

Update

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Gene Carter Named New ASCD Executive Director

Culminating a nationwide search, the ASCD Board of Directors last month overwhelmingly approved Gene Carter, superintendent of the Norfolk, Va., public schools, as ASCD's new executive director.

Carter, 53, will take the post in July, replacing Gordon Cawelti, ASCD's executive director for the past 19 years. Carter has held a variety of teaching and administrative posts in the Norfolk schools since 1962 and has been superintendent since 1983. His professional achievements include being selected the first National Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School

A new era begins as Carter succeeds longtime director Gordon Cawelti.

Administrators in 1988. Carter is a longtime ASCD member and has served on its Board of Directors. He is married and has two children.

Cawelti's departure closes a chapter of unprecedented growth for the Association. Since Cawelti took the reins as executive director in 1973, ASCD's membership has leaped from 13,000 to more than 150,000, and the Association's programs, products, and services have increased in both quality and quantity. Long-term ASCD members say Cawelti's vision and leadership have strongly contributed to ASCD's improvement (for more on Cawelti's legacy, see pages 3-5).

In remarks to the Board of Directors at ASCD's Annual Conference in New



ASCD Executive Director Gordon Cawelti, left, greets Norfolk, Va., school superintendent Gene Carter. Carter will succeed Cawelti on July 1.

Orleans, Carter praised ASCD's accomplishments during Cawelti's tenure and said he hoped to help build on that foundation.

"ASCD is truly stronger and more effective today than at any point in its proud history," Carter said. "We could not find a stronger foundation upon which to build a new tradition than the progress and achievements realized during the past 19 years under the able, strong, and compassionate leadership of Gordon Cawelti. With our basic foundation firmly in place, we must maintain our momentum, re-examine our paradigms, and continue to seek ways to ensure that ASCD values are reflected in decisions

affecting schools today and tomorrow."

Self-possessed and soft-spoken, Carter has deep roots in Virginia. Born in the central Virginia town of Staunton, he has lived and worked in the state for nearly his entire life. When he began teaching in 1960, at a Catholic military academy, he planned to pursue a legal career. But the satisfaction he found in teaching made him decide to remain an educator. "I began to enjoy seeing the spark ignite within the kids." After several years in the classroom, he rose through the administrative ranks in the Norfolk schools, an urban district of 36,000 students, to his present position.

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Carter has earned wide respect for his achievements as Norfolk superintendent. When he first took the post nine years ago, the district's dropout rate was about 14 percent—the highest in the state. Under Carter's leadership, that figure has been



Gene Carter

reduced to 5 percent, while academic standards have been tightened. "We worked actively to increase promotion requirements and to improve student performance, which we've done," he says.

Briefly . . .

- *A Guide for Reviewing School Mathematics Programs*, edited by Glendon W. Blume and Robert F. Nicely, Jr., is now available for sale. Published jointly by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) and ASCD, the *Guide* is designed to help school districts analyze their mathematics programs in the areas of goals, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and teacher and administrator responsibility. To order, contact ASCD Order Processing, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314; (703) 549-9110. Stock no. 611-91163. Price: \$8.00.

- The University of California—Los Angeles seeks racially mixed secondary schools that are experimenting with alternatives to tracking/ability grouping to participate in a national study. Interested public or private schools should contact Professors Jeannie Oakes and Amy Stuart Wells, Graduate School of Education, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024; (310) 825-5423.

- **Correction**—The location for the Township High School District 214 mentioned in the February *Update* was incorrect. The district is located in Arlington Heights, Ill. *Update* regrets the error. ■

Carter also helped to establish a scholarship foundation (with private sector funding) that enabled every student earning a 2.5 or higher grade point average to attend college. Another source of pride for Carter is a district-operated early childhood center for three-year-olds, which opened this school year. "We've wrapped community resources around the center, including health services, social services, parent training, literacy training," he explains. The center's services are especially important, he believes, because "if we're really going to influence and improve the life chances of youngsters in the urban environment, then we have to begin with early childhood education."

Carter intends to foster the same kind of innovative approaches at ASCD. To help ASCD members deal with the quickening pace of societal change, the Association itself must be creative in its daily operations and long-term efforts, Carter believes.

Expanding ASCD's influence on education policy is another priority. Carter anticipates that ASCD's voice will speak out more strongly on critical national issues, "becoming a more forceful spokesperson, if you will, for our constituents: strengthening our presence on Capitol Hill, in the governors' offices, and creating new linkages with other professional organizations." Expanding ASCD's influence is part of the Association's strategic plan.

Carter relishes the opportunity to have broad influence on his profession as head of an international organization. "I've always had a deep feeling of wanting to help others to realize their potential, and I think the structure of the organization lends itself to doing that."

"The schools of today shape the society of tomorrow," Carter emphasizes. "The fundamental challenge to us is to foresee and shape that change to our benefit." ■

—John O'Neil and Scott Willis

Stephanie Marshall Urges Focus on 'Interconnections'

There's a symbolic significance in the fact that Stephanie Pace Marshall, ASCD's new President, has a collection of kaleidoscopes.

For Marshall, kaleidoscopes are more than just intriguing displays of shifting colors and patterns. They also serve as a metaphor for interconnections and synthesis—two concepts she believes are fundamental for educators.

Interconnections and synthesis—the combining of parts to form a coherent whole—are pervasive themes in Marshall's life and work. Before she embarked on her education career, for example, her ambition was to be *both* a physician and a minister. Yet she's never regretted her decision to become an educator. "I still get to practice aspects of the other two fields," she jokes.

Throughout her professional life, Marshall has worked to cultivate alliances between her own organization and others holding similar values. Her belief in synthesis is also reflected in the interdisciplinary nature of the program at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, where she has been executive director since 1986. The Academy, located in Aurora, Ill., is a publicly funded three-year residential high school for students highly gifted in math and science—one of nine such schools in the nation. Before joining the Academy, she was superintendent of schools in Batavia, Ill., having begun her career in 1967 as an elementary school teacher.



Stephanie Pace Marshall

Marshall is closely identified with the Academy. As its founding director, she transformed the school from a concept to a reality, including designing its instructional program. Getting the fledgling school on its feet posed quite a challenge. "Many people thought we were doomed to failure," she recalls. That the Academy is

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Gordon Cawelti Leaving ASCD After 19 Years at Helm

In late 1988, Gordon Cawelti gathered ASCD's Executive Council and Executive Staff at the foot of the Berlin Wall. No matter how swift the pace of global change, Cawelti told those assembled, one thing would never change. "The Soviets will not give up East Germany," he said. "They paid too high a price for it." Little more than a year later, of course, the wall was reduced to rubble and the nations behind the Iron Curtain altered in ways that no one could have foreseen.

Not even Gordon Cawelti.

Muffing the call on the fall of communism is forgivable, however, given the extraordinary track record Cawelti has established as ASCD's executive director. Cawelti, who is stepping down next month after 19 years at the helm, has shown a remarkable ability to foresee how ASCD could better serve its membership. With Cawelti's leadership, ASCD has greatly expanded and diversified its products and services to meet member needs. The Association also has experienced phenomenal growth in membership, which has increased from about 13,000 to more than 150,000 during his tenure (see chart,

p. 5). ASCD officers and staff members who have worked with him say that it's hard to overestimate the influence Cawelti has had on an organization that has changed significantly under his leadership. During Cawelti's tenure, ASCD has been marked

by "tremendous growth—not only in membership, but in diversified products and services and in an enlarged professional credibility and reputation," says ASCD President Stephanie Pace Marshall.

"The organization now is profoundly different than when he came," says O.L. Davis, Jr., a former ASCD president who has also served on the ASCD staff.

"Clearly, ASCD now is a reflection of Gordon Cawelti more than any other person or group."

Newer ASCD members and staff might have difficulty realizing how different the Association was in 1973 when Cawelti left the superintendency of the Tulsa, Okla., public schools to direct ASCD. Despite the success of the annual conferences and *Educational Leadership*, ASCD was struggling financially. Also disturbing, say some staff members and officers from the early '70s, there appeared to be a dearth of new ideas. The prevailing attitude before Cawelti came to ASCD "was that things were okay as they were," says Nancy Olson, vice president for publications at the American Society for Training and Development and an ASCD staff member from 1969–83. "There was no thought that things could be better."

"When Gordon was hired, he was seen as someone who would be entrepreneurial, who'd be able to break some molds," says Davis.

Cawelti has lived up to that billing. From launching ASCD's National Curriculum Study Institute series (now called Professional Development Institutes) to overseeing the creation of ASCD's Curriculum/Technology Resource Center, Cawelti has been the impetus behind just about every effort to improve and expand ASCD's products and services (see timeline, pp. 4–5). "Gordon has personally invented virtually every piece of ASCD's program," says Ron Brandt, ASCD's executive editor.



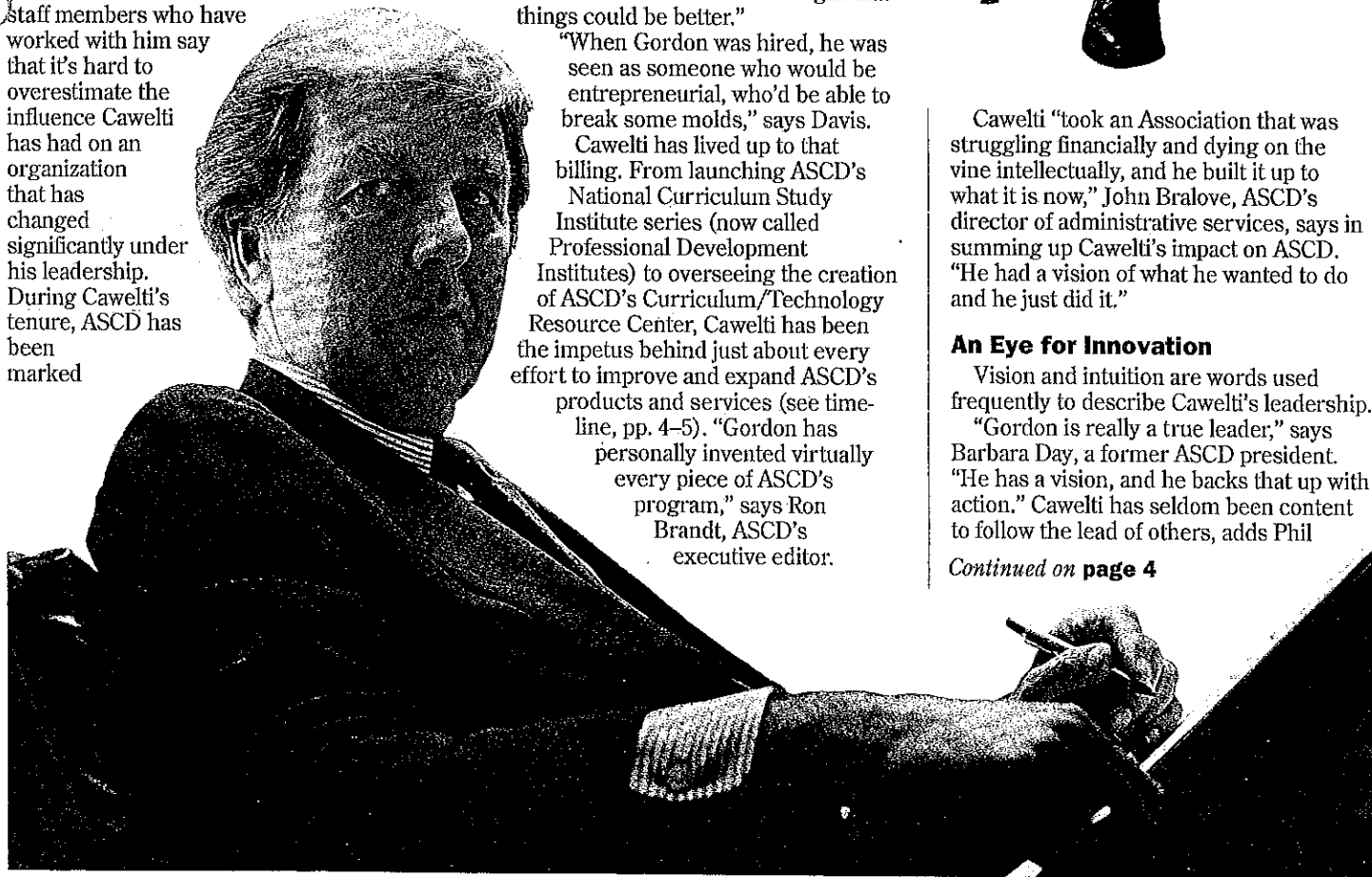
Cawelti "took an Association that was struggling financially and dying on the vine intellectually, and he built it up to what it is now," John Bralove, ASCD's director of administrative services, says in summing up Cawelti's impact on ASCD. "He had a vision of what he wanted to do and he just did it."

An Eye for Innovation

Vision and intuition are words used frequently to describe Cawelti's leadership.

"Gordon is really a true leader," says Barbara Day, a former ASCD president. "He has a vision, and he backs that up with action." Cawelti has seldom been content to follow the lead of others, adds Phil

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End of an Era

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Hosford, another former ASCD president. "He's never been the kind of person who just saw where people wanted to go and then got out in front." Says Marshall: "Gordon has always had a clear sense of where the organization needed to go and how to orchestrate things to get it there."

Both staff members and officers say that ASCD's move to strategic planning, which occurred during Cawelti's tenure, has helped to focus the Association's activities and better prepare for future member needs. Using a strategic planning process, ASCD staff members and officers "scan" internal and external factors, describe how the organization should look in the future, and develop action plans on how to get there. Since the inception of strategic planning, the Association has published several five-year plans and created "focus areas" of program concentration. ASCD's work in one former focus area, thinking skills, is credited by some experts as a major source of interest in that topic by the education community from the mid-1980s to the present.

Another cornerstone of ASCD's success over the years has been Cawelti's intuitive style. Time and again, Cawelti has shown a knack for taking an idea and turning it into an ASCD service, sometimes before a marketing analysis showed a need. "He travels in the field, he gets an idea, it resonates with him personally, and he does it," says Bralove. "I think he trusts his sense of what's needed around the

country more than any survey. And, more often than not, he's been right. He knows what people want or need long before they know they need it." ASCD's entree into the videotape market, for example, was Cawelti's brainchild; he filmed the first video (on middle schools) himself, using borrowed equipment. ASCD videotapes now bring in more than \$3 million in income annually.

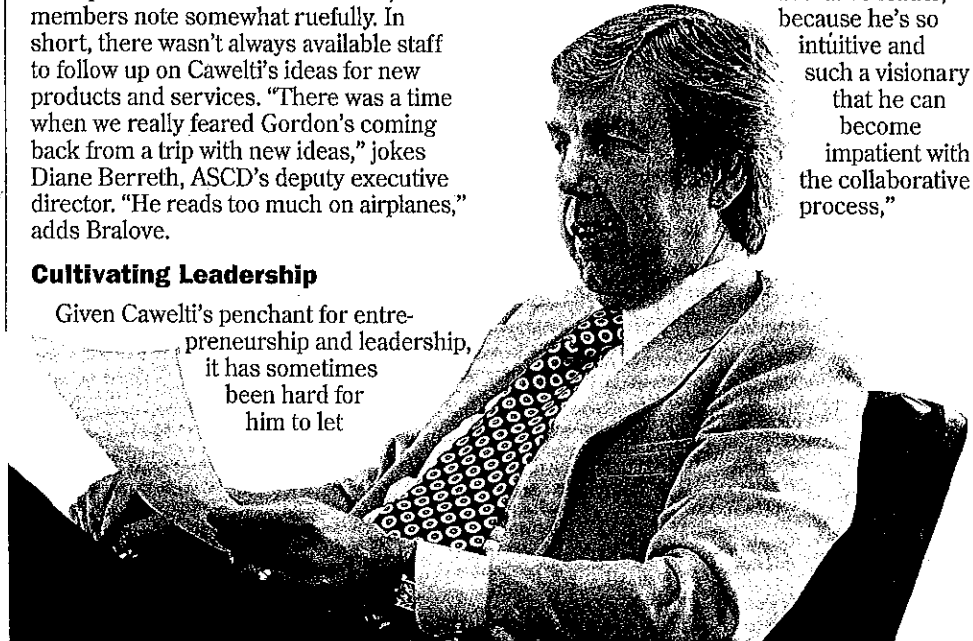
At times, Cawelti's enthusiasm for new ideas conflicted with his goal for ASCD headquarters to be "lean and mean," staff members note somewhat ruefully. In short, there wasn't always available staff to follow up on Cawelti's ideas for new products and services. "There was a time when we really feared Gordon's coming back from a trip with new ideas," jokes Diane Berreth, ASCD's deputy executive director. "He reads too much on airplanes," adds Bralove.

Cultivating Leadership

Given Cawelti's penchant for entrepreneurship and leadership, it has sometimes been hard for him to let

go of the reins, especially during the first decade of his tenure at ASCD. Initially, he was expected to be a "take charge" leader, says Berreth. In those early years, Cawelti joked that his version of shared decision making was that "he made a decision and then he shared it with his staff," says Brandt. There were few committees or teams with decision-making authority, and Cawelti had a hand in just about every ASCD product and service.

"It's not easy for Gordon to be a collaborative leader, because he's so intuitive and such a visionary that he can become impatient with the collaborative process,"



1973 Gordon Cawelti takes post as ASCD executive director. ASCD has 13,000 members and 21 staff members. The annual budget is \$640,000, and dues are \$30 for a comprehensive and \$20 for a non-comprehensive membership. Headquarters is located in National Education Association (NEA) building in Washington, D.C.



1974 ASCD launches National Curriculum Study Institutes program, a small series of institutes to "help curriculum leaders remain informed about developments in the rapidly changing field of instruction." *Professional Development Institutes, as they are now named, are being presented on 126 different topics during 1991-92.*

1979 First purchase of headquarters building, located across the Potomac in Alexandria, Va., in the historic Old Town area.



1980 ASCD's member newsletter, *News Exchange*, is revised and appears as *ASCD Update*. *ASCD Curriculum Update*, a quarterly newsletter focusing on one curriculum area, also appears as a member benefit.

ASCD Milestones During Gord

1973 Attempting to build links with inner-city educators, Cawelti convenes first meeting of Urban Curriculum Leaders (UCL), held in Memphis. *The UCL held its 19th meeting several months ago.*

1976 Cawelti is named first chair of the Educational Leaders Consortium (ELC), a group of 25 school administrator organizations. *The ELC continues to meet regularly to discuss education issues and possibilities for collaboration.*

1977 "Designing a Middle School for Early Adolescents," ASCD's first staff development videotape, is released. *Income from videotapes now totals more than \$3 million per year.*



1980 ASCD's Research Information Service (RIS) is launched as a service to members and staff. *Now known as the ASCD Research & Information (R&I) department, the unit answers as many as 300 inquiries a month.*



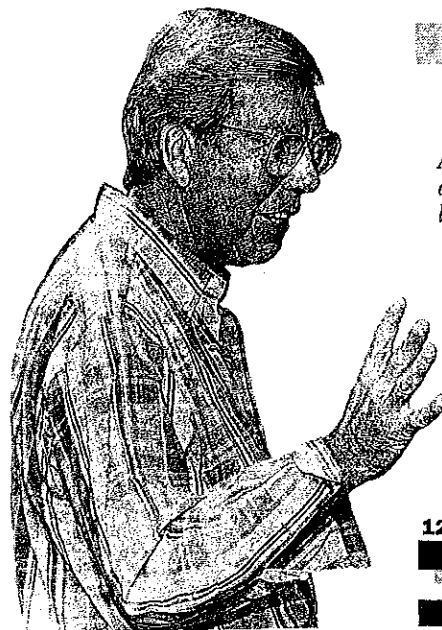
1981 First meeting of a from around the nation to form a network for "Research in Education in the America. *These projects, later called together educators to hear, to develop long-range impr*

Berreth says. "What most impresses me about Gordon is that he has worked hard and successfully to change his leadership style to fit changing times and a changing institution." In the past decade, ASCD staff members have had expanded opportunities to take leadership roles and share in decision making.

Several former ASCD presidents add that Cawelti did his best to cultivate *their* leadership. "He really guides you and helps you see the larger picture," says Corrine Hill. "Gordon never stood in my way in terms of leadership," says Barbara Day. "He really encourages people to do their best."

Some current and former ASCD staff members, moreover, credit Cawelti with giving them opportunities to enhance their skills. Carolyn Shell, who came to ASCD as a receptionist in 1972 and is now a special projects coordinator, says Cawelti "has been very caring and very supportive." Elsa Angell served as Cawelti's administrative assistant and cut her teeth in the publishing field as an editor of *News Exchange* (the forerunner to *ASCD Update*). "I don't know if he knows I think of him as my mentor, but I do," says Angell, who now does work in adult literacy. "He really gave me the opportunity to grow."

Others will remember the personal touches and gestures that have characterized Cawelti's tenure. The annual Christmas dinner and party for staff and their guests. The way he would go to art

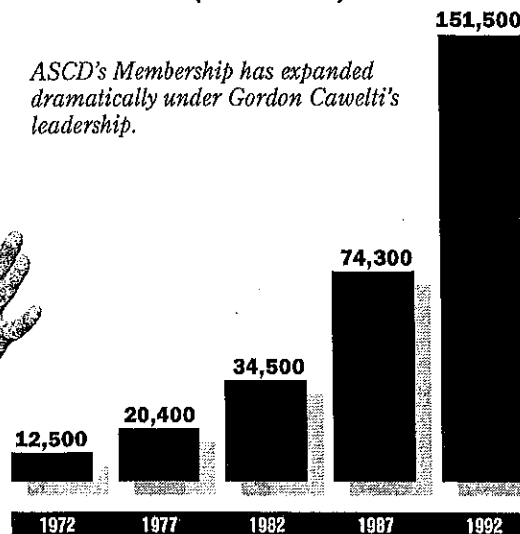


shows on the weekend and hang up a new piece of artwork on Monday morning. Handwritten notes of appreciation to staff on their birthdays. The institution of flex-time, which made life easier for staff with families. The support offered to staff members dealing with a death or illness in the family. "He never forgot the person, and that's very important," says Anne Dees, a staffer from 1978-83 who hasn't forgotten Cawelti's support when her daughter suffered from a serious illness.

From the staff members and officers he

ASCD GROWTH
(in Members)

ASCD's Membership has expanded dramatically under Gordon Cawelti's leadership.



touched to the personal stamp he placed on ASCD products and services, Cawelti's legacy as ASCD executive director will be powerful and long-lasting. "He has set the tone, over the years, in words and in deeds," says Teola Jones, who coordinates ASCD advertising and exhibits. Sara Arlington, who worked at ASCD from 1959-88 as Annual Conference coordinator, sums up the feelings of many when she asks: "Who else is going to dream the big dreams that he had?" ■

—John O'Neil

1983 ASCD charts its first international affiliate, located in Germany. *ASCD's Affiliates program now includes 61 affiliates in the United States and elsewhere with more than 36,000 affiliate members.*

1983 First ASCD policy analysis project, a study on the potential impact of Florida's effort to raise graduation requirements, is published in *Educational Leadership*. Now known as *Issues Analysis reports*, this series of publications has included studies of religion in the curriculum, merit pay, and school choice.



1989 ASCD moves to its present headquarters building, at 1250 N. Pitt St., in Alexandria, Va.



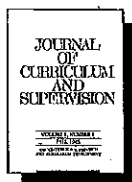
1991 ASCD publishes the *ASCD Curriculum Handbook*, the first major effort of ASCD's Curriculum/Technology Resource Center. *More than 1,000 educators have already signed up for the service.*

1991 *Educational Leadership* wins "Golden Lamp Award" from the Educational Press Association of America as the top education journal.

Cawelti's Tenure: 1973-1992

1985 ASCD launches Networks program with five networks. *This information-sharing program now numbers 37 networks serving 10,000 members.*

1985 ASCD publishes first issue of the *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*. *This quarterly publication now reaches 4,000 subscribers.*



1988 ASCD nets its 100,000th member, Bobbie Davis, an elementary school principal in Utica, Miss.

1992 Gordon Cawelti to step down from post as ASCD executive director. ASCD has more than 150,000 members and 130 staff members. The annual budget exceeds \$18 million, and dues are \$69 for a comprehensive membership and \$56 for a non-comprehensive membership.



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Message from the Executive Director

A Few Words of Thanks . . . and a Look Ahead

Next month, my 19-year tenure as ASCD's executive director ends. Before I go, I want to leave with some thanks and a look ahead at some needed directions in the effort to improve schools.

When I was talked into coming to ASCD in 1973, I didn't have the slightest intention of remaining this long. I fancied myself a "turnaround manager," having played this

With the help of others, I tried to build a vision of what ASCD wanted to become, and then I tried to fulfill that vision.

role in each of my four previous jobs in the public schools. With the help of others, I tried to build a vision of what ASCD wanted to become, and then I tried to help lots of people fulfill that vision. Each year, it seems, there was always one more big task to be done. After almost two decades, two million miles in the air, hundreds of speeches, and many more meetings, it's time for me to step aside to offer the chance for fresh leadership in curriculum, instruction, and supervision.

I owe a debt of thanks to so many that I dare not name one for fear of offending many. Nineteen presidents, scores of members of the Executive Council and Board of Directors, and many committees have made important contributions to what ASCD has become during my tenure. I must tell all of you that your elected officers have always taken your suggestions and their responsibilities very seriously. These governance officials set the policy and help staff members shape ASCD's program each year. Similarly, I have been privileged to observe affiliate leaders around the world contributing numerous hours to plan and conduct ASCD affairs at the local level.

If I have been a successful leader, it is because the ASCD staff has helped make me one. In truth, ASCD's increasing membership has forced me to spend much of my time trying to cope with the consequences of that growth. We've had to move several times to create space for more staff. We've changed computer systems three times as technology improved. We've tried, above all, to maintain a healthy work culture for employees. Staff members, despite heavy workloads, have done much to ensure that ASCD values and beliefs are not only clear but adhered to. I am certain that ASCD products and services will continue to be high quality because of the efforts these employees have made to create a culture that demands taking pride in one's work.

Key Issues

A close friend of mine, the late Harold Spears, served for 12 years as superintendent of the San Francisco public schools during some of the most turbulent years of public education. He once told me that it was said of him that he was too liberal for the city when he came and too conservative when he left, even though he was the same person. I hope this won't be said about me, but it probably will, so let me leave my watch with a few ideas that I hope will be realized in the years ahead:

- We must build better **partnerships to bridge the work of scholars and the needs of schools**. One focus must be determining the interventions that succeed in improving student performance on significant outcomes. The federal government needs to play a more active role in this, both in terms of allocating more resources and in supporting the kind of longitudinal research on school effects that is needed. University investigators need to hone in on how schooling can overcome the serious learning deficits of many students.

- The education enterprise is badly divided on what it will take to develop first-rate schools all across the country. Politicians are much more in the driver's seat than ever before in our country's history. **The education community must play a greater role in deliberating policy and developing reform proposals**. The participation of politicians is good news in that their leadership is badly needed. The bad news is that they often seem more driven by quick fixes and appealing sound bites than a realization of what it will actually take to restore schools

as the central social and intellectual institution in a child's life. Urban schools, for example, aren't served by more rhetoric about how bad they are: they need better facilities and technology, highly trained teachers equipped to meet their students' needs, and lots of parental and community agency support. Regrettably, none of the current presidential aspirants shows the vision and grasp of local realities needed to begin to turn around schools that are failing their students.

- Educators are fond of saying that school choice and new assessment strategies, in and of themselves, are insufficient to improve school quality. But we must be more articulate on what we believe *is* needed. I think this involves two elements: (1) forcefully demonstrating the **financial costs of excellence**. If schools are being asked to do more than ever before to help each child become a successful learner, they will need the resources to do so. (2) Investing in activities to **make teaching a true profession**. Teachers are being asked, as never before, to diagnose the needs of each student and provide appropriate learning activities to ensure success. We need to reconceptualize teacher training and staff development.



ASCD can play a vital role in helping these ideas become a reality, and I hope the Association will find ways to involve a far larger number of members in helping shape the future. It has been my pleasure to be your colleague the past two decades, and I hope to cross paths with many of you during the next phase of my career. ■

Policies Based on Flawed Assumptions, Cawelti Says

Would-be school reformers, armed with misinformation about the quality of U.S. schooling, are focusing their policy work on imagined problems rather than real ones, ASCD Executive Director Gordon Cawelti said in a farewell speech.

"There are a significant number of very persuasive critics who seem to thrive on repeatedly pointing out weaknesses in schools," Cawelti said, alluding to the drumbeat of negative headlines on U.S. student achievement. But much of the data used to assail U.S. schools' performance, such as SAT scores or international test results, are being misinterpreted by critics, he said. Flawed assertions then are used to buttress supposed solutions, such as the privatization of schools and national tests. Many critics, Cawelti charged, have distanced themselves from the local schools where the *real* problems—and perhaps some solutions—might be found.

For example, Cawelti told of working recently in Harlem with a group of Chapter 1 teachers on a plan to raise student achievement. Asked to rank 10 possible explanations for low student achievement, teachers named as the top three the diminished role of parents in their children's lives; social conditions such as crime, drugs, and violence; and inadequate financing to get the job done. The *least*-named contributors to low student achievement? A failure to set high standards for student achievement and a dearth of information from tests. Yet these areas have become a major focus of national and state policy deliberations, he noted (see p. 7). "It's not that school reform isn't needed, but we'll never successfully reform our schools unless we're clear about what we want to fix," Cawelti said.

Educators and others concerned with the welfare of today's students must better articulate to policymakers the main obstacles to student success and what initiatives might remove the barriers, said Cawelti. Then they must fight for the resources they need to do the job and provide evidence that the investment has helped to achieve their aims. In today's political climate, "you can't be vague or fuzzy about it, because if you are, you'll never get that money again," he said.

As educators plan school programs appropriate not only for today's students but for tomorrow's, they need to pay special attention to research showing why some adults thrive at home and in the workplace, Cawelti added.

Doug Heath's research, for example, has found that successful adults have good cognitive skills, are critical thinkers, and are lifelong learners. Good schools have

traditionally emphasized these qualities. But Heath's research also shows that successful adults do much more: they are empathetic, see multiple sides of issues, are honest, have a sense of humor and self-insight, and consistently model certain values. And research on workplace requirements in the U.S. Department of Labor's SCANS report shows that job applicants need not just basic academic skills but such attributes as an understanding of how systems work, the know-how to select and use appropriate

technologies, and an ability to work in teams, Cawelti said.

In reflecting on how the school reform movement has focused almost entirely on academic subjects, Cawelti said these research findings show the need for schools to be broader in their goals and their thinking on what a well-prepared graduate is. "Because they are less quantifiable doesn't mean that we should ignore them," he said of the newer outcomes being proposed for students. ■

—John O'Neil

Florida School Puts 'Cultural Literacy' to Test

When art teacher Holly Desantis recently asked her elementary students to choose a face to draw, she didn't get the typical fare. Instead of assorted Mickey Mouses, Bart Simpsons, and smiley faces, children depicted Abe Lincoln, a Mayan Indian, and the tragicomic mask.

Children at Three Oaks Elementary School in Fort Myers, Fla., are steeped in the content-rich curriculum developed by the Core Knowledge Foundation at the University of Virginia. Among topics covered in the 1st grade are Lewis and Clark, the Trail of Tears, the food chain, and Copernicus. Second graders are introduced to simple machines, Alexander the Great, and astronauts, while 3rd graders learn about ecology, Norse mythology, and Dracula stories, among other topics.

Three Oaks is the first K-6 elementary school to put into practice the curriculum spurred by E.D. Hirsch's 1987 book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. A suburban school serving 1,025 students, Three Oaks is completing its fourth year of successful implementation, teachers told a roomful of educators.

Each grade level has a core curriculum in five areas: American and world civilization, language arts, science, math, and fine arts. "While we don't presume to stipulate everything American schoolchildren should know, our curriculum is based on a consensus of minimum knowledge children should acquire in each grade," teacher Patricia Scott said. The curriculum is also guided by state and county guidelines, and while content is outlined on a school calendar, teachers make decisions about methods used for teaching each subject.

One of the advantages of the program is



Patricia Scott

the interdisciplinary connections students and teachers make. For instance, a science unit on telecommunications is coordinated with a social studies unit about the changing Eastern nations.

"When more than one teacher talks to them about a subject, it sticks," said Desantis, who showed slides of children creating interdisciplinary projects such as atom replicas and amoeba art. School records show that the program is a success as well. Attendance rates in 1990-91 shot up, giving Three Oaks the second highest ranking among 30 schools, up from its previous ranking of 13th. In the same year's time, suspensions and retentions were drastically reduced.

"We aren't a wealthy school district. One-third of our kids are eligible for free or reduced lunch and more than half are bussed to school," Scott said. "But we think our curriculum is raising our expectations. Our commitment to a core of shared knowledge is giving all students a fair and equal chance to succeed." ■

—Marge Scherer

National Standards, Assessment System Draw Mixed Response

The push toward national standards for student performance and a national system of comparable exams—a strategy endorsed by President Bush and an influential panel created by Congress—may well result in unintended negative consequences, several speakers said. For that and other reasons, many educators attending the Annual Conference appeared unsure whether to oppose the national standards and testing movement or attempt to shape it. Those at ASCD's General Business Meeting chose to oppose it, defeating a resolution calling for ASCD to give provisional support to the effort.

Support among policymakers for a national system of standards and assessments reached a crescendo recently when the Congressionally appointed National Council on Education Standards and Testing declared the idea both feasible and desirable (see March Update). The council called for the development of national standards in history, geography, mathematics, science, and English, and the creation of a national system of examinations linked to those standards. As Update went to press, Congress was deliberating legislation that would put the force of law behind the panel's recommendations. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has already developed national curriculum standards, and other subject matter organizations are following suit.

Waving a battered copy of NCTM's standards document, Colorado Gov. Roy Romer told a special session that NCTM's

effort will help satisfy a growing hunger for clear statements of what students should know and be able to do to lead productive and fulfilling lives. Romer, a licensed pilot, noted that instruction in piloting keeps the standards of performance fixed while varying the time and resources needed for would-be pilots to attain those standards. Too often, Romer argued, the reverse is true in schools. U.S. schools will not improve without a clear notion of whether students are meeting broadly accepted standards, he added. "If we don't know what we're reaching for, I don't know how we're going to get there."

Old Dominion University professor Dwight Allen said a system of national standards and assessments could do

Roy Romer (right) lobbied for a national system of standards and assessments, but **Art Costa (below)** and other ASCDers weren't buying.



several things: reinforce equity by pushing comparable standards for all; ease problems faced by children whose families move; and clarify what outcomes schools should help students to master. "None of these issues can be dealt with short of a national framework," he said.

Others, however, worried about the adverse impact that national standards and



assessment might bring. Gil Valdez of the Minnesota Department of Education said he had "no problem with creating national standards as a vision." But he feared that the process "would soon become politicized" and might discourage, rather than fuel, changes in school practices. Mary Hatwood Futrell, former president of the National Education Association, said the movement toward national standards and assessments could well "narrow the curriculum," particularly if the assessments were high-stakes.

Futrell and others said the establishment of standards and assessments is but one part of the systemic changes needed in U.S. schools. "To a large degree, the impact [of standards and assessments] will depend upon how much we're willing to spend" not only on high-quality tests but also on better curriculums, teacher training, and other needed reforms, said Futrell, adding that she wants to help shape the movement in a positive way.

At ASCD's General Business Meeting, such concerns helped defeat a resolution that would have provided provisional ASCD support to the national standards and assessment movement. Some members felt that ASCD should help to influence this fast-moving crusade. But longtime ASCD member Thelma Spencer spoke for the majority who demurred when she told participants at the meeting: "There are some trains better left unboarded, and I think this is one of them." ■

—John O'Neil

Conference Participants Win Honors

Several conference attendees left New Orleans with the praise of their peers ringing in their ears. They include:

- The winners of ASCD's 1991 Dissertation Awards. **Carol Wilson** and **Christine Abbott** (Oakland University) won the top dissertation prize in the field of curriculum; **Dianne Taylor** (University of New Orleans) won in the field of instruction; and **Jennifer Cheal** (Michigan State University) was first in supervision. The winners received a plaque and presented their research findings at a special session.

- Recipients of the 1991-92 Affiliate Publications Awards. For affiliate journals, the winners were **Connecticut** (Kenneth Lester, editor) and **Washington** (Richard Wolfe). Top prizes for affiliate newsletters

were earned by **New Jersey** (Brenda Benson-Burrell) and **Georgia** (Frances Karanovich). The award for best individual article went to "Making Tracks in a High School English Class," written by Kate Pennington and Judith Stafford, which appeared in the **Maine** affiliate journal (Leon Levesque, editor). Finally, the award for affiliate journal graphics went to **Florida** (Carmen Dumas).

- **Gordon Cawelti**, whose support of ASCD videotapes was marked with his being named "Chief Executive of the Year" for non-Fortune 500 companies by the International Television Association. ASCD began producing videos at Cawelti's direction (he filmed the first tape himself), and they now bring more than \$3 million in income each year. ■