From Good to Great Practices

Principals report that they spend the majority of their time working with staff; but they also indicate that among their highest concerns are teacher performance and fragmentation of their time. It’s no wonder that principals are anxious about maximizing the clock and raising teacher performance, as teachers have been identified as the most significant school-related factor contributing to student learning, with principal leadership coming in second. In the words of NAESP Executive Director Gail Connelly, “A great teacher can create and sustain a great classroom, but only a principal can create and sustain an excellent school.” Let’s add to this sentiment that teachers and principals need access to research-based, targeted resources to make the difference between good and great in their classrooms and schools.

This issue of Principal provides resources in support of the principal’s role in leading classroom instruction, hopefully saving you countless hours in vetting best practices that will impact school success. These best practices span school-wide response to intervention, strategic use of research to institute change, and enhancing teaching through evaluation, in addition to innovative ideas from the 2011 class of National Distinguished Principals. Connected to this issue’s focus on principals supporting teachers in the classroom, feature author Jacqueline Darvin outlines how to empower teachers with multidimensional professional development.

Also included in this issue is the fourth installment of the five-part autism series. In “Finding a Voice,” Shannon Stuart provides an overview of inexpensive mobile technology that can help students on the autism spectrum communicate and learn.

This month many of you will connect with NAESP and Principal magazine face to face in Seattle at the Best Practices for Better Schools™ National Conference and Expo of the Year. To commemorate the Association’s focus on developing and disseminating resources centered on best practices, conference attendees will receive a special reprint of a recent white paper in NAESP’s Best Practices for Better Schools™ online publications series. Download “Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making” for yourself at www.naesp.org/best-practices-better-schools.

Your comments are always welcome, so send us an email at publications@naesp.org to let us know what you think about the issue.

Clarification: Chris Hammill, author of “Down, But Not Out” in the November/December 2011 issue of Principal, served as interim superintendent of Mt. Morris Consolidated School District from January to June 2011. He was interim superintendent when he wrote the article, but not when it was ultimately published.