

Interesting Times

There's an ancient Chinese proverb that is equal parts blessing and curse: *May you live in interesting times*. I don't know about you, but I'm finding these times to be extremely "interesting."

First, the blessing. NAESP is ideally positioned to serve as your champion on Capitol Hill, in the Department of Education, and with our sister associations. We are asserting our increasingly robust advocacy agenda with renewed purpose, urgency, and clarity, but also with an outstretched hand and a commitment to collaboration. Consequently, in recent months, we've been invited to participate in dozens of conversations with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and his top aides, members of Congress on both sides of the political aisle, and influential consortia of education associations.

Our message is powerful: Elementary and middle-level principals are primary catalysts for creating a lasting foundation for learning, driving school and student performance, and shaping the long-term impact of school improvement efforts. We've had significant legislative successes on your behalf. A few follow:

- NAESP drafted legislative language supporting professional development for principals in a provision for the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

How it helps you: This bill, which has taken a back-burner to other legislative priorities, is the source of federal funding for elementary and middle-level education. Specifically, the provision would fund "a comprehensive system of professional development" with the goal of embedding professional development in a principal's work.

- NAESP took a central role in providing specific language on pre-K through grade 3 for the first-ever national comprehensive literacy bill. The bill is awaiting congressional action.

How it helps you: The bill will fund literacy coaches at schools, new research, and the wider dissemination of research-based best practices.

- Key NAESP staff participated in the first round of high-level meetings with members of Congress and their staff; the second-round began this fall.

How it helps you: These meetings have reintroduced NAESP to power brokers on Capitol Hill; consequently, congressional members and staffers increasingly recognize our key staff as informed, balanced content-specific experts on issues pertinent to you. Their contributions of accurate



and timely data have greatly elevated and informed many issues dealing with the principalship.

Now, the curse. We're at the table for important discussions, but like many of our education association counterparts, our greatest challenge is making our voice heard clearly and sufficiently, particularly on issues related to the department's initiative to improve low-performing schools: how we measure school improvement and how we lift up such schools. Our comments on this initiative follow:

We wholeheartedly share the department's goal to improve these schools. We part company, however, on its approach to use standardized test scores as the primary yardstick for measuring success, and we strenuously disagree with the proposal to replace principals (and other educators) when low-performing schools don't show sufficient progress.

NAESP believes that if the department relies on standardized test scores as the primary metric for school improvement, reform efforts will fall far short of our mutual goal to strengthen schools and educate children. You and your colleagues know best: Success is more than a test score. Schools and students succeed in multiple ways; they should be measured in multiple ways.

Further, we believe that *automatically* replacing principals of low-performing schools is likely to be hasty and unwarranted. The better solution is providing all principals with the time, talent, and tools they need to succeed.

They need a minimum of three school years to turn around an under-performing school, they need the ability to restructure and reorganize teaching and support staffs, and they need support, professional development, and resources to strengthen their skills. A new principal alone cannot change a struggling school that operates in the same culture and with the same resources. Current principals at under-performing schools should be afforded the same presumption of expertise and the same opportunity to succeed as replacement principals.

As these issues and others dominate education—and as our work and yours grows ever more "interesting"—we'll continue to lend our voice to this national discussion. As we speak out on your behalf, we do so with the promise that we'll engage friends and opponents alike with collegiality and in the spirit of constructive problem solving, we'll press for results that improve the lives of millions of children, and we'll remain mindful of our mission to serve your interests. □

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What are your views? NAESP wants to know. Please contact governmentrelations@naesp.org or visit www.naesp.org and click on Advocacy.

NOVEMBER 10, 2009

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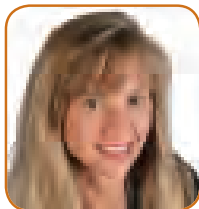
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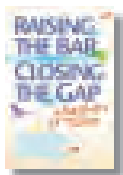


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Speakers are subject to change.



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KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

Rebecca DuFour

The Power of Professional Learning Communities: Bringing the Big Ideas to Life

Richard DuFour

Once Upon a Time: Confronting the Mythology of Public Education

Robert Eaker

What It Means to *BE* a Professional Learning Community

Thomas Guskey

Grading and Reporting Student Learning: Effective Policies and Practices

Thomas Many

Forged, Not Forced: Illuminating What Works When Implementing Professional Learning Communities

Robert J. Marzano

Formative Assessment and Standards-Based Grading

Mike Mattos

Pyramid Response to Intervention: RTI, PLCs, and How to Respond When Students Don't Learn

Anthony Muhammad

Transforming School Culture

Rick Stiggins

Seven Essential Assessment Actions for School Leaders

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