

**Training for principals** *continued*

leadership is," Harris says. Harris, who is a Virginia Tech Fellow with the Roanoke-based Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement (part of the Office of Engagement at Virginia Tech), founded the workshop series. Tripp, a newly named Fellow, is a retired superintendent of Salem City Schools.

To prepare to establish the workshops, Harris first surveyed superintendents in a dozen school divisions in Virginia. The superintendents outlined the need for training but said they lacked the resources to carry it out.

Enter Virginia Tech. "The story we want to tell is that this is an innovative leadership development opportunity for new principals and assistant principals to begin grounding in the role they have taken on, in some cases, just days before they come to us," Harris says.

The 2012-13 class included Jennifer Bolling, assistant principal at Pulaski County High School. She was a seasoned teacher. But, for her, everything about being an assistant principal was new – the orderly flow of students, the discipline, the scheduling of teachers, sensitive discussions with parents and, most of all, the need to exercise a new position of power.

She found having the training staggered throughout the year helped drive the lessons home. "During the workshops, we would be given all these tools to use," she says. Back at the schools, they would practice the skills. "We would take them out, use them, come back, reflect on how



Wayne Tripp (left) and E. Wayne Harris co-direct the Recently Appointed Administrators workshop series.

we used them." The key word for Bolling was "reflection." Taking time to reflect on her actions helped her get better at her job, she says.

From the reality show "Blackboard Wars" to movies such as "School of Rock" and the classic "To Sir, With Love," depictions of schools capture the improbability of great things happening in tough environments. But while Harris points out that schools and educators "are not equipped to handle

some of the societal ills that we're expected to solve," he nonetheless believes that innovative training methods "can share great ways of thinking about how to be successful in the work."

As Riley puts it, "If our job is truly to make sure that all students are being successful, then that's accomplished."



Mike Riley oversees the day's school dismissal.

For a more in-depth look at the workshop series, including visits to two schools, please see:  
<http://tinyurl.com/wayneharrisvideo>  
<http://tinyurl.com/jenniferbollingvideo>  
<http://tinyurl.com/mikerileyvideo>

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## Training for principals makes schools better in Virginia

*Ensuring 'genius will come out'*

By Andrea Brunais

Each school day, a parent's wish is that educators, no matter the job's stresses, hold to core values. Will they be fervent, confident, and committed to the child's success? In a program unique to the region, Virginia Tech's E. Wayne Harris works to make school leaders more effective.

He talks about the "inherent genius that exists in every child." He reminds principals and assistant principals to guide teachers and staff and "to model the way, to ensure that ... genius will come out."

These vital instructions come during one of the workshops held over the course of

about a dozen days in Roanoke during the school year. Harris, former superintendent of Roanoke City Schools, co-directs the Recently Appointed Administrators series with Wayne Tripp, a retired faculty member from the School of Education in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

At the workshops, school leaders hear from experts about how to manage "the enormous amounts of data we have to deal with on a daily basis," says Mike Riley, principal of Hidden Valley Middle School in Roanoke County.



E. Wayne Harris



Participants in the Recently Appointed Administrators series work on a class assignment at The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center.

September," Riley says of the Virginia Tech training. "At that point, I didn't know what to expect or even what I needed to know."

Other topics include discussions of student discipline problems, ways to keep teacher morale high, and how to keep one's life in balance. A recent evaluation of the 8-year-old program showed that the school leaders who attended, as well as their bosses, gave the program high marks for:

- creating a network of trusted friends and colleagues
- teaching lessons that can be immediately incorporated into daily work
- offering skill-building in communications, especially in articulating a clear vision

A fourth key outcome of the training is that it "enables new leaders to expand their understanding of what effective

*continued on page 4*

# recently appointed administrators

a professional development program for Virginia's school leaders

## top four benefits for school leaders\* —

- 1 formed new network of trusted friends and colleagues
- 2 applied lessons immediately to daily work
- 3 expanded understanding of effective leadership
- 4 built new skills in communication

\*according to participants' evaluations

participants spend

**10**  
days of  
classroom study at  
The Hotel Roanoke &  
Conference Center

average  
participant  
taught  
school for  
**12**  
years before  
taking on  
administrative role

I think it's a  
good idea that Mr. Riley  
wants to keep learning and  
to learn to be a better  
principal than he  
already is.



**2600**

school leaders  
have participated  
(including Mr. Riley)

**36**  
school districts have  
leaders who have  
completed  
the program

Program has existed for **8** years

