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Blue Ribbon Schools Recognize Outstanding Principals

Exceptional school leaders from around the country were honored this month at a ceremony for the National Blue Ribbon Schools program.

In a reception November 13, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recognized this year's 314 National Blue Ribbon Schools, who were selected based on overall academic excellence. Seven principals of this year's winning schools were further recognized with the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership. The honor, named for the secretary of education serving during President Ronald Reagan's administration, highlights exceptional school leaders.

"It's the principal who shapes the vision and sets the tone for their school," said Duncan in a news release. "It's the principal who inspires and models the excellence he or she knows their school can reach. We don't celebrate success enough in education – and the Bell Award recognizes these principals for the essential work they do every day."

Winners of the Bell Award are:

- Dianne Reynolds, Spencer Elementary School, Mobile, Alabama (NAESP member)
- Pam Camper, Russell D. Jones Elementary School in Rogers, Arkansas
- Christopher Todd Hall, Pocomoke Elementary School, Pocomoke City, Maryland
- Blaine Helwig, J. Walter Graham Elementary School, Austin, Texas
- Tracy McDaniel, KIPP Reach College Preparatory School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- James Mireles, Garden City High School, Garden City, Kansas
- Liana Szeto, Alice Fong Yu Alternative School, San Francisco, California

Read more about each winner [here](#).


At the celebration, the Bell Award recipients, and principals and teachers from this year's Blue Ribbon Schools, heard keynote presentations from Duncan and NAESP President Mark Terry. Last year's Superintendent of the Year and Teacher of the Year also spoke.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools program honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools with excellent student performance, as measured by state assessments, as well as schools that have made significant academic improvement. In its 30-year history, the designation has been bestowed on nearly

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7,000 schools. The program is the product of ongoing collaboration between the Department of Education, NAESP, and NASSP. For a complete list of this year's winners, click [here](#). 

Meaningful Evaluations Inform Principals' Practice

What are the traits of an excellent principal? What pieces of a principal's job can be measured? How can a principal's skill and impact be quantified?

As states across the country have grappled with those very questions, NAESP has created a framework for principal evaluation, "[Rethinking Principal Evaluation](#)," that contains six domains of principal leadership. NAESP Executive Director Gail Connelly has recently discussed this framework in two national venues. Earlier this month, she was featured on Blogtalkradio's EduTalk about principal evaluation. Listen to her interview [here](#).

In a [commentary](#) published earlier this month in *EdWeek*, Connelly and NASSP Executive Director JoAnn Bartoletti explored the importance of effective evaluation systems.

"Principals have long been part of processes to develop standards for their profession, and our associations have played an important part with landmark frameworks and standards embodied in our Breaking Ranks and Leading Learning Communities programs, which are aligned with the work of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium and other benchmarks. Aligning effective evaluation systems with these widely accepted standards will ensure that results are relevant to the improvement of principals' current work.

Overall, principals seek fair evaluations that are transparent, systematically applied to all principals in a state or district, and place a high priority on outcomes principals control rather than those they have limited or no ability to affect. All of this can increase the usefulness of evaluations—for those being evaluated as well as those doing the evaluating. Meaningful evaluation results can inform principals' learning and progress, regardless of summative ratings of practice, and have the ability to treat performance assessment as a positive process that builds principals' capacity, not as a pretext for discipline. Perhaps most important, an effective formative and summative process can help principals and evaluators create a holistic description of effective professional practice.

We have an unprecedented chance to get principal evaluation right, and we're confident that the framework within the "Rethinking Principal Evaluation" report will begin to move us in the right direction."

Read the [full piece](#) here. 

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Principals' Issues Top Priority for New Congress

By Kelly Pollitt

President Obama's reelection and the new configuration of Congress will likely bring education issues to the forefront of policymaking, with a focus on issues for principals.

While we expect the debate about the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to continue where lawmakers left off with bills currently circulating in Congress, there is a great deal of uncertainty if the policies will be finished anytime over the coming year.

Tackling the Fiscal Cliff

Congress returned last week for the "lame duck" session to consider the looming "fiscal cliff," and top leaders in the House and Senate are now meeting with the president to come to an agreement on a plan to reduce deficit spending that will include a mix of tax cuts and revenue priorities. Washington-based advocates and the public are watching to see if the two parties in Congress will be able to compromise with the White House. Compromise will signal the potential for consensus on major policy issues and productivity in Congress going forward.

Shifts in Both Houses, Committees

Democrats now have a slightly larger majority in the Senate. Republicans maintained the majority in the House, despite losing a few seats. There will be well over 80 new House members and 12 new Senators in the 113th Congress.

This will mean a significant amount of "education on education." New members (to both the Congress and the education committees), will need take time to become familiar with issues and set priorities. This may take well into the next year and lead to delays or further stalemates, depending on the bipartisan nature of the issues that will be brought forward by new members.

With Senator Michael Enzi (R-WI), the top Republican on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, term-limited out of the position, former Secretary of Education, Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) is slated to take over as the ranking member on the committee. Changes on the House education committee are also in store, with Representative Judy Biggert, a top Republican moderate, out of Congress after losing her reelection bid. Democrat Mazie Hirono from Hawaii moved over to the Senate, and

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Representatives Todd Platts (R-PA), Dale Kildee (D-MI), Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) and Jason Altmire (D-PA) all either previously announced their retirement or lost primary election bids.

Waivers, ESEA Reauthorization

For now, we do know that the new makeup of the House and Senate and the trends within the parties will put education back on the agenda, with particular emphasis on principals' pre-service preparation and evaluation. The House and Senate education committees have begun to pick up where they left off on the reauthorization of ESEA, which includes significant policy reforms that will impact accountability, assessment, professional development for educators, as well as teacher and principal evaluation. School leadership was recently highlighted by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in [remarks](#) he made to the state chiefs, many of whom were recently elected or appointed by new governors. This sends a strong message to policymakers on Capitol Hill and to the field that the U.S. Department of Education will include the issues in any education policy deliberations for regulation or legislation.

However, any movement in Congress on elementary and secondary education policy or higher education issues may be slowed as the waiver process put into place by the Department of Education continues, and new members on the education committees are installed. A little over a year ago, the Obama administration offered states "flexibility" from certain provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in exchange for a commitment from states to implement their reform agenda. Many have viewed this regulatory action as a reauthorization of the law, leaving little for Congress to do other than allow states to move forward. NCLB remains the underlying statute, however, and the Obama administration has not indicated that it would support either the House or Senate bills to fully reauthorize the law. The majority of states are in the process of the waiver implementation, which leaves little incentive for the House or the Senate to consider ESEA now. Although many believe that Congress will hold off on the ESEA reauthorization process and bring up other outstanding authorization bills (there about eight total in the Higher Education Act), NAESP has heard from top staff working on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the chairman, Tom Harkin (D-IA), that the reauthorization of ESEA is a top priority for 2013.

On the House side, the Education and Workforce Committee chairman, John Kline (R-MN), said in [an interview this week](#) that he will push a package of ESEA bills again next year, with "tweaks," but also sees oversight on the implementation of the administration's ESEA waivers as a priority going forward. Whether or not ESEA will move quickly or in a bipartisan fashion remains to be seen.

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NAESP will continue to report on changes to the House and Senate committees, which may help us better determine the legislative priorities going forward. As noted, many in Washington have speculated that the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) could come up before ESEA, as policies related to Pell Grants and student loans have expired and demand Congress' attention. While Congress has a full plate of expired bills to choose from, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), career and technical education, and workforce development, we do know that there will be significantly more attention paid to the role of school leaders and how principals impact student learning.

NAESP will be working with the Federal Relations Network to position any legislation on principals, and work to ensure that federal policies are focused on building the capacity of our nation's instructional leaders. Visit the NAESP advocacy page for more information and updates as we move into the new Congress.

Kelly Pollitt is NAESP's associate executive director for advocacy, policy & special projects. 

Ideas from Creativity Grant Winners

This year, students at Whiteknact Elementary will see how Notre Dame Cathedral was built—and they won't even have to leave their school.

Whiteknact Elementary is one of twenty schools to win a 2012-2013 [Champion Creatively Alive Children](#) grant. The school will use its grant to institute a "Math in Our World" program, in which students will research and build models of Notre Dame Cathedral, the Chichen Itza pyramid in Mexico, the Petronas Towers in Malaysia, and much more.

The Champion Creatively Alive Children program awards \$3,000 grants to schools like Whiteknact to build innovative, arts-infused education opportunities.

Arts-infused education teaches children the four Cs (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity), skills they need to understand our increasingly interconnected world and thrive as 21st century citizens.

This year, all around the country, the winning schools will partner with nonprofits, museums, and other community organizations to explore art, music, and dance, and even architecture, web design, and oral history.

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Here are a few of their ideas.

Cross-Continental Study of Ancient and Contemporary Civilizations

Valley Elementary School

Eden, UT

Dave Hales, Principal

Sixth graders at Valley Elementary School will take virtual Skype field trips to explore ancient and modern civilizations. Through the lenses of social studies, art, language, math, science and technology, students will discover cross-cultural insights. They will create museum exhibits, murals, architectural constructions, and design publications to express their understanding of other societies in relation to their contemporary lifestyle. Students will use art as a language and engage in art-based, wordless debates.

Art History Explored Through Humans' Relationships With Animals

Sacred Heart School

Lake Worth, FL

Candace Tamposi, Principal

Sacred Heart's K-8 students will explore how humans' relationships with animals and nature have been portrayed through art throughout history. Examining architecture, drama, music, painting, and literature from various eras, students will see patterns in art, history, myths, and religions. For instance: How has the bull, as an animal, symbol, myth, and metaphor been used by artists and authors through the centuries? This and other key questions will be explored as the school collaborates with the Norton Museum of Art, the Marshall Foundation's environmental center, and a local science museum in this multi-disciplinary exploration.

Making Connections With Chinese Culture

Valley Park Elementary School

Valley Park, MO

Dr. Bryan Pearlman, Principal

Valley Park students will connect with a school in China and share Artist Trading Cards that celebrate diversity through art and language. Students will be introduced to the Chinese culture through art, music, reading, history, language and writing in both English and Chinese. Parents of Chinese descent in Valley Park's PTO will help design and implement the year-long, art-based program, and work with the arts specialists on a culminating Chinese Culture Day.

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Civil War History Through the Lens of Native and African Americans Art


St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School
Greenville, SC
Catherine Noecker, Principal

Third through sixth graders at St. Anthony of Padua school will study Civil War history through the lens of Native American and African Americans' storytelling, poetry, and visual arts. They will focus not just on "what" happened but "why" it matters to their 21st century lives. They will experience the importance of voice in the telling of history and the voice that can be heard through art. Students will record in journals their personal reflections. Partners include the Greenville Metropolitan Arts Council, Greenville County Museum of Art, professional storytellers, poets, writers, visual artists, musicians, parents, and classroom teachers who will align the cross-curricular lessons with standards.

Students Explore Math in Nature Through the Arts Lens

Emma G. Whiteknact Elementary School
East Providence, RI
Nadine Lima, Principal

Students at Whiteknact Elementary will be learning about "Math in our World" through the lens of artists. They will research and build models of significant art forms, including the Rose Window of Notre Dame Cathedral, the Chichen Itza Pyramid in Mexico and the Petronas Towers of Malaysia. They will discover the cultural contributions of the peoples who created these art forms. The program includes several collaborative partners, including the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Art Museum, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, East Providence High School, and the Whiteknact PTA.

Read full descriptions of each winning project [here](#). 

Registration Open Nov. 27 for 2013 Conference

The [NAESP National Conference and Expo of the Year](#) in Baltimore is right around the corner. This premiere national event for principals, held July 11-13, 2013, offers dynamic speakers, countless sessions exploring best practices, and rich networking opportunities to connect with educators from around the country.

Registration opens November 27 with a special [early-bird price](#). Shortly after that, in December, is the deadline for submitting a proposal to present at the conference. Join other nationally recognized speakers in

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shaping the professional program by sharing your best practices, expertise and successes in a concurrent session. [Click here](#) to register for proposal submission and view FAQs and requirements.


While [planning for your trip](#), don't forget to reserve Wednesday, July 10 for the annual service day project, as well as Jeans and Jerseys, a star-studded NAESP Foundation fundraiser. Details will be forthcoming. 

Energize STEM at Your School With Two Top Resources

The [November/December issue of *Principal*](#) explores science, technology, engineering and math. If you've already perused the magazine, and watched this month's [PD 360 segments on STEM](#), dive deeper with two top resources from the National Principals Resource Center.

Start with [Successful K-12 STEM Education: Identifying Effective Approaches in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics](#), by the National Research Council. This definitive STEM implementation handbook examines the ways that STEM subjects are cultural achievements that reflect our humanity, power our economy, and constitute fundamental aspects of our lives as citizens, consumers, parents, and members of the workforce. It argues that a successful STEM program would increase the number of students who ultimately pursue advanced degrees and careers in STEM fields, enhance the STEM-capable workforce, and boost STEM literacy for all students.

Next, learn how STEM literacy can boost student achievement with [STEM is Elementary: Why Elementary Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Prepares Students to Beat the Gaps!](#) by Glory Oljace and Alexander Everhart. This timely resource clarifies the need for STEM programming at the elementary level, and offers educators viable, research-based solutions for inspiring and preparing all students to succeed. With its clear explanation, vivid diagrams and step-by-step instructions, this book is instantly accessible to all.

Each book is only \$12.95 for NAESP members, available in the NPRC. 

Grants, Opportunities, & Free Resources

Contests and Grants

EPA Environmental Education Grants

EPA's Office of Environmental Education grants program supports environmental education projects that enhance the public's awareness, knowledge, and skills to make informed environmental decisions and take responsible actions towards the environment. **Deadline: December 12**

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<http://www.epa.gov/education/grants/>

President's Environmental Youth Awards

The President's Environmental Youth Award program promotes awareness of our nation's natural resources and encourages positive community involvement. Since 1971, the President of the United States has joined with EPA to recognize young people across the U.S. for protecting our nation's air, water, land, and ecology.

Deadline: December 31

<http://www.epa.gov/peya/>

Tennis, Anyone?

United States Tennis Association Southern offers matching equipment grants to elementary schools that organize a kids' tennis club. No tennis courts are required. Kids' tennis clubs can be located in schools, parks, youth centers, or tennis facilities. This grant is available for schools in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. **Deadline: Ongoing**

http://www.southern.usta.com/community_tennis/grants_and_scholarships/

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/>

Classroom Resources

Books for Children in Need

First Book donates 35,000 books per day to programs and schools serving children from low-income families throughout the United States and Canada. Educators or program administrators at schools where at least 70 percent of the children come from low-income families are eligible to apply for the nonprofit's book distribution programs.

www.firstbook.org/receive-books

Free Classroom Supplies

Teachers can use a helping hand when it comes to stocking up on school supplies. That is why The Clorox

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Company is launching the *Canisters for Classrooms* program to help teachers get Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes for their classrooms and get parents involved in donating, too! When teachers put Clorox Disinfecting Wipes on their back-to-school list, Clorox will automatically donate two canisters to their classroom (while supplies last)! Visit [Clorox Classrooms](http://www.clorox.com/classrooms/canisters/) to upload your back-to-school supply list or create your back-to-school supply list online.

<http://www.clorox.com/classrooms/canisters/>

Curricula and Teaching Tools

Financial Literacy Resources

Money as You Grow—20 Things Kids Need to Know to Live Financially Smart Lives, an online tool to help improve the financial capability of America's youth, offers 20 essential, age-appropriate lessons kids need to learn about money. The President's Council on Financial Capability developed the website.

www.moneyasyougrow.org

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>

Free Pen Pal Club Subscription

Pen Pal Kids Club, a global social network for kids, is offering free classroom subscriptions to K-8 teachers across the United States. The website promotes cross-curricular collaboration by integrating nonfiction writing, geography, social studies, and technology while offering students a chance to discover different cultures and meet new friends from across the globe.

<http://www.PenPalKidsClub.com>

Powerful Free Tool for Data, Tutoring

School leaders know that every minute spent testing is a minute taken away from teaching. ASSISTments, a new, free web-based platform developed by Worcester Polytechnic Institute, aims to change that, offering teachers the ability to blend assessment questions and tutoring. Students receive real-time guidance, while

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teachers see instant reports on student progress. Plus schools and districts can build benchmarks right into the system. Contact NAESP@wpi.edu for training and more information.

<http://teacherwiki.assistment.org/wiki/About>

Free Professional Development and Learning Resources

Green Strides - Webinar Series

This webinar series, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools initiative, features experts from the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and other federal programs. Topics include fitness, solar energy, life in space, and more.

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/webinar.html>

Implementing Common Core Standards in Math - Webinar Series

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

RTI in Early Childhood Settings - Webcast

"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.

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