A Collaborative Effort

We recently met with focus groups comprised of the 2010 National Distinguished Principals to discuss a number of issues, one of which was school improvement. As the award-winning principals shared their views about and experiences with getting support staff to buy into improvement efforts, this issue of the magazine—which focuses on the crucial relationships principals must forge—came to mind.

The principals explained that support staff—from the bus drivers who are likely a student’s first school-related point of contact every day to the cafeteria workers who prepare and serve students’ vital meals—understanding their value to a school’s overall mission “is enormous” because everyone has to feel vested in the process. This goes both ways, of course: They must not only understand their value, they must also feel valued by other school staff, including the principal.

But, as you already know and will read about in this issue of Principal, school building personnel isn’t the only subgroup with which principals must foster positive relationships. School leaders must also build rapport with such core groups as the teachers’ union, central office, community members, PTO, and local businesses. So while John Daresh and Jane Lynch address in their article how to form solid partnerships with non-faculty members, Washington principal Cathie West explains how to form an effective principal-superintendent team and New York principal Don Sternberg demonstrates the delicate steps school leaders should take with the teachers’ union.

Our final theme article, a Q&A with Marty Blank, the director of the Coalition for Community Schools, focuses on a concept NAESP has long supported—addressing the needs of the whole child. In this interview, Blank describes how the various physical, emotional, and educational needs of students (and their families) can be addressed by partnering with community service agencies, local businesses, recreation departments, and higher education institutions.

And while we’re on the topic of collaboration, we’d love to receive your input on what you would like to read about in Principal next editorial year. Your voice is not only relevant, but also highly valued to us as we plan each issue. We’ll soon be determining themes and deadlines for the 2011-2012 cycle; what are the hot topics we should address? Let us know by sending an e-mail to publications@naesp.org. We hope that when we reveal the finalized themes in the May/June issue, you’ll consider submitting an article for publication consideration.

NAESP ELECTION IS APPROACHING—ARE YOU READY?

Eligible NAESP members will vote electronically for president-elect and directors for Zone 1, Zone 2, and Zone 8 beginning in April. Make sure NAESP has your e-mail address on file so you can receive your ballot and other election-related correspondence. Send an e-mail with your contact information to membership@naesp.org with “E-mail Update” in the subject line. Candidate information will be included in the March issue of Communicator, which will be mailed to eligible members.

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