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The Monthly Newsletter of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

## ED's Perspective: Start Strong, Finish Strong

*By Gail Connelly, NAESP Executive Director*

Remember the old song, "it's not where you start, it's where you finish"? The song celebrates the commendable characteristics of persistence, optimism, and resiliency—attributes shared by the vast majority of principals I've met in my NAESP career. Today, however, the song for principals, especially early career principals, has a different refrain: To finish strong, you have to start strong.

A growing number of my conversations with principals—both veterans and newcomers—eventually touch on how difficult the principalship has become, especially during a principal's first few years on the job. Although 90 percent of veteran principals say they would choose the principalship again and would recommend it as a career path to their colleagues (see NAESP's landmark report, [A Ten-Year Study: The K-8 Principalship in 2008](#)), the reality is that an alarming number of early career principals are not continuing in the position beyond their first couple of years. Ensuring that the early years of the principalship are as successful, accomplished, and rewarding as the later years is key to avoiding rapid turnover and reducing distress on our nation's schools and students.

Not so long ago, the focus of the principalship was managerial. Now, principals are apt to concentrate on being instructional leaders who are the primary catalysts for creating a lasting foundation for learning, driving school and student performance, and shaping the long-term impact of school improvement efforts. And principals are still responsible for the overall management of their school, usually without the support of an assistant principal.

This demanding, multifaceted job requires the wholehearted dedication of professionals with the ability and intestinal fortitude to successfully deal with dozens of daily challenges. A 2009 study by Eileen Lai Horng, Daniel Klasik, and Susanna Loeb of Stanford University reported that principals engage in more than 40 separate tasks in a typical day. Assuming that principals work a 10-hour day, this means that they identify, analyze, and solve an average of four complex tasks every hour. That's one every 15 minutes. Plus, the job is carried out in a crucible of high-stakes accountability, where one-dimensional standardized tests outweigh multiple layers of

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student, teacher, and principal effectiveness. Now pile on unfunded mandates, shrinking budgets, and unjustified criticisms.

Wow! Is it any wonder that many early career principals feel overwhelmed and wish they had remained teaching in the classroom? New principals need our collective help, and they need it fast. Three avenues of help are currently available to early career principals:

**State Support.** Many of NAESP's state-based associations conduct high-quality workshops and conference sessions targeted to early career principals. Typically, these sessions are either conducted by some of education's best thinkers and writers or by a state's exemplary principals—colleagues who not only impart wisdom, insight, and a few tricks of the trade, but also create a ready-to-tap network of nearby peers.

**NAESP Resources.** With the guidance and leadership of the NAESP Board of Directors—14 practicing principals of Pre-K, elementary, and middle-level schools—the Association is launching a new initiative to provide targeted support to early career principals. To begin—and I stress that we are only beginning our work in this vitally important area—we're examining our existing resources to identify all of the magazine articles, publications, conference sessions, professional development opportunities, and member services that have particular relevance for new principals. We're also ramping up the Principals Help Line, a quick way to get completely confidential answers to questions, peer-to-peer. Find these resources at [Help for Early Career Principals](#), and watch for news from NAESP as other activities take shape.

**Our Community.** The most important resource is the colleague in a school next to yours. Are you an experienced principal who's seen and done it all? Make a commitment to reach out to a new principal with an offer of support, friendship, and camaraderie. Help a new colleague understand the professional growth that comes with [membership in NAESP and your state affiliate](#). Even a highly experienced teacher who is transitioning to the principalship can feel adrift and alone. You can make a positive difference. If you're interested in becoming a certified mentor, take a look at our [National Mentor Program](#) to get started.


Are you a new principal who's wondering how to get the job done while still having time to read a story to a group of children, give an encouraging pat on the back, or help tie a youngster's shoelace? Ask for help. You might feel alone in your building, but

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you are surrounded by committed, experienced, and well-wishing colleagues who are ready, willing, and able to help you be successful in your career.


Through it all—both the successes and the challenges—and regardless of where you are in your career, take heart in the knowledge that your profession is enormously important, draw wisdom from your peers, and keep the faith that you do make a *real difference* for children. 

## Access Extra Principal Content Online

Take your *Principal* magazine experience to the next level by reading the [current issue online](#), accessing the two articles published as Web Exclusive, exploring [web resources](#)



that accompany each feature article, and delving into NAESP's extensive [publications' archives](#). The two most recent Web Exclusive articles are: "[Knowing How to Help](#)," which explains how principals can help build teacher self-efficacy to improve student learning and "[Student Voice](#)," which makes the case that getting elementary students involved in their learning produces positive results.

In addition to articles that focus on the issue's technology theme, be sure to read a feature article on [restoring peace on the playground](#) and the third installment in the five-part autism series, "[What Parents Want Principals to Know About Autism](#)" and the accompanying [Report to Parents](#). 

## Federal Update: Sharing the Principal's Perspective at NAESP Federal Relations Conference

*By Kelly Pollitt, NAESP Director of Advocacy, Policy, and Special Projects*

Two weeks into 2012, NAESP's comprehensive advocacy efforts to protect the power of principals in federal legislative or regulatory efforts are well underway, especially in light of the continued activity surrounding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). (For an update on the bills released by House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairman John Kline (R-MN) this month, visit NAESP's [blog](#).)

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As decision-makers in Congress consider changes to key federal education policies and related legislation that will have an impact at the school building level, elementary and middle-level, principals will be able to leverage the annual NAESP Federal Relations Conference (FRC) to discuss issues in education and share legislative recommendations on behalf of the students they serve. The FRC, scheduled for February 6-8 in Washington, DC, brings together elementary and middle-level principals with leading policymakers to share a vision of education reform from the school leadership perspective. Attendees will have a chance to hear about legislative proposals directly from Capitol Hill, learn from influential policy experts about the potential outcomes of education legislation this year in light of the November election, and strategize before taking the principals' message to congressional leaders during Capitol Hill visits.

NAESP's 2012 comprehensive advocacy campaign is moving forward based on the following principles:

- **Protect the unique and critical role of elementary and middle-level principals.** NAESP believes the reauthorization of ESEA and implementation of state and local strategies provide an opportunity to ensure that educational policies recognize the critical role principals play in improving results for all children and that such policies support what we have learned about improving student achievement and turning around low-performing schools. NAESP will continue to advocate for common sense reforms to federal policies that may have adversely impacted principals.
- **Promote the principal's vision for education reform.** NAESP believes there must be a new vision for education that positions decision-making and fair, accurate accountability back at the school building level to ensure better results for all children. Research has proved that principals are second only to teachers among school-related factors contributing to student learning. Principals have a strong effect on student achievement because they ultimately create the conditions and cultures that encourage effective teaching and learning environments and shape initiatives that continually improve schools. Thus, federal policies and reforms must better recognize school-based authority, grant principals autonomy, and better support effective instructional leadership.
- **Preserve the principalship through high-quality professional learning opportunities.** Current education policies and practices fail to prioritize principal professional development. For example, only 3 percent of Title II funds under ESEA are specifically used for principals. While a small amount of

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professional development funds are targeted toward principals at the federal, state, and local levels, more must be done to ensure that principals receive job embedded, ongoing access to the high-quality professional learning they need to drive student achievement and school success. Specifically, NAESP believes that elementary school principals should receive opportunities for professional development in early childhood education, quality mentoring of new school principals, and ongoing professional development for experienced principals.

For more information about NAESP's advocacy campaign, visit [www.naesp.org/advocacy](http://www.naesp.org/advocacy). 


## Apply Now for Arts Education Grants



The [Champion Creatively Alive Children](#) grant program, sponsored by Crayola and NAESP, encourages educators to explore a "what if..." learning opportunity. For example, what if arts-infused learning thrived every day in schools? What if schools relied more on project-based authentic assessment rather than standardized tests? What if parents and schools found ways to document and articulate the value of creative experiences?

What if you apply and your school wins? Your school would receive \$2,500 and \$500 worth of Crayola products to implement an innovative arts-infused program. In addition, you would document and share results and outcomes of your school's project via NAESP's website in order to help other educators develop promising practices.

The deadline for proposals is June 15. Champion Creatively Alive Children seeks to help educators integrate the arts across the curriculum to build students' 21st century skills in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Up to 20 elementary schools will receive grants. Entries are judged on innovation, collaboration, and sustainability. Proposals must be submitted by principals who are NAESP members. Educators whose schools received a grant in 2011 are not eligible to apply in 2012 but are encouraged to become judges of 2012 proposals. 

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## What Shall We Tell the Federal Government?

The NAESP [Platform](#), the statement of beliefs for NAESP and its members, summarizes how elementary and middle-level principals think K-8 education should work. By providing your feedback about proposed changes to the belief statements, you will be aiding NAESP's advocacy staff as they try to influence members of Congress and the U.S. Department of Education based on the *Platform*.

Your representatives on the [NAESP Resolutions Committee](#) work every November to update the statements to accurately reflect the realities of your profession. The results of the committee's diligent work this year are changes (edits, combinations, and deletions) to [19 resolutions](#).

Member feedback is critical to the resolution process, so we ask that you review the statements and offer your comments and suggestions. Provide your feedback by sending an e-mail to [erohlffs@naesp.org](mailto:erohlffs@naesp.org).

During the Association's annual Best Practices for Better Schools: National Conference and Exposition of the Year March 22-24, the committee will determine which changes to make—based on member feedback—and present them to the Delegate Assembly for approval. Your time and careful review of the Resolutions Committee's efforts on behalf of NAESP and the principalship is encouraged and appreciated. 

## Prepare to Vote

This spring, eligible NAESP members will elect a new president-elect as well as directors for Zones 5, 7, and 9. The electronic ballots will be available through our website—but you will need to log in to access the ballot, which is members-only content. If you have never logged in to [www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org) (or if it has been a while) take a moment to do it now—and ensure that you are able to vote for your candidates as soon as you are notified in late March.


Go to <https://www.naesp.org/user/login>.

- Type your "Username"—the email address NAESP has on file with your membership.

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- Type your "Password"—your last name is your password the first time you log in. If you have changed your password and can't remember it, click on the "Request new password" tab and follow the instructions. 

## Tap into Differentiated Instruction/RTI Resources on PD 360 in January



This month's online professional development topics for NAESP members are differentiated instruction and response to intervention (RTI). Through a special partnership with the online learning resource PD 360, members get free access to video-based materials and related resources that are appropriate for both individual learning and staff training.

### Here's how:

1. Log in at [www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org);
2. Visit the [PD 360 page](#);
3. Click on the **Learn Now** button to go to the NAESP Group on PD 360, and click on "Tasks" in the left navigation, where you will find a list of video segments ready to view.

The differentiated instruction video segments and related resources are from a series called Elementary Education, Differentiating Instruction for All Students:

- *Differentiation: Elements for Planning*
- *Climate*
- *Knowing the Learner*
- *Instructional Strategies*

All four RTI segments from December have been made available throughout January as well. February's topic will be Student Assessment.

These full-length video segments are designed so you can watch them singly and learn in short spurts of time or sit down and go through all four at once—from about 12 minutes to an hour or more, depending on your learning style. You can also revisit

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segments, and extend your learning by using the ancillary resources, anytime during the month.

NAESP's special partnership with PD 360 allows members to get a sampling of some of more than 2,000 high-quality segments on topics for educator. NAESP's PD 360 access, unlike a full PD 360 membership, is focused on a limited set of specific subjects. As an NAESP member, you gain access with your regular NAESP login, but please do not share your log in with others as it is restricted for use only by NAESP members.

Contact the PD 360 tech support team if you need assistance accessing the video segments at 800-572-1153 or [support@schoolimprovement.com](mailto:support@schoolimprovement.com).

## Register Now—Conference Advance Rates End Feb. 10



Now is the time to register for the NAESP 2012 Annual Conference and Expo—Best Practices for Better Schools™—in Seattle, March 22-24. Your opportunity to save \$100 off the final registration rate ends on February 10, so go to [www.naesp.org/2012](http://www.naesp.org/2012) to make sure this National Conference of the Year is on your calendar.

Best Practices for Better Schools™ is three days packed with learning opportunities, networking, exploring, and sharing with your peers—you'll enter your school doors the next week full of new ideas, charged up to complete the school year with new knowledge, and with renewed energy and confidence.

By attending the national conference—in a very exciting destination—you'll be able to meet and learn from the top experts who will deliver best practices for school improvement that you can put into action at your school. To get a sneak preview of the keynote sessions, see two recent interviews with our celebrated speakers, **Diane Ravitch** and **Rafe Esquith**, in the [November/December 2011](#) and [January/February 2012](#) Snapshots section of *Principal* magazine.

When you [register](#), make sure your [membership](#) is current so you will get the *best rate possible—up to \$100 off the late registration rate*.

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Remember, Best Practices for Better Schools™ is the only national conference designed just for you and your fellow elementary and middle-level principals. [Register today!](#)




## Just 2 Weeks to Enter the JUST ONE Drawing and Help Us Grow!

Last month, NAESP President Rob Monson wrote to you about the satisfaction of welcoming a colleague to experiencing all the high-value member benefits you enjoy through NAESP and your state affiliated association. Now the time is running short to get in the JUST ONE action.

January 31 is the final day members can enter the JUST ONE drawing by completing a simple online form. When you complete the form, you indicate your commitment to help grow membership in your state affiliate and/or NAESP by recruiting JUST ONE new member. Then you are automatically in the running to land one of these valuable premiums:

- A free registration to the [Seattle NAESP Conference & Expo](#);
- A one-year free NAESP membership renewal;
- An Apple iPad2;
- An Amazon Kindle, or
- A \$100 bank gift card.

Get started by logging in at [www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org) to access the members-only JUST ONE page ([www.naesp.org/just-one](http://www.naesp.org/just-one)). For logged-in members, the JUST ONE page is also available under "Membership" on the navigation bar. Get your name in the drawing today, and reach out to a fellow principal, assistant principal, or aspiring principal who is not yet a member. Once you've completed the form, you'll also have access to helpful tools for your outreach, including a sample email and talking points. 

## Arrive in Seattle Early for Mentor Training and Service Day

Make plans to take advantage of pre-conference programming at the NAESP 2012 Annual Conference and Expo—Best Practices for Better Schools™—in Seattle, in March: mentor certification programming and the Fourth Annual Community Service Day.

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There is still time to register for [NAESP National Mentor Certification Program](#) in Seattle March 19-21, 2012. Join your colleagues in participating in NAESP's highly regarded leadership and mentor training program. Expand and refresh your knowledge of standards for principals while learning mentoring skills and best practices so you can effectively coach an aspiring or new principal through the first challenges as an administrator.

The NAESP Mentor Program includes:

1. A two and one-half day Leadership Immersion Institute;
2. An optional nine-month Mentor-in Training internship with your protégé; and
3. National certification as a Principal Mentor for successful completion of both components.

For more information visit our [Mentor Website](#) or contact Carol Riley at [criley@naesp.org](mailto:criley@naesp.org).

Join us for our Fourth Annual Community Service Day on Wednesday, March 21, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Seattle. This rewarding event, sponsored by Landscape Structures, is a powerful demonstration of commitment during the NAESP convention that raises awareness of the importance of volunteerism and of principals helping each other.

More than 100 volunteers are expected to participate in the installation of an inclusive playground for all children, regardless of their abilities, at Hawthorne Elementary School, which is a high-needs school in downtown Seattle.

NAESP's annual Community Service Day has been described by volunteers as one of the highlights of their convention experience. View a slideshow presentation from last year's Service Day: <http://animoto.com/play/DhyLIZbkaTT6eMscuEvzyg>.

Sign up to take part on the [conference registration form](#). 

## Student Council Award Applications Due March 21

If you would like to honor the outstanding work of your school's student council, consider nominating it for the [Student Council Excellence Award](#). The deadline to [apply](#) is March 21. You can also order [Honor Council pins](#) for your student council members.

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If you are looking to strengthen your student council, NAESP offers several resources, including a [Student Leadership Kit](#), a [Resource Kit](#), an [Advisor Handbook](#), a [Member Handbook](#), and [lapel pins](#) for student council members.

## Online Publication Series Offers Research-Based Best Practices



The latest paper in the [Best Practices for Better Schools™](#) online publication series provides information and insight about formative assessment systems (FAS). ["Formative Assessment Systems: Finding the Right Fit"](#) covers work by Matthew Militello and Neil Heffernan in developing a framework for school leaders who have to make important decisions about FAS. Heffernan is the creator of the ASSISTments System, a powerful, free web-based assessment tool for which NAESP is a distribution partner.

The publications series is designed to strengthen the effectiveness of elementary and middle-level principals by highlighting research-based best practices and offering guidance for implementing them in schools. [Earlier papers in the series examined](#) preschool language and literacy, response to intervention in elementary-middle math and primary grade reading, and using student achievement data to support instructional decision making.

In 2012, white papers will be released on instructional leadership, teacher and staff development, school improvement, and school and home partnerships. 

## Grants, Opportunities, & Free Resources

### Teacher of the Year

The National Center for Family Literacy is accepting applications for the 2012 Toyota Teacher of the Year. The winner will receive \$20,000 for his or her program and a free trip to the 2012 National Conference on Family Literacy in March. The application must be completed by the applicant's principal or supervisor. **Deadline: February 1**  
<http://www.famlit.org/award-grant-opportunities/toyota-teacher-of-the-year-award/toyota-teacher-of-the-year-award-selection-criteria/>

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## **Arts Education Grants**

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[www.naesp.org/champion-creatively-alive-children](http://www.naesp.org/champion-creatively-alive-children)

## **Grant for Salad Bars in Schools**

Seeking to increase children's consumption of fruits and vegetables, the Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools program plans to fund and grant 6,000 salad bars to schools across the nation by 2013. Any K-12 school or district participating in the National School Lunch Program is eligible to apply. **Deadline: Rolling**

<http://saladbars2schools.org/>

## **Grants for Pets in the Classroom**

The Pets in the Classroom program from the Pet Care Trust provides grants of \$100 to \$150 to purchase or adopt a new pet and required equipment or \$50 to support existing classroom pets. Teachers can apply for one grant per school year. **Deadline: Rolling**

<http://www.petsintheclassroom.org/>

## **Webinar Series on Implementing Common Core Standards in Math**

This free webinar series and online professional learning community, sponsored by ETA/Cuisenaire, provides advice and support regarding the national math curriculum. The program provides free webinars, live chats, lesson plans and online discussions to assist teachers in connecting and collaborating with others in the same grade level.

[http://www.edweb.net/inv\\_math](http://www.edweb.net/inv_math)

## **Webcast on RTI in Early Childhood Settings**

"Implementing Response to Intervention in Early Childhood Settings: National, State, and Program Perspectives," an 80-minute webcast from the RTI Action Network, features a panel of nationally recognized researchers and dynamic RTI implementers on RTI's role in early childhood. This unique blend of multiple perspectives targets matching high-quality instruction and interventions to meet learning needs during the early childhood years.

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<http://www.rtinetwork.org/professional/forums/rti-national-online-forum-implementing-response-to-intervention-in-early-childhood-settings>

## **Books for All Kids**

The Books for All Kids Program provides free books to nonprofits, after-school programs, and child care centers. All book donations are announced through email alerts and are made on a first-come, first-serve basis. Public and charter schools are not always eligible for donations, as guidelines vary from offer to offer.

<http://www.pwirtr.org/booksforkids.html>

## **Free Fitness Curriculum**

The ACE Operation FitKids curriculum from the American Council on Exercise is designed for educators looking to integrate health and fitness into classroom learning. The 7-lesson curricula for grades 3 to 8 and teach students the dangers of being overweight and the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle.

<http://www.acefitness.org/ofk/curriculum.aspx>

## **Supporting Social Well-Being of Young People With Disabilities**

*Impact: Feature Issue on Supporting the Social Well-Being of Children and Youth with Disabilities* is a free publication that focuses on what adults can do to create and sustain environments that contribute to social well-being for young people with disabilities and their peers. It is published by the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota.

<http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/241/> 