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Preaching to the Choir



Not having been an educator, I had never thought much about the length of a principal's day until I attended my first NAESP convention many years ago. In the program, I noted an event listed for 7 a.m. That has to be a typo, I thought, and brought it to the attention of the convention director, a former principal.

"That time is correct," she assured me, and smiled at my expression of disbelief. "Principals are used to getting up early," she said, "and working late."

We are probably "preaching to the choir" in this issue, in which we examine how principals make it through days when it sometimes seems that 24 hours aren't enough. But we hope that some of you will come away with new perspectives that may help you to shorten your workday, or at least make it more productive.

Peggie Robertson, a veteran elementary school administrator, provides a fascinating look at the principal's day by examining five work-management styles: hoppers, perfectionists, detail-allergics, fence sitters, and cliff-hangers. She also addresses three major time-killers—interruptions, personal contacts, and paperwork—where more effective time-management practices can save precious minutes.

J. Allen Queen, a former principal, and Donald Schumacher take a broader look at some of the stress factors that are all too common in the principal's day. They offer a practical survival guide that includes some useful suggestions for disarming three "time bandits": perfectionism, procrastination, and the inability to say "no." They also have some useful tips on how to reduce stress by making time for exercise and healthy eating.

Several of our editorial advisors—principals all—have contributed summaries of their typical days that make for some interesting reading. One of our advisors leads three rural schools in Pennsylvania and another heads a boarding school in Hawaii, where he literally lives with his students seven days a week.

From the many articles we received describing a principal's typical day, we have included those submitted by elementary school principal Mary Ann Chapko and former middle school principal Robert Ruder. We also have posted two more as Web Exclusives at www.naesp.org/principal.

This issue also features a Special Section in which distinguished education writer Gene Maeroff makes a strong case for prioritizing the primary years and making pre-kindergarten to grade 3 an instructional unit unto itself. "Such an approach gives administrators and teachers an opportunity to enhance child development at its most fragile and potentially most productive time," he says.

The Research Report examines how principal support can make the difference between success and frustration for new teachers, and is accompanied by an article that tells principals what to look for in their math classrooms.

In this issue, you will also find the names and faces of your 65 colleagues who will be honored as 2006 National Distinguished Principals on Oct. 27. Reflecting their increasing numbers in NAESP and the nation, two-thirds (44) of this year's honorees are women.