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[lgreene@naesp.org](mailto:lgreene@naesp.org)  
Vanessa St. Gerard  
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[vstgerard@naesp.org](mailto:vstgerard@naesp.org)  
Jennifer Apperson  
Production Assistant  
[japperson@naesp.org](mailto:japperson@naesp.org)

**EDITORIAL ADVISORS**

Jan Borelli  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma  
[janborelli@cox.net](mailto:janborelli@cox.net)  
Frank Buck  
Talladega, Alabama  
[buck@mail.talladega-cs.net](mailto:buck@mail.talladega-cs.net)  
Jeanette Gilliland  
Phillipsburg, New Jersey  
[jgilliland@pburgh12.nj.us](mailto:jgilliland@pburgh12.nj.us)  
Olaf Jorgenson  
Kamuela, Hawaii  
[ojorgenson@hpa.edu](mailto:ojorgenson@hpa.edu)  
Rita R. Martinez  
Phoenix, Arizona  
[rmartinez@harr.cartwright.k12.az.us](mailto:rmartinez@harr.cartwright.k12.az.us)  
Scott A. Miller  
Horicon, Wisconsin  
[smiller3@horicon.k12.wi.us](mailto:smiller3@horicon.k12.wi.us)  
Christopher J. Peal  
Walled Lake, Michigan  
[pealc@walledlake.k12.mi.us](mailto:pealc@walledlake.k12.mi.us)  
Katherine Ralston  
Mt. Solon, Virginia  
[kralston@augusta.k12.va.us](mailto:kralston@augusta.k12.va.us)  
Patricia Reynolds  
Northbrook, Illinois  
[preynolds@zion.k12.il.us](mailto:preynolds@zion.k12.il.us)  
Teresa Tulipana  
Kansas City, Missouri  
[tulipanat@parkhill.k12.mo.us](mailto:tulipanat@parkhill.k12.mo.us)

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# It's an Electronic World



**W**hen I first started editing *Principal* back in 1984, the tools of the trade were a typewriter, a telephone, and a red editing pencil. Today, the words you are reading here and throughout the magazine are being seen in print for the first time. They were created, revised, edited, proofread, laid out, and transmitted to the printer electronically—all in far less time and with far less effort than in the good old low-tech days.

If technology has revolutionized magazine journalism, it has yet to achieve that level in education, where change comes slowly. But its impact is becoming increasingly visible in classrooms where blackboards have given way to electronic white-

boards, textbooks have been largely replaced by laptops, and students go on field trips all over the world without leaving their seats.

Technology has been a boon to principals who embrace it. Sending and responding to e-mail messages is a lot simpler and more effective than having to endure the frustrating busy signals and not-at-home messages endemic in telephone communication. The cell phone and handheld computer make it possible to spend more time out of the office, walking around and visiting classrooms.

Looking into the future, the tech-savvy principal may be able to relate to some of the cutting-edge technology described in this issue by Will Richardson and Rob Mancabelli, co-authors of *Blog, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Web Tools for the Classroom*. They describe these tools as elements of the Read/Write Web, an informal network in which the “ability to connect users around online content is beginning to have a profound impact on curriculum, classroom instruction, and professional practice.”

The authors envision a world where online texts are constantly updated, entire books can be downloaded, and teachers become technology connectors. Some of that world is becoming reality as principals and teachers increasingly use blogs for basic communication and students employ podcasts and videocasts for their reports and projects.

But the tech-savvy principal doesn't need a lot of new equipment to operate efficiently. Frank Buck describes how you can speed up and streamline some time-consuming and paper-wasting routines by using basic technology.

As for what technology can accomplish when skillfully integrated into the curriculum, read what two elementary school principals have accomplished. Patricia Patterson used an innovative five-year plan to transform her school from “a 20th century textbook-driven model to a 21st century model characterized by the seamless use of technology at all levels of the curriculum.” Craig Mills used a different approach four years ago, implementing a digital learning system for the core subjects of reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies. “Since then,” he says, “we have made remarkable progress across all subject areas.”

There's a lot more in this issue. The Research Report examines a number of strategies that principals can use to reduce or eliminate in-grade retention, and Alfie Kohn has some interesting thoughts about homework and what principals can do to place it in the proper educational perspective. Don't miss the Special Section on obesity and poverty, and what schools can do to help control what is being called a childhood obesity epidemic.