President's Perspective: A Rose Garden Moment

By Rob Monson, NAESP President

Even though my term of office as NAESP President officially began just a few months ago in July, I’ve already enjoyed a few “firsts” for my career. On Monday, Sept. 12, I was fortunate to experience a first that will last a lifetime.

I was invited to an event in the Rose Garden on the grounds of the White House. It focused on the president’s American Jobs Act (AJA) and brought attention to the vital importance of keeping principals and teachers in schools instead of sending them to unemployment lines. Don’t get me wrong: As I stood in the Rose Garden, I was honored to be in such a historic setting. But the “first” that will always stick with me is that I was there because of you and the collective Power of the Principal.

Only a principal can energize across-the-board school improvement—from the instructional staff to the support staff, from the classroom to the playground, from preschool to the primary grades, and from the schoolyard to the neighborhood. In short, only principals can create and sustain excellent schools, which are necessary for a sustained economic recovery.

You and I know this first-hand. We’ve seen schools lift up children and their families, bolster neighborhoods, and vitalize entire communities. Unfortunately, we’ve also seen what happens when budgets are cut to the bone, principals are assigned to two schools, classrooms become ever-more crowded, and teaching and learning suffer.

While NAESP does not always see eye-to-eye with the Obama administration on its education policies, we support the president’s call to strengthen education as the essential engine of our nation’s long-term prosperity by preventing more layoffs and by modernizing our schools. There’s no greater threat to our economic stability than the erosion of support for public education. This is the time to invest in educators and in education.

It’s impossible to predict an end-game for the AJA proposal. No one—not any of you, not our friends in state affiliate associations, and not our colleagues at NAESP—is so naïve as to believe that the president’s proposal is non-political, or that it will be
wholeheartedly embraced across the political aisle on Capitol Hill, or that it is a cure-all for our ailing economy.

Just the same, I am encouraged by these initial positive signals—an affirmation that education is the only permanent cure for poverty, that schools are the way out and up for millions of children, and that principals, teachers, and other educators are invaluable to the nation’s well-being.

Like most principals I know, I’m an optimist, and so I am hopeful that the administration’s proposal represents a much-needed shift in the tone of our discussion about education. If so, it will be a direct outcome of your power to persevere against long odds—that’s the true Power of the Principal.

- Read [NAESP’s statement](#) on President Obama’s plan.
- Take action by contacting your representative through the [Legislative Action Center](#), an easy-to-use tool for NAESP members.

**Foster Community Engagement With $5,000 in Grant Funding**

Proposals are now being accepted for the 2011-2012 [Sharing the Dream](#) grant program, which awards $5,000 to each winning school to improve 21st century learning through school-community engagement. For 2011-2012, the NAESP Foundation and MetLife Foundation is awarding 25 elementary and middle school principals with funding to create globally oriented schools and international learning communities, and to engage children in transformative, multidisciplinary experiences and service-learning projects that will help them succeed in the interconnected world of the 21st century.

The deadline for submitting proposals is Sept. 21 and grants will be awarded mid-October. Projects should have a strong global-engagement component and involve parents, teachers, civic groups, business leaders, institutes of higher learning, and other partners. Special consideration will be given to schools serving mostly low-income and under-represented minority students.

Proposed projects must:
Engage the local community to build greater ownership for the work of the school;
Encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in schools and their children’s learning; and
Include a global-engagement component.

Guidelines and additional information are available in the grant application.

Seattle’s the Place to Be for NAESP 2012 in March

If you haven’t been there yet, you’re in for a treat, and if you have, you already know that Seattle—host city for the NAESP 2012 Annual Conference: Best Practices For Better Schools™, March 22-24—always offers something new and exciting. Seattle, with its picture postcard appeal is brimming with charm, but it’s also green and vibrant, sleek and modern, and steeped with history and fun—a great destination for NAESP members to gather, learn, network, and enjoy.

The Washington State Convention Center, venue for the conference, is in the heart of a central, walkable location, close to hotels, world-class restaurants, and shopping, including Pikes Place Public Market, famous for its fish-tossing vendors and festive atmosphere. And getting around town on the monorail, light rail, or city buses is a cinch, so nothing’s out of reach.

There’s something for everyone in this city.

Food lovers will find great seafood restaurants, wine tasting opportunities, some of the nation’s best boutique coffee shops, and wineries within driving distance. The adventurous will want to make time after the conference to enjoy day trips for rain forest hiking, whale watching, rafting, kayaking, or even surfing. Close to Puget Sound and not far from Mount Rainier and Mount St. Helens, Seattle is the starting point for enjoying an outdoor lover’s paradise.

Culturally alive, Seattle is well known for the arts, including the Seattle Art Museum and the Frye Art Museum, as well as theatre and music venues. Great destinations for families are the Pacific Science Center and the Seattle Aquarium or the Burke Museum.
of Natural and Cultural History for hands-on learning opportunities. And don’t forget the Space Needle!

You’ll have the best of the best at the national conference of the year for principals—best speakers and programming, best location, best national networking opportunity, best total experience. Register now and save at the early-bird rate. Learn more about the conference at www.naesp.org/2012.

**Federal Update: Battles on Budget, Appropriations, and ESEA Continue**

*By Kelly Pollitt, NAESP Executive Associate, Strategic Policy and Special Projects Communicator*

NAESP is preparing for strategic and targeted advocacy to ensure that the issues that principals care about most remain at the forefront of discussions on budgets, appropriations, and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Summaries of the landscape of these three federal developments follow.

**Budget and Appropriations**

Congress has returned from its August recess and continues to grapple with the fallout from the provisions put into law by the Budget Control Act of 2011, the 11th-hour deal reached by Congress and the president to avert the debt ceiling crisis and control deficit spending. Congress must now address the FY 2012 appropriations bills under the confines of the budget agreement, as well as get through a second round of budget negotiations that will be spearheaded by the bi-cameral, bi-partisan Joint Select Committee—also known as the “super committee.” The super committee’s charge is to come up with over $1.2 trillion in cuts to the federal budget that both parties in the House and Senate can agree to, pass binding legislation, and have the president sign it into law by December 23, 2011.

While Congress works on larger federal spending issues, the House and Senate are also working from the overall spending limits put forth in the budget deal to set the individual appropriations spending targets for FY2012, meaning the spending limits for appropriations legislation that will fund various federal agencies and programs. The appropriations subcommittees recently negotiated the upper spending limits for the appropriations bills, which disappointedly, although not surprisingly, fall far below the
current spending levels for FY 2011. This means far less money is available to spread around the various federal agencies and spend on key programs, including funding for the Department of Education and key education-related initiatives.

While lawmakers figure out how to fund programs under the existing FY 2012 budget limits, it is clear that the work will not be completed in time for the new fiscal year, which starts October 1. We can expect Congress to pass a stopgap measure, also known as a continuing resolution (CR), to keep the federal government funded beyond the end of September and to avoid a federal government shutdown. Congress is likely to pass a series of CRs this year as the super committee puts together the broader package of spending cuts, unveils the plan, and Congress works by the holiday deadline to pass legislation that will eliminate the deficit over the next ten years. In short, a quick resolution to federal funding issues is unlikely this year and NAESP encourages you to be ready for a swift call to action in response to expected cuts to critical services and education programs in the federal budget.

**ESEA Reauthorization**

Meanwhile, ESEA continues to dominate the focus of NAESP’s government relations team, despite the fact that it likely won’t be reauthorized this year. Nonetheless, NAESP anticipates further action by the education committees this fall, even though budget battles will likely consume committee time and delay a formal, comprehensive consideration of the law. As noted in previous updates on ESEA, the Senate committee has missed the latest self-imposed deadline for an ESEA bill introduction, while the House continues to slog through its piecemeal approach. Yesterday, the full House passed the only bipartisan bill produced by the committee, which will allow states to increase the number of charter schools. A vote on the companion bill is not expected in the Senate. The remainder of the House bills—on accountability, teachers, and leaders—has yet to be unveiled.

In sum, NAESP expects Congress to continue to work on ESEA while it wrangles with the budget throughout the remainder of the year. Congress will debate on significant issues such as accountability and teacher evaluation, in addition to other bills that will likely set the stage for serious consideration of ESEA reauthorization. NAESP is preparing for a second round of strategic, targeted advocacy to ensure that school leadership and the issues that principals care about the most remain at the forefront of the discussion.
In addition to advancing President Obama’s proposal on jobs and the economy, which has implications for educators and schools, the Department of Education is expected to offer details on changes states would need to make in order to qualify for recently proposed waivers from specific requirements of No Child Left Behind.

Details on the waiver package are expected to be announced soon, giving states time to complete applications over the coming months. Waivers would then be issued during the 2011-2012 school year. A state that receives a waiver might be able to “reset” the accountability targets for the current school year. However, schools and districts may not feel the effects of regulatory relief until the 2012-2013 school year, when specific requirements such as providing supplemental education services and school choice might ultimately be waived.

The department has received harsh criticism on these proposed actions, particularly from lawmakers in Congress such as Rep. John Kline (R-MN), the Chairman of the House Education and the Workforce Committee, who questions the Secretary of Education’s legal authority to issue waivers because he believes the process undermines Congressional attempts to fully reauthorize the law. Expect continued debate and discussion once the waiver package is released by the department in September. NAESP will continue to monitor the issue and provide updates accordingly.

As Congress and the administration make key decisions regarding education program funding and policy, NAESP will ensure that the principals’ voice is fully represented. In the meantime, please send your feedback, comments, questions or concerns to advocacy@naesp.org.

Promote Reading for a Chance to Win $5,000 for Your School’s Library

Principals know that while reading is fundamental, two barriers prevent students from engaging in reading to their highest potential: Many students don’t practice at home and not every school has a well-resourced library that can support student’s reading interests. To overcome these issues, NAESP has teamed up with Parents magazine to launch its Raise a Reader contest, which encourages.
students to spend more time reading at home. *Parents* will award $5,000 to the school with the most minutes read per child.

Here’s how to get started:

**Step 1:** Register your school starting Oct. 1 at [www.parents.com/raise-a-reader](http://www.parents.com/raise-a-reader).

**Step 2:** Get your students and their families to sign up for the contest starting Nov. 7 at [www.parents.com/reading](http://www.parents.com/reading).

**Step 3:** Encourage students to read and to log their minutes online daily. The online tool, which is free and easy to use, allows parents to keep track of their children’s reading minutes, note which books they are reading, and print a summary of reading activity.

Students link their individual reading accounts to their school’s master account. The school with the most minutes read per student during the contest’s duration (Nov. 7, 2011, through Jan. 30, 2012) will win a $5,000 stipend for its library.

Make sure that you get your entire school involved so that every student in your building has the opportunity to join in the fun—and improve their learning in the process. Consult with your lead reading teacher about getting staff members on board and ways to communicate the contest to parents.

Schools must register for the contest before individual students can sign up and link to his or her school’s account. So make sure that you beat your students to the punch by registering starting Oct. 1.

NAESP is *Parents*’ educational partner for this literary initiative.

**Start School With a Plan for Recognizing Student Achievement**

The school year is already in full swing, but are you ready to acknowledge students who demonstrate high academic achievement, leadership, citizenship, and character? NAESP offers you several student recognition programs:
The Dream! Reach! Succeed! Awards Program enables principals nationwide to recognize and honor students who serve as role models for others. Awards are based on the students’ effort, citizenship, and success at home, at school, and in their communities. Eight colorful recognition pins that highlight conditions of the human spirit that make a difference—belonging, heroes, sense of accomplishment, fun and excitement, curiosity and creativity, spirit of adventure, leadership and responsibility, and confidence to take action—as well as certificates, are available individually or as a set.

The ASCA Honor Student Council Excellence Award—a time-honored award—recognizes student councils for excellence in leadership, citizenship, and community service. All schools that complete an application receive a certificate, and participating schools will be announced on the NAESP website. Student council pins, individualized by role, and certificates are available to present to your student leaders as well. NAESP also offers idea books and handbooks for student councils.

The American Citizenship Award acknowledges students who follow the rules and behave appropriately in school. It serves as an incentive to build school spirit and student self-esteem while promoting an appreciation for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The award also helps build responsible, knowledgeable citizens and gets students involved in their community. Present your top citizens with an attractive lapel pin and inspire their schoolmates to follow in their footsteps.

National Elementary Honor Society—for students in Grades 4-6—is another way to reward high academic achievement. Special gold seals, student membership cards and honor council pins are available for purchase. Present them to your academic star students as you “induct” them into the Society.

Budget now for the 2012 President’s Education Awards Program (PEAP), which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, in partnership with NAESP and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. It was developed to help principals recognize and honor student academic excellence and achievement. You can order 2012 PEAP certificates bearing the signature of the president of the United States and recognition pins starting in January 2012.
NAESP President Discusses Online Resources on Lifetime Network

NAESP President Rob Monson was recently featured in a segment on The Balancing Act, which airs on Lifetime Network, to discuss ways that teachers and parents can find online education resources and help students succeed. Monson was joined by Candace Hackett Shively of TeachersFirst.com at The Source for Learning Inc. and Joan Jarrett, president of the Association for Middle Level Education. Watch the segment.

To help parents better meet their children’s educational needs, NAESP has joined forces with Lifetime TV’s The Balancing Act, providing information on “The Parent Teacher Corner,” which is a new segment that provides information for parents about how to help their children succeed in school. Watch previous segments featuring NAESP leaders, which address combating bullying, improving reading skills, and engaging parents in their children’s learning.

The Balancing Act TV show airs on Lifetime Television at 7 a.m. and is America’s only one-hour morning show that’s about women, for women, and trusted by women. Celebrating life and all there is to accomplish, The Balancing Act inspires and empowers with entertaining and educational shows that help place women in the best position to achieve success in every area of their lives.

Leadership for the Future

NAESP believes that the future leaders of our schools must be ensured that school districts provide a well-structured plan for leadership development and continuous professional learning. Many states and school districts require mentor programs for new and aspiring principals and recognize the investment of time and money must be well-spent for their future leaders. Preparing individuals to become skilled in the essential mentoring and coaching practices as they guide new leaders must be implemented through high-quality training programs.
NAESP provides the opportunity to develop the mentor skills that promote the professional growth and confidence needed by new and aspiring principals. By participating in NAESP’s National Mentor Training, school districts invest in the future and sustainability of new principals to meet the increasing challenges of leading today’s schools.

“As a recently retired elementary school principal, I wanted to share my professional and personal experiences with the next generation of school leaders,” said Howard “Howie” B. Schechter, a Nationally Certified Mentor. “Mentoring afforded me the opportunity to not only share my expertise as a principal but also to hone my skills as a facilitator, advisor, coach and teacher.”

“Every time I speak with Howie, I benefit from his knowledge, experience, and insights into how schools and groups of people work. His insights come from deep study in this field,” said principal Matthew Bolton, who is Schechter’s protégé. “As a result of our work together this year, I have committed myself to continuing my study and contributions to the field of education by enrolling in a doctorate program for executive leadership.”

Like Schechter, you can make a difference in a new principal’s career as well. The National Principals Mentor Training and Certification Program consists of two parts:

1. A multiday Leadership Immersion Institute workshop that explores the theoretical foundations of adult development, reflective practice, critical feedback, and leadership capacity.
2. Participants may continue with a nine-month internship to complete the National Mentor Certification Program. The internship is led by a trained coach working with mentors honing their skills in a mentor-protégé relationship as the new or aspiring principal assumes the responsibility of leading a school community with a focus on student achievement.

Sign up today:
Oct. 13-15 – Alexandria, Virginia
Oct. 26-28 – Montpelier, Vermont
Nov. 3-5 – St. Simons Island, Georgia
March 19-21, 2012 – Seattle
June 27-29, 2012 – Pittsburgh
For more information, contact Carol Riley at criley@naesp.org.
Grants, Opportunities, & Free Resources

Grants for Community Engagement
The 2011-2012 Sharing the Dream grant program awards $5,000 to each winning school to improve 21st century learning through school-community engagement. The NAESP Foundation and MetLife Foundation is awarding 25 elementary and middle school principals with funding to create globally oriented schools and international learning communities, and to engage children in transformative, multidisciplinary experiences and service-learning projects that will help them succeed in the interconnected world of the 21st century. **Deadline: Sept. 21**
www.naesp.org/2011-12-sharing-dream-grant

Instruments for School Music Programs
The Mr. Holland’s Opus Foundation donates both new and refurbished instruments to school and after-school music programs that lack the resources to keep up with equipment loss, and to accommodate students on waiting lists or who have to share instruments. **Deadline: Sept. 29**
www.mhopus.org

Grant to Improve Youth Fitness
The 2011 Henkel Helps Get Kids Fit contest will award $10,000 to one elementary, one middle, and one high school to improve youth health in schools. Schools must answer the question, “What would your school do with $10,000 to improve youth fitness?” **Deadline: Sept. 30**
http://www.henkelhelps.com/

School Funding Grant
Parenting's Mom Congress School Transformation Grant contest will award one school a $20,000 grant to be used toward furnishing needed educational resources for its students—everything from textbooks to playground equipment, to new computers and art supplies. To enter, submit a 200-word essay and photo describing why your school deserves to win the grant. The winning school will be determined by visitors to Parenting.com. **Deadline: Sept. 30**
www.parenting.com/mom-congress/contest
Grants for Math and Science Education
The Toshiba America Foundation awards grants up to $1,000 to K-5 teachers who seek to introduce a new math or science project to their classes. **Deadline: Oct. 1**
http://www.toshiba.com/taf/index.jsp

Grants for School Improvement
Lowe’s Toolbox for Education grants fund school improvement projects initiated by parents in recognition of the importance of parental involvement in education. Maximum award: $5,000. **Deadline: Oct. 14**
http://toolboxforeducation.com/

Contest for Classroom Technology
The eInstruction 2011 Classroom Makeover Contest will award more than $170,000 of classroom technology to three grade categories (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). Schools must submit short, creative music videos demonstrating how they would use technology to enhance their learning experience in the classroom. **Deadline: Oct. 25**
www.2011classroommakeover.com/

Contest for School Library Funds
NAESP has teamed up with *Parents* magazine to launch its Raise a Reader contest, which encourages students to spend more time reading at home. The school with the most minutes read per student during the contest’s duration (Nov. 7, 2011, through Jan. 30, 2012) will win a $5,000 stipend for its library. **Deadline to register: Oct. 30**
http://www.parents.com/reading/school/signup

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/

Free Mental Health Screening Resources
The TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups at Columbia University is now offering new training and development resources for its Schools and Communities Programs online. These free resources help schools establish mental health screening
programs for adolescents in middle and high schools with implementation materials, screening questionnaires, and technical assistance to communities that wish to implement their own screening programs using TeenScreen’s model. www.teenscreen.org/programs/schools-communities

**Bring Student Writing to the Small Screen**
Green Screen Adventures(GSA) is an educational series whose goal is to promote literacy among children in grades 2-8. GSA builds enthusiasm for children’s writing by adapting their essays, stories, reports, and poems using story theater, songs, game shows, and puppetry. Students are encouraged to submit their writing to GSA for the opportunity to be featured on television or on the GSA website. www.greenscreenadventures.tv/

**Free Grant-Writing Assistance**
Resource Associates specializes in grant writing for charters and school districts throughout the country. There are a number of grant opportunities available now for charters and public schools that Research Associates can potentially write for your school for free. www.grantwriters.net/free-grant-writing.php

**Resources to Help Students in Times of Grief**
Scholastic and the New York Life Foundation are providing educational bereavement booklets, free online resources, and a professional development webcast in the spring to better support students in times of grief. The childhood bereavement resources area contains a wealth of information for guidance counselors, school psychologists, other educators, and bereaving families. www.scholastic.com/childrenandgrief

**Free Online Safety Education Kit Available**
NetSmartz Workshop, a program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, is offering educators free online safety education starter kits for grades K-6. The program focuses on educating children about online and personal safety. The comprehensive kit includes a resource manual; two interactive, 20-minute animated video presentations; activity cards with lesson plans to accompany the presentations; Internet safety pledges; and an activity poster. www.netsmartz.org/kit