



NEWS

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PRINCIPALS PRAISE PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA'S EDUCATION AGENDA AND CALL FOR EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

28,000 principals are poised to help Obama administration achieve gains in teaching and learning.

Alexandria, VA –December 1, 2008— The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) congratulates Senator Barack Obama on his election as the 44th president of the United States and applauds his attention to the education of our nation's children. This dramatic change in leadership at the highest level suggests that at the federal policy level America's schools may be in for much-needed change over the coming months and years. Nothing short of world-class educational transformation should be a high priority for our next President. Securing the economic and democratic future of our nation depends on educating all children to be highly adaptive learners in a rapidly changing world. This means understanding that creating and sustaining good schools where children excel in many ways is about more than academic performance as currently mandated for measurement by the federal government.

“President-elect Obama has set forth clear education priorities for his administration that compare favorably with NAESP's Platform and inspire hope for change in flawed federal education policies,” said NAESP's executive director Gail Connelly. “Principals are eager to work with the Obama administration and the new 111th Congress to reframe the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently No Child Left Behind) in ways that allow schools to equip today's students with the competencies they need to be successful in tomorrow's economy, including provisions for integrated teaching and learning and workable guidelines for the proper use of standardized tests and other assessments.” In an increasingly diverse and global society, educated children must be creative, curious, and imaginative as well as academically proficient, which requires a shift away from a sole focus on standardized testing that often thwarts creative teaching and learning.

A majority of principals reported in NAESP's 2008 10-year study of the K-8 school principalship that although NCLB positively impacted the focus on instruction and attention to the needs of all students, it had a negative impact in a number of key areas, including school morale, pressure on staff, non-tested subject areas (such as science, social studies, and the arts) and addressing the needs of the whole child. Principals contend that student success cannot be measured effectively by a single standardized test score and should be based on multiple measures. Further, principals are strong advocates for meeting the social, emotional, and physical needs of all children as important contributors to student academic success. Principals also understand the undeniable need for students to be afforded learning opportunities that help them become increasingly multilingual, multicultural and multidisciplinary in order to flourish in the workforce of tomorrow.

“Principals must be included as key partners working with the Obama administration to place a primary emphasis on creating optimal learning opportunities for all children,” said Nancy Davenport, NAESP's president. “Improving student learning and raising student achievement levels requires providing effective ongoing professional development specifically designed for principals with mentoring as a priority during the first few years on the job.” There is evidence from research that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among factors that contribute to student achievement. Effective leadership and high-

quality teaching go hand in hand and developing the principal workforce would be a cost-effective, human-capital investment.

In a recent study conducted by NAESP, a majority of K-8 principals reported spending most of their time leading staff and teachers and engaging with students, while only 1.8% percent reported spending significant time on their own professional development. It is imperative that principals be afforded ample time and opportunities to participate in well-designed, fully-funded professional development that supports their work developing and sustaining high-achieving schools—a primary goal of the Obama education agenda. Principals must have preparation and ongoing training to lead learning communities where children learn what they need to know to flourish in an ever-changing and complex world.

NAESP is committed to partnering with the Obama administration to create sound and effective federal education policies, especially regarding the whole child and school leadership. Principals are willing to lead the way for educational transformation that puts children at the center of teaching and learning, that sets high standards for school leaders, and that values and supports the critical role of principals in the education of our nation’s children. We recommend *Vision 2021: Transformations in Leading, Learning, and Community* and *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do*, as well as other NAESP publications on leading exemplary early childhood education and afterschool programs, as excellent sources to lead and inform the transformation of public education.

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Established in 1921, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) serves 28,000 pre-K-8 principals in the United States, Canada, and overseas. NAESP leads in the advocacy and support for elementary and middle-level principals and other education leaders in their commitment to all children.