



## Report: Principals Need Better Access to Professional Learning

**H**igh-functioning school principals are essential for ensuring that students have access to strong educational opportunities. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of the principal has become even more critical in identifying and meeting students' needs, and ensuring that principals have the knowledge they need to lead is key.

To learn more about principals' opportunities for professional learning, NAESP teamed with the Learning Policy Institute to conduct a national study surveying the nation's principals. The results are outlined in a new report, "Elementary School Principals' Professional Learning: Current Status and Future Needs."

According to the results of the survey, 4 out of 5 principals (84 percent) indicated that they faced obstacles to pursuing professional development. Principals serving schools with high percentages of students of color were more likely to report lacking money for professional development (50 percent), compared with less than one-third of principals of schools with low percentages of students of color (32 percent).

Local policymakers can ensure that professional learning for principals embodies key features that help produce principals capable of improving school outcomes. These features relate to the content of the professional development, as well as the delivery of content in authentic, job-embedded formats:

**1. Professional development focused on improving schoolwide instruction for whole-child education.** Such content could be particularly valuable to school leaders as they support their communities in coping with the trauma and other challenges related to the COVID-19 crisis.

**Only 1/4 of surveyed principals reported having had a mentor or coach.**

**2. Professional development focused on fostering equitable school environments.**

More than two-thirds of principals expressed a need for professional development content to support diverse learners and equitably serve all students.

**3. Meaningful applied**

**learning experiences that are problem-based and context-specific.** Problem-based, context-specific learning opportunities, such as school walk-throughs with peers or analyzing student data to identify problems, can enrich principals' skill development.

**4. Mentors and/or coaches who provide principals with individualized support that's tailored to their needs.**

For principals with all levels of experience, mentoring or on-the-job coaching can support them in fostering school improvement and adopting new leadership methods.

**5. Opportunities to participate in collaborative learning, such as networks of practicing principals.** Effective learning uses PLCs and other network structures to enable school principals to collaborate in small groups of peers and learn on the job together.

To help ensure that they have access to useful professional learning opportunities, principals can advocate for district, state, and federal policymakers to support and fund:

- Professional development content that meets principals' needs, including improving schoolwide instruction for whole-child education and fostering equitable school environments; and
- Delivery of this content through authentic, job-embedded professional learning opportunities, such as applied learning experiences, mentoring and coaching, and PLCs.

Read the entire report at [bit.ly/32r8vve](https://bit.ly/32r8vve).



**Elementary School Principals' Professional Learning**

Current Status and Future Needs

Stephanie Levin, Melanie Leung, Adam K. Edgerton, and Caitlin Scott



OCTOBER 2020



## A Forward Focus

NAESP is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2021. As we look back at our rich history, we will also focus on where the future of the association—and education—is headed. Our top priorities often go hand in hand: helping leadership achieve equity in schools while emphasizing social-emotional needs.

In a congressional briefing for National Principals Month in October 2020, NAESP President Kimbrelle Barbosa Lewis spoke about this and how a lack of federal funding to support these issues is affecting her students.

“Our students are in a much more severe time,” she said. “I have two counselors, and I also have a behavior specialist who focuses on social-emotional needs of students. That’s three people in addition to the teachers to work with 800 students who are mainly of color [and] are not only experiencing the pandemic and health issues with their families, but also experiencing the trauma of seeing people who look like them being killed for just being people who look like them. There isn’t enough staff right now to address those needs.”

All year long, NAESP will be celebrating its rich history and dedication to the issues that matter most to principals. Join us by tweeting your favorite moments as members of NAESP; use #ACenturyOfNAESP to share your stories.



## NAESP Statement on Election of 46th U.S. President, Vice President

“The Biden-Harris campaign’s message of unity provides an extraordinary opportunity to bring Americans together and heal a divided country. NAESP stands ready to work with the Biden-Harris administration to boost *educational* opportunities for students across the country. Most pressing, with tens of millions of students out of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic, K–12 schools are at a perilous juncture. As the academic, social, and mental health needs of students continue to grow, schools need a robust federal response that positions them to confront this crisis head-on and emerge even stronger. NAESP looks forward to continuing to work with members of both parties in the coming months and years to support principals in their critical work: leading schools, advancing equity, and improving student outcomes.”



## Protect Students Against Vaping

The dramatic rise in youth vaping is a public health crisis that threatens American children. A staggering 5 million U.S. kids now use e-cigarettes, and 97 percent use flavored e-cigarettes. Aside from the unknown long-term health consequences, e-cigarettes could become an on-ramp to nicotine addiction for a generation of youth. Congress must act now to protect children against this growing epidemic.

Momentum is building quickly in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate to pass legislation that aims to curb vaping in schools. Principals and educators can make a difference right now by contacting their members of Congress to urge them to support S. 1832, the Smoke-Free Schools Act, and H.R. 2339, the Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act.



**TAKE ACTION!**  
Visit NAESP’s Advocacy Action Center to send an email to your elected officials with just one click at [p2a.co/FWA1z3k!](https://p2a.co/FWA1z3k)

If signed into law, both pieces of legislation would make significant inroads in the youth vaping epidemic. Principals work hard every day to protect the well-being of their students, which is why your voice on this issue is critically important.