

## from the Director's Desktop



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### *From Reel to Virtually Real*

My elementary school, Mellette Grade School, was built in the 1880s. Each classroom had two electrical outlets, which certainly limited the technology teachers could use.

Not that there was much technology anyway. The only real supplements to textbooks were 16 mm films (shown on a clackety old projector) or filmstrips.

For those too young to remember filmstrips, think of them as a primitive precursor to today's ubiquitous PowerPoints. Teachers threaded a thin strip of film into a projector about the size of a Buick. The audio part of the "audiovisual" was provided by a 33½ rpm record that beeped to indicate when it was time to advance to the next slide.

There were no TV monitors at our school, which was not a problem because there were only three TV channels anyway. As a rare treat, some teachers allowed us to listen to the last one or two games of the World Series on a portable radio someone had smuggled in. (Yes, the World Series used to be played during the day.)

When I became a teacher, I found that the technology available to me had not advanced much since my days at Mellette. The filmstrip audio track was now provided on a cassette tape, but there was still the awful beep to signal a slide change.

And the clackety old projector at my high school looked as though it had actually come from my grade school. Each year, I designated one kid in every class to get the film up and keep it running without stripping the perforated edges, thus rendering the film unplayable. I learned the hard way that nothing was

worse than a room filled with 10th graders poised for a movie without anything to watch.

Today's students and teachers have so many more opportunities to use technology to enhance learning. While field trip budgets still do not support a visit to Egypt to see the Pyramids, virtual reality glasses can transport the whole class. Internet links allow a class in London, Kentucky, to chat with counterparts in London, England.

The future is bright. We are so excited about the future of schools that we have devoted an entire issue of the *Standard* to exploring what lies ahead for students and teachers. From new approaches to helping students with disabilities to innovative ways to evaluate teachers, you'll find much to discuss with your colleagues.

We hope those discussions continue through our 2016 Annual Conference in Kansas City. For the first time, state board members will have the opportunity to try out many of these innovative educational solutions (think of it as Show and Tell for adults!) at a session on the Future of Schooling. If you've always wanted to try virtual reality glasses, this will be your chance.

Of course, the changes won't be limited to technology. We'll talk about new approaches to testing and other future-looking changes that will come to schools soon.

An Amish proverb reminds us all that "children are living messages we send to a world we will not see." The job of policymakers is to envision that future, as best we can, so we can equip the children who will actually live there. ■