

What Kids Deserve

I am a big fan of the #kidsdeserveit hashtag stream on Twitter because it both showcases principals' passion and shines a light on the kinds of learning communities they believe are relevant for today's students. Education leaders at all levels can visit the feed once a day to be reminded that, "Kids deserve teachers who know how to have fun!" or urged to collaborate because "We're better for kids when we're connected." Born out of the conversations of two principals—Todd Nelson and Adam Welcome—at NAESP's 2015 Best Practices for Better Schools annual conference in Long Beach, California, the hashtag turned multichannel movement is meant to be a source of inspiration as well as push boundaries and challenge conventional thinking about educating students. And inspire it does, providing daily doses of motivating images and messages about the learning experiences that we should all strive to create in schools. But beyond the platitudes, what boundaries does it push and exactly what is it that today's students deserve?

NAESP Executive Director Gail Connelly takes up this very issue in her explanation of a well-rounded and complete education. According to Connelly, educators should "provide the type of broad range of experiences that influence a student's long-term success, supporting at-risk students where they need it most." The way forward, she adds, is to shift from a counterproductive focus on testing toward "an educational system that is measured by the robustness of students' health, well-being, and happiness, which profoundly affect their academic achievement."

The #kidsdeserveit movement and the concept of a well-rounded and complete education resonate strongly with educators. Connecting the dots between the student-centered vision and the underlying principles needed to guide principals' practice are the newly re-focused 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). Formally known as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, PSEL amplifies the focus on students, student learning, and creating cultures of improvement. Standard 4—on curriculum, instruction, and assessment—for example, spells out the principal's role in enriching student learning by promoting a "love of learning," aligning instruction with the "identities and habits of learners," ensuring differentiated instructional practices that promote the effective use of technology, and making sure that learning experiences are intellectually challenging and recognize students' strengths. Principals can look to PSEL as a roadmap to "move the needle on student learning and achieve more equitable outcomes."

The feature articles in this issue of *Principal* present real-world examples of the principal's role in leading instruction—providing a complete education experience that builds on stimulating instructional practices that not only prepare students for college and career, but that are customized for today's learners and are truly student-centered. In the opening article, education consultant Justin Baeder outlines a strategy to vet such instructional initiatives, and then to thoughtfully operationalize success. So whether you want to differentiate instructional practices to create a makerspace, introduce a blended learning approach, or integrate the arts, for example, this issue of *Principal* will give you the tools to ensure that these practices make a lasting difference. **P**

—Kaylen Tucker, Ph.D.

Gail Connelly
Executive Director,
NAESP Foundation President

Ernest J. Mannino
Deputy Executive Director,
NAESP Foundation CEO

PRINCIPAL

Kaylen Tucker, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief
ktucker@naesp.org

Edwin Colbert
Communications Assistant

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