment: Correction of Malfunctions under Warranty

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) If equipment under warranty malfunctions, a telephone call should be made to the architect detailing the problem. The superintendent should be contacted by telephone if the problem is major. The telephone calls should be followed with a written memo to confirm the telephone call and again detailing the problem. The memo should be sent to the architect and the superintendent of schools with a copy for the principal. A copy should be sent to the contractor if applicable. When the problem is corrected, a memo stating when and how the problem was corrected and thanking the architect for giving attention to the problem should be sent to the same people as the original memo.

(2) If the school district has a maintenance department, the initial contact should be made through it, if that is district procedure.

Notes:

Equipment: Receiving Warranties

Implementation: 4 weeks prior to opening day

The principal needs to receive from the architect and/or contractor as a part of the construction contract copies of the warranties on equipment within the school and operating manuals. These should be kept in a warranty notebook or in a file system for easy access. If they are not received, the principal needs to request them; they will be needed.

Notes:

Equipment: Stolen or Missing

Implementation: Ongoing

A security system should be developed to prevent thefts or misplacement of equipment. If equipment is stolen or misplaced, however, file a report with the local law enforcement agencies listing the serial number of the equipment. A burglary or misplaced equipment report also should be filed with the district for insurance purposes in order to replace the equipment as soon as possible. Then recheck your security system and change locks if necessary.

Notes:

Furniture: Receiving

Implementation: 2 months prior to opening day

The principal needs to designate one person to be in charge of receiving furniture and storing it. The designated person needs to maintain an accurate inventory of the furniture received to insure that the new school receives what is ordered, that none of it is stolen, and that the staff does not furnish their rooms without permission. The designated person also needs to maintain a file of the shipping receipts as a check and balance for purchase orders used to order the furniture. The designated person should not approve payment to any supplier until the entire shipment has been received. If partial payment is approved, it may take undue time to obtain the remainder of the order.

Notes:

Furniture: Storage

Implementation: 2 months prior to opening day

(1) Arrangements should be made with the contractor to store new furniture being delivered in completed portions of the new school. The school district, however, needs to set a furniture delivery date that is mutually acceptable by the contractor and the architect.

(2) If the furniture has to be stored somewhere in the district other than at the new school, a well organized plan will have to be developed in order to account for the furniture received, the furniture transferred to the new school, and the furniture remaining in storage. Plans need to be made for transporting the furniture when the school is available.

Notes:

Furniture: Distribution

Implementation: 4 weeks prior to opening day

(1) The principal needs to designate one person to be in charge of distributing the furniture. This person should be the same as the one in charge of receiving and storage, if at all possible. The designated person needs to have a basic list book, which details the furniture needed for each room in the new school. An index card can be placed on each room door indicating the number of teacher desks, teacher chairs, student chairs, student desks, tables, wastepaper baskets, and other equipment to be placed in the room. As the furniture is moved into the room, the person actually moving the furniture initials the item on the card as it is placed in the room. In this manner, the designated person can check the cards against the basic list book and have an inventory for each room and department within the school. Adjustments then can be made while maintaining an accurate inventory.

(2) The designated person cannot move all of the furniture alone but must be able to delegate responsibility to custodians, staff, district maintenance people, or whomever to move the furniture.

(3) Parent volunteers and student volunteers can be used to move the furniture. The result is a group of people who take pride in the new school because they helped prepare it for opening day.

(4) If furniture is to be moved from the present school to the new school, a moving plan can be developed involving the teachers and the students, but the principal should obtain the permission of the parents and check with the superintendent on insurance regulations before instituting it. A moving day is planned. Each student is assigned to a teacher. The number of students per teacher depends upon the amount of furniture and equipment the teacher needs to move. Each teacher is assigned a pick-up truck, stock trailer, or long bed truck. The students and staff then move the furniture. The school district needs to provide as much help as physically possible on the moving day. The community can be involved by providing sandwiches and

drinks for the staff and students. Parent volunteers can also be used. In this light, all of the furniture and equipment can be moved and placed in position at the new school in one day.

Notes:

Handbook: Development of Student

Implementation: 3 months prior to opening day

(1) The student handbook can be developed by the administrative staff and address items that have been changed or added in the new school. These items would include closed or open campus, fire drills, tornado drills, cafeteria serving lines, and parking. The student handbook can be developed by revising the previous year's handbook or by examining the handbooks of other schools approximately the same size as the school being opened. The handbook should be ready for the first day of classes.

(2) The student handbook can be developed by including students in the planning and compiling of it. The involvement of students in the development of the handbook may aid in the student acceptance of the new school because the students believe that they had input into the programs and policies of the new school.

Notes:

Handbook: Development of Teacher

Implementation: 2 months prior to opening day

The same basic thoughts apply to the development of the teacher handbook as apply to the development of the student handbook as described above. The involvement of the teachers aids the principal in compiling a handbook, which includes information the principal wants the staff to know as well as information that the teachers believe all the staff wants to know. The involvement of the teachers once again would aid in staff acceptance of the new school because they had input into its programs and policies.

Notes:

Heating to Cooling: Changeover

Implementation: 4 weeks prior to opening day

(1) Convene a meeting involving the architect, the contractor, the heating/cooling representative, the principal, and whomever the principal designates to be in charge of the heating/cooling system. If the system is clock synchronized, have a representative of the clock company present also. At the meeting, have the system explained so that the principal and his designee understand how it operates, how the changeover is to be handled, and who to contact if the equipment needs repair under warranty.

(2) Allow only the principal, assistant principals, head custodian, and the person responsible for maintaining the system to have access to the system. This will give a quality control check to the system and prevent unauthorized people from trying to run the system.

Notes:

Keys: Storage

Implementation: 1 month prior to opening day

Keys need to be stored in a vault in a key cabinet with a lock to prevent unauthorized access to them. The principal should designate one person to be responsible for the keys, including distribution. The designated person should be the only one with access to the key cabinet. The keys must be labeled correctly to match the as-built plans. The keys need to be stored to reflect which keys are individual room keys, sub-masters, masters, and grand masters.

Notes:

Keys: Distribution

Implementation: 2 weeks prior to opening day

The principal needs to designate one person to be responsible for distributing keys. This should be the same person as for the storage of keys. All people receiving keys need to sign an index card listing the keys they have received. Teachers can be assigned a sub-master key to fit their department if appropriate. Custodians can be assigned a master key for their areas of responsibility. The administrators can be assigned individually a grand master key to fit all doors on campus. Keys other than door keys distributed to the staff also need to be recorded on the individual teacher's index card.

Notes:

Keys: Fitting the Correct Locks

Implementation: 3 weeks prior to opening day

(1) A session needs to be held with the contractor prior to the locks being installed in the new school to insure that locks are being installed in an organized manner and labeled on the as-built plans. The contractor should supply the principal with a list of the keys by number, the rooms each key fits, and by room with the number of the key for each room.

(2) If a key is assigned to a staff member and does not fit the correct lock, the key number and assigned room can be written on an index card labeled "Trouble" which is taped inside the key cabinet. A check can then be made to see if the key is defective. If it is not defective, the contractor should be consulted to determine what procedures are needed to obtain the correct key. If a key does not fit a lock, it may be necessary to try the key in all of the school locks until the lock is found that the key fits. The reverse of this is the lock for which a key cannot be found. In this instance, the principal has two options. The first option is to try all of the keys in the lock in hopes one will work. The other option is to replace the lock with the lock assigned to the key indicated on the as-built plans.

Notes:

Landscaping

Implementation: 3 months prior to opening day

(1) Develop a detailed plan for landscaping even if money is not available to do everything the plan indicates. The items can be listed in priority order so they can be installed as money becomes available. The detailed plans need to include the estimated cost of the landscaping materials. Landscaping needs to be completed before the new school opens to prevent tracking of mud and dirt into the school.

(2) The community, individuals, and clubs are generally enthusiastic about landscaping a new school. If and when they offer assistance in purchasing and/or planting trees and shrubs, the estimated costs and landscaping plans are immediately available to answer their questions.

(3) If the school district lacks the funds to landscape a new secondary school, a purchase plan can be developed involving the community, staff, parents, and students. The landscaping plan with estimated costs is made available. Volunteers or outside agencies then can purchase items on the plan and have them planted in honor of, memory of, or recognition of someone. The principal can have their names published in the local newspaper or provide other recognition to indicate appreciation for support of the new school.

(4) Have a landscaping day where staff, student, and parent volunteers plant the trees and shrubs that have been purchased. Sandwiches and drinks can be prepared by volunteers. The principal should be on hand to supervise the project and answer any questions which may arise.

Notes:

Loading/Unloading of Pupils: Busses

Implementation: 3 weeks prior to opening day

A space needs to be designated for bus loading and unloading of students. The space or curbs need to be painted with a "No Parking/Bus Lane" designation. Permanent signs stating "No Parking/Bus Lane" should be posted where possible.

(1) Where possible, the bus loading/unloading zone needs to be separate from the private transportation of students by a physical barrier such as a median or the school itself. This prevents, for the most part, private vehicles from occupying the bus lanes.

(2) A staff person may be assigned before and after school to supervise the bus loading/unloading zone and bus ingress and egress to prevent private vehicles from interfering with the loading/unloading of students on the busses. This staff person also can serve as the contact person to communicate with the bus drivers on problems, which may arise from the loading and unloading of students.

Notes:

Loading/Unloading of Pupils: Non-Bus

Implementation: 3 weeks prior to opening day

Communication with students and parents should detail where and how parents are to park when loading or unloading their children at school. A definite area needs to be established on the campus to prevent parents from stopping on the streets to unload and load their children and to prevent interference with bus loading and unloading.

Notes:

Newspaper

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) Supply the local newspaper with information on the progress of construction at the new school, the results of committee planning and membership of the committees, student achievements with pictures of the students, staff achievements with pictures of the staff, and monthly activities at the school.

(2) Invite the editor of the local newspaper to be a member of any school and community committee.

(3) Take the editor and the school reporter out to lunch to gain a feel for how they view the new school and its acceptance. After all, they play a key role in how the community accepts the new school by what and how they report in the newspaper.

Notes:

Occupation of School: Not Completely Finished

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) The principal needs to develop a comprehensive plan to continue the educational program when the new school is not completed but opened for the beginning of the school year. The plan needs to address that portion of the building completed with steps to be taken as additional portions are completed and released to the school district. The construction taking place while school is in session needs to be visually and physically separate from the students and staff, where possible. This plan needs to be shared with staff, students, and parents. The plan needs to include explaining to the students why the school is not complete and when it is projected to be complete. This explanation can be given during orientation and the first day of classes and should include definitions of construction areas which are off limits to the students. The plan should emphasize the staff and the students having lots of patience.

(2) An option for students who are to move into the new school is to allow them to remain in their present school until construction is complete. This has drawbacks, especially for students moving from elementary to junior high school. Staffing would have to be split and coordination of the curriculum would be difficult. This option would have to be weighed against the parent complaints, which might arise over opening the new school while still under construction.

Notes:

Orientation: Staff to New School

Implementation: Ongoing

Obtain permission from the contractor to allow the principal to give the staff tours of the new school while it is under construction. This can be done after the working day for safety reasons. This will enable the staff to see the progress of the construction, especially in their own areas. On the first day of teacher orientation, the staff can be given a final tour. At this time, maps of the new school should be available with the areas labeled as to the teaching area. Time should be allotted for questions from the staff to alleviate their concerns. Items covered in the orientation of the staff to the new school should include building security, building use, student handbooks, staff handbooks, and the orientation plan for the students.

Notes:

Orientation: Students to New School

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) Obtain permission from the contractor to give student and parent tours of the school while it is under construction. This can be done on Saturdays when construction is not taking place. The tours can be given to students and parents on two Saturdays a month. The number of students and parents touring on any one Saturday can be controlled by developing a schedule of tours based on the clubs or organizations in which the students participate. The tours allow them to chart the progress in construction and develop a feeling that the school is really "theirs." Time should be allotted during the tours for questions to alleviate the concerns of the students and parents.

(2) On the first day of classes in the new school, the students can be brought into a general assembly for an overview of the new school and the policies that regulate it. The students should be given information on construction progress, areas of the school off limits to them, common areas, parking, and any other area needing emphasis. Time should be allotted to answer questions that the students may have. Tours of the

new school can be conducted at the end of the assembly by the staff, drill team, cheerleaders, or student council.

(3) A feature that builds enthusiasm for the new school during the assembly is to put together a photographic slide show of the construction of the school through its stages from beginning to end with a popular song as background music which lends itself to telling a story. Possible songs for this are "tie Your Dream to Mine" by Marty Robbins, "Through the Years" by Kenny Rogers, and "You're One in a Million" by the Oak Ridge Boys. Pictures of the students touring the school, picking up schedules, or helping in volunteer work preparing the school to open help develop pride in the new school.

Notes:

Parking: Staff

Implementation: 3 months prior to opening day

Designate the staff parking areas and define where the no parking areas and the fire lanes are on campus. Consideration might be given to issuing staff parking permits to the staff to control who has access to the staff parking areas. The permits also enable the principal to quickly identify the owner of a vehicle whose lights may be left on.

Notes:

Parking: Student

Implementation: 3 months prior to opening day

The student parking areas should be defined as well as the no parking areas, handicapped parking spaces, and fire lanes. Consideration should be given to requiring students to purchase parking permits. The permits need to be a different color and design than the staff permits. The permits enable a student's car to be quickly identified in the event of an accident on school property, violation of parking policies, or lights being left on.

Notes:

Preparing for Opening Day: District Role

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) A commitment for the district's maintenance staff to aid in the physical preparation of the school campus must be obtained by the principal through the superintendent. The maintenance staff needs to be available to help with the placement of student desks and chairs, teacher desks and chairs, filing cabinets, and other furniture in the classrooms. The alternative is to put the cost of placing the furniture into the bid specifications for furniture, which may be more expensive. The maintenance staff also needs to landscape the campus prior to school opening.

(2) Money may be budgeted to hire outside help for the purpose of moving furniture into the classrooms and landscaping the campus. The outside help may range from professional to hiring students.

Notes:

Preparing for Opening Day: Parent Role

Implementation: Ongoing

Parents can become involved in the opening of the new school by inviting them to tour the facility, participate in developing a parent-teacher group, help with projects to build pride, help move furniture, and help landscape. This enables the parents to lay a base of support for the school because they believe that the school wants their support and solicits their ideas.

Notes:

Preparing for Opening Day: Staff Role

Implementation: Ongoing

(1) One view is that the staff should not have to help physically prepare the school for opening day except for bringing their own personal supplies to school. This view holds that the staff should concentrate on academic concerns only.

(2) If the principal needs to solicit staff help to prepare the school for opening day, this should be done on a voluntary basis only. In this manner, morale is not destroyed and a staff person does not have to work without pay.

Notes:

Principal: Defining the Role in Opening a New School

Implementation: 9 months prior to opening day

The principal should discuss with the superintendent what is expected of the principal in opening the new school with attention given to responsibilities in working with the architect and the contractor, responsibilities should the school open without construction being completed, the communication process with the superintendent and the school board, and generally what is expected of the principal.

Notes:

Registration: Students New to the District

Implementation: 4 weeks prior to opening day

Publicity on enrollment for new students needs to be published in the local newspaper frequently during the summer months prior to the opening of the new school. The publicity should include information on what telephone number to call and who to talk with about enrollment as well as the hours available to enroll. Information also should be included as to the starting date for the school year. This information should also be given the local Chamber of Commerce and the local realtors.

Notes:

Supplies: Receiving

Implementation: 2 months prior to opening day

The principal should designate one person to be responsible for the receiving of supplies. An accurate accounting of the supplies received should be maintained to insure that the school receives what is ordered, none of it is stolen, and the staff does not supply their rooms without permission. A file of the shipping receipts and invoices needs to be maintained to compare with purchase orders.

Notes:

Supplies: Storage

Implementation: 2 months prior to opening day

A locked area should be used to store supplies received with only one person having access to the area. Ideally, this should be the same person as the one designated for receiving the supplies. If the school is not complete, arrangements should be made with the contractor to release a room for the storage of the supplies. The school district personnel responsible for ordering supplies, however, should arrange a mutually agreeable delivery time with the principal, architect, and contractor.

Notes:

Supplies: Distribution

Implementation: 1 month prior to opening day

The supplies can be distributed by the person responsible for receiving and storing them as designated by the principal or by the custodians with supervision from the person responsible for receiving and storage of supplies. Staff members should be allowed to pick-up supplies only if the designated person is present to insure the proper supplies are taken.

Notes:

Textbooks: Receiving

Implementation: 2 months prior to opening day

The principal needs to designate one person to be responsible for the receiving of textbooks. A filing system needs to be maintained listing the name of the textbook, the number of copies received, the date received, the number of copies distributed to the teachers and/or students, and the name of the teacher and/or student receiving the textbooks. The textbook should have an identification number inside the book, and it also should be maintained in the filing system.

Notes:

Textbooks: Storage

Implementation: 2 months prior to opening day

Ideally each department should have a book storage room or locking cabinets to safeguard the textbooks. If this is not possible, a central book storage room needs to be maintained by a person designated by the principal. The designated person should be the one who is also responsible for the receiving to textbooks. The textbooks should be stored by subject area within the department to allow for easy inventory.

Notes:

Textbooks: Distribution

Implementation: 1 month prior to opening day

(1) Textbooks should be distributed to the department heads who should be given the responsibility for keeping records for their respective departments. If not possible, the textbooks should be distributed to the teachers with records maintained by the person responsible for receiving and storage of textbooks.

(2) When the teacher issues a textbook to a student, an index card should be kept showing the name of the book, author, edition, and identification number. The student should sign the card to show that it has been received. The index cards should be maintained in a file by the teacher for easy access if an inventory is needed or a book is lost or stolen and needs to be replaced.

Notes:

Traffic Flow: Student

Implementation: First day and thereafter

The student traffic flow should be monitored daily for the first few weeks of school by the administrative staff as well as by the teaching staff. Any congested areas or other problem areas need to be brought to the attention of the principal in order to develop plans to alleviate the congested or problem areas. The plans should be covered with the teachers in those areas affected to insure that the plans are understood and stand the chance of working as anticipated.

Notes:

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations, which follow, are aimed at enabling the principal to better plan for the opening and occupation of the new school. The school system, specifically the superintendent and/or the school board, must implement the recommendations, except for number one, if the principal is to effectively plan for the new school.

The recommendations are:

1. The principal who opens a new secondary school needs to develop a time line as a part of the overall plan for opening the school.

2. The principal who opens a new secondary school needs to be named to the position a minimum of nine months prior to the first day of classes in the new school. Giving the principal less time handicaps him/her in planning and preparing for the new school to open.

3. The principal needs to be involved in the planning of the new school prior to the architect designing it. The principal would then be developing the rationale for the designs in the new school and could communicate better with the staff, students, parents, and community about the new school.

4. The principal needs to work closely with the superintendent and the school board in choosing a school design that is practical as well as aesthetically pleasing.

5. The school system should provide the principal of the new school with additional salary to compensate for the increased hours required to successfully open the new school.

6. The school system should appoint a person to work for the system to oversee the construction of the new school and report to the principal and the superintendent. The principal needs to be free to plan, not to troubleshoot problems with construction.

4 CONCLUSIONS

To open and occupy a new school with a plan of "flying by the seat of your pants" is to invite problems for the new school and possibly lead to a negative view of the school by students, parents, community, and staff. For the principal who is to open a new school, planning is an important key in foreseeing and handling areas of concern before they become major problems. An integral part of this plan would be the development of an accurate, comprehensive recordkeeping system. In implementing a plan of action, which includes a

timetable, a checklist, and strategies, the principal must use clear, effective communication to insure that the plan is followed and can be evaluated.

Opening a new school can be an uplifting and positive experience for the principal, faculty, staff, students, parents and community. It can also be a tragic experience resulting in a negative view of the school and the principal, and then it will be years before this view can be changed in the eyes of the community. The principal and the school system have a choice of which option they wish to pursue. Without a doubt, the positive experience option can be exercised by the planning of a timetable, a checklist, and strategies to open the new school.

The principal and the school system can save time and problems by using time prior to the opening of school to plan or they can spend time taking care of problems after the school opens. The former results in less overall time spent and fewer problems. Hopefully, the information provided here will enable you to better plan effectively and efficiently.

Kenneth E. Lane is Professor and Coordinator of the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at Southeastern Louisiana University. Dr. Lane has over 100 publications in the field of educational leadership with many of them in the areas of school facility planning and technology impact on the school facility and student learning. He has also served on editorial boards for school facility and leadership journals. Selected publications by Dr. Lane in the area of school facility planning include:

Lane, K. E., and Hull, S. (2006). Infrastructure for Web-Based Learning. In H. O'Neil and R. Perez (Eds.), *Web-based learning: Theory, research, and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Lane, K. E., Richardson, M. D., and Van Berkum, D. W. (1996). *The school safety handbook: Taking action for school and staff safety*. Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing Co., Inc.

Lane, K. E., and Sweeney, D. P. (1996). Impact of facilities on technology leadership. *Educational Considerations*, 23(2), 36-38.

Lane, K. E., and Livingston, J. (1992). School facility planning. In S. Swartz (Ed.), *An introduction to California school administration*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.