

Snapshots

Fast Fact: The chances of a third-grader

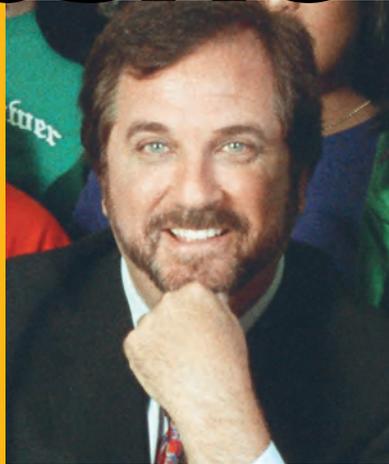
Q&A

With

RAFE

ESQUITH:

America's
Most Inspiring
Teacher



a blistering rock 'n' roll soundtrack played by the children. They rehearse forever, but we don't cut any of the Shakespeare; it's not a toned-down version. The idea that kids could do this—kids that don't speak English. The kids are perfectly capable of doing better; it's our system that's failed them.

What can principals do to support teachers?

Principals can make sure that their teachers get to observe each other and teachers outside their school. I think teaching has become so isolated. Many of my good ideas came from watching other good teachers. It's great to hear theory, but to see a great practitioner, a real master at work, I think can really help other teachers.

While we need great principals, we also need teachers who have no desire to leave. If everybody is in their second year [of teaching], you're not going to have a very good school. Administrators have to do everything in their power to keep their teachers so happy that they want to keep teaching.

How should we measure student learning?

I would like to measure things like where the kids are 10 years after my class. The best teachers teach the kids skills that they will use in their lives. That's how we measure. Where do these kids wind up 10 years from now? Are they still in school? Are they in col-

Rafe Esquith, celebrated fifth-grade teacher and author of *Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire*, will share his inspiring story in the closing keynote address at the NAESP 2012 Annual Conference: Best Practices for Better Schools™ March 22-24, 2012, in Seattle. For more than two decades, Esquith has taught at a public school in a Central Los Angeles neighborhood plagued by guns, gangs, and violence. His classroom at Hobart Elementary—known simply as Room 56—is unlike any other in the country. Here's a preview of Esquith's ideas about teaching.

What's the wackiest thing you've done to reach students?

Coming up with the concept of taking two of my three greatest loves in the world—rock 'n' roll and Shakespeare—and synthesizing them with our curriculum to create an unabridged production of Shakespeare every year, with

MYTWOCENTS

How does your school address bullying and cyberbullying problems?

This year, our school implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program in conjunction with our existing School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Plan. As a part of these programs, teachers conduct class meetings to discuss bullying and other related issues with students. We also use children's literature as a springboard for discussion on issues such as diversity, conflict resolution, and peer relationships. Outside the classroom, students can report bullying through our "bullying mailboxes" hung throughout the building. These confidential reports are reviewed by our teacher team and resolved in a timely manner.

JACIE MASLYK, Principal, Crafton Elementary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

➤ Read more responses—and submit your own—by visiting the Principals' Office at www.naesp.org/blog. Click on My Two Cents.

lege? Are they doing good things? Or are they dropouts and gang members?

What are the tell-tale characteristics of outstanding teachers?

The kids have a clear vision of what the classroom mission is. I also think that the best teachers shut up. You'd be amazed at how quiet I am in the classroom; I don't talk a lot. I know that a lot of young teachers like to be the center of the classroom and entertain the kids. But the best teachers

are almost invisible. The best teachers simply model the behavior that they expect of the children.

Promising Practices

IN TAKING A look at our school's significant food waste every day, we observed that students often did not eat their fruits and vegetables. As a school that only enrolls kindergart-

ners, we also knew that many of the children were not familiar with all of the foods on the cafeteria menu. Enter Mystery Food Day. Every other Wednesday, students hear clues about the day's mystery food. Children then have time to write or draw about what they think the food might be. Later in the day, each student receives small cooked and raw samples of the mystery fruit or vegetable. Students try each sample and then write about or discuss what they liked and disliked. During the program's first two years, we obtained grants to purchase the produce. Following each Mystery Food Day, food service staff begin preparing and serving these fruits and vegetables as part of the school meals. Food waste has declined, and students are more willing to try new foods.

Teresa A. Anderson

PRINCIPAL, NICKLIN LEARNING CENTER
PIQUA, OHIO

Assist, Assess, Achieve

ANNOUNCING ASSISTMENTS, A powerful, free web-based assessment tool that supports all subjects, with a robust repository of content that teachers can use to:

- Write or select specific questions to support classroom instruction;
- Connect data to instruction and student achievement;
- Give students immediate feedback;
- Get instant reports to help inform instruction and delivery; and
- Assign targeted work to each student directly.

PLUS, it enables principals to:

- Provide ongoing instructional support for teachers;
- Create common assessments across an entire grade level or school;
- Use data-based formative assessments to track student learning; and
- Build benchmarks aligned to common core standards.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Carnegie Mellon University developed ASSISTments with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation, among others. Developers have received a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant to distribute the platform. NAESP is a partner in this effort. Contact NAESP@wpi.edu for more information.

We have a student led club that emphasizes solving problems through non-violence. The club has led a campaign where students have pledged that they will try to solve their problems non-violently. The group also has encouraged anti-bullying by developing and producing an anti-bullying video that will be shown to the entire school. Staff have been trained on cyberbullying so they can recognize the signs that a student has been bullied online or through texting. We also make sure our Parent Resource Center, which is located in our main lobby, is stocked with bullying literature to help educate parents on what they can do to stop bullying in and outside of school.

KEVIN HULBERT, Principal, Keeseville Elementary School, Keeseville, New York

TEACHERS ON OUR Principal's Advisory Committee developed a positive behavior plan. When "caught doing something good," students instantly receive an eagle-shaped laminated slip that they take to the office. In the office, they describe their positive behavior, which is noted in the school's book of honor, and receive a special pencil. They choose an egg from the eagle's nest and open it to reveal a number. Their name is placed on the corresponding square on the Eagle Award chart in the hallway. The chart has 10 rows of 10. Once a row is filled, either horizontally or vertically, those 10 students win a special mystery prize, such as movie tickets, school supplies, or board games. After the winners are announced, the chart is cleared and a new contest begins. We have seen a 50 percent drop in referrals for student behavior.

Randy A. Peters

PRINCIPAL, ORANGE STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
BERWICK, PENNSYLVANIA

Learn more promising practices at www.naesp.org/promising-practices.