

Principals Speak Out at 2014 National Leaders Conference

NAESP's annual National Leaders Conference (NLC), brings nearly 200 principals from across the country together to Washington, D.C. to engage with top education thought leaders and lawmakers.

A key highlight of this year's conference, held Sunday, February 23 to Tuesday, February 25, was the launch of NAESP's 2014 advocacy agenda

Principals met with members of Congress to advocate for supportive education policies based on NAESP's advocacy agenda. The agenda comprises strategies to strengthen federal policies for the nation's principals, including boosting funding for principals' professional development, pressing for fair and objective principal evaluation systems, and focusing on accountability systems that consider student growth.

Principals prepared for these visits with a series of sessions on education policy issues. In a key panel, Deborah Delisle, assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education at the U.S. Department of Education, and Chris Minnich, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, explored principals' challenging task of implementing Common Core State Standards amidst new teacher evaluation systems and tight budgets.



Delisle and Minnich (pictured above with moderator Kris Kurtenbach) emphasized that principals play a key role in speaking out about the realities of implementation in their schools, and need support for shifts in practice.

In a question-and-answer session that followed, principals asked Delisle and Minnich about professional development for principals, community support systems, and teacher evaluations. Delisle stressed that multiple measures of success are vital, and that states can often rush accountability systems without carefully considering metrics.



Principals gather on the steps of the U.S. Capitol after a day of meeting with lawmakers.

To guide discussions with legislators on teacher evaluation, participants learned about NAESP's newly released policy brief on teacher evaluation. *Supporting Principals in Implementing Teacher Evaluation Systems*, released jointly with NASSP, offers policymakers seven recommendations to bolster principals in the evaluation process.

NLC culminated with the presentation of the Congressional Champion Award for legislators who work on behalf of the nation's principals. Sen. Al Franken (D-MN) and Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA) received this year's award for their commitment to principals through the introduction of the School Principal Recruitment and Training Act, a key bill in the 113th Congress. The bill, written with input from NAESP and principals, serves to strengthen federal policies for instructional leaders.

"You all make a huge difference," said Davis at NLC's closing reception on Capitol Hill. "[One] reason I am here today is that we want you engaged in public policy. It's so important to express [your] views."

For the remainder of the year, NAESP will promote and advance the School Principal Recruitment and Training Act as a key component of ESEA reauthorization. NAESP will press for other measures to build the leadership capacity of the nation's elementary and middle-level principals.

For more information on NAESP's advocacy agenda, visit naesp.org/advocacy.

For Twitter highlights from NLC, visit NAESP's Storify page: storify.com/NAESP.

For photos from the event, visit NAESP on Flickr: flickr.com/photos/naesp.