Snapshots

Prepare to Vote

This spring, eligible NAESP members—active, institutional active, emeritus, and lifetime—will elect a new president-elect as well as directors for Zones 5, 7, and 9. NAESP has simplified the election process—it takes less than five minutes, and it’s confidential, protecting the integrity of the voting system. All you have to do is log in to access the ballot.

Members will be notified when voting opens, and electronic ballots—for which you will need to log in to access—will be available on the NAESP website. If you have never logged in to www.naesp.org (or if it has been a while), here’s a refresher:

1. Go to www.naesp.org/user/login.
2. Type your “Username”—the email address NAESP has on file with your membership.
3. Type your “Password”—your last name is your password the first time you log in. If you have changed your password and can’t remember it, click on the “Request new password” tab and follow the instructions.

Fast Fact: Just 17 percent of U.S. teachers are minorities, compared with more than 40 percent of public school students.

Source: Center for American Progress

Tap Into Best Practices

By identifying research-based best practices and offering guidance for implementing them in schools through the Best Practices for Better Schools™ online publication series, NAESP is seeking to strengthen the effectiveness of elementary and middle-level principals.

The latest paper in the series provides information and insight about formative assessment systems (FAS). “Formative Assessment Systems: Finding the Right Fit” covers work by Matthew Militello and Neil Heffernan on developing a framework for school leaders who have to make important decisions about FAS. Heffernan is the creator of the ASSISTments System, a powerful, free web-based assessment tool for which NAESP is a distribution partner.

Earlier papers in the series examined preschool language and literacy, response to intervention in elementary-middle math and primary grade reading, and using student achievement data to support instructional decision-making.

In 2012, white papers will be released on instructional leadership, teacher and staff development, school improvement, and school and home partnerships. Access all the papers in the series at www.naesp.org/best-practices-better-schools.

MYTWOCENTS

What kinds of supports do you need from your superintendent to improve teaching and learning?

1. Support in terms of marketing the positives about the schools within the system, and 2. Teams of central office staff to assist new principals in transferring from assistants to actual principals.

MARQUITA E. JACKSON, Assistant Principal, Hammond Junior High School, Hammond, Louisiana

The biggest support that I can receive from my superintendent is the “gift of time.” The strongest enhancement opportunity that teachers have during a school year is the ability to learn from master teachers already working within the school. Having the ability to call in substitute teachers to cover classes.
Fast Fact:
Just 17 percent of U.S. teachers are minorities, compared with more than 40 percent of public school students. SOURCE: Center for American Progress

RESEARCH DIGEST

Watching Teachers Work

IN A RECENT REPORT, researchers Lisa Guernsey and Susan Ochshorn of the New America Foundation explored the crossroads of two emerging education reform trends: foundational early childhood education and new teacher evaluation systems that feature classroom observation as a component.

“Watching Teachers Work: Using Observation Tools to Promote Effective Teaching in the Early Years and Early Grades” is based on Guernsey and Ochshorn’s examination of a growing crop of classroom observation tools and the sites where they have been implemented, such as the D.C. and Boston public school systems. They conclude that observations can boost teacher performance, but they must be done with consistent, validated tools.

“When [observation tools] are used across early education programs (Head Start, pre-K and child care) and up through kindergarten and the early elementary grades, these instruments can help to create a common language for educators to talk about their teaching, fostering a shared vision of high-quality practice and common standards of professionalism,” write Guernsey and Ochshorn.

Pressed to improve the quality of early education, half of all states have begun to develop rating systems specifically for pre-K and Head Start programs. More than 50 observation tools have been designed for pre-K settings, and many are being put to use in early elementary grades too, according to the report.

One stumbling block for implementation of these observation rubrics is cost. Although most policy debates about observations place responsibility on principals, many tools actually call for the work to be done by outside evaluators or coaches, who must be trained and compensated. In several districts piloting observation systems, though, such as D.C. Public Schools, some observations are completed by outside “master educators” while the rest are done by principals.

For these tools to be maximally effective, they must be linked to professional development. Guernsey and Ochshorn propose that principals provide teachers opportunities to be observed with reliable tools, and have access to the results and videos of their practice.

“Make time for [teachers] to work with professionals who can provide research-based strategies for improvement using those assessments,” they write.

Further, the authors recommend that observations be brought to the forefront of federal and state policy, calling for expanded research on observation tools and examples of best practice for principals and teachers. They recommend training for educators, especially pre-K professionals, on observation methods.

Read the entire report online at http://earlyed.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/Watching_Teachers_Work.pdf.

Members in the Spotlight

CONGRATULATIONS TO CHRISTINE M. FOXEN COLLIER, 2011 National Distinguished Principal from Indiana and winner of this year’s National Distinguished Principal scholarship. This full tuition prize is awarded annually by Nova Southeastern University and the NAESP Foundation to an outstanding school leader. Collier has spent more than a decade leading exemplary schools. She co-designed and opened the first International Baccalaureate World School for both primary and middle-year programs, Center for Inquiry at School 2. Replicating its success, she went on to open and lead two more award-winning Center for Inquiry schools in Indianapolis, with the most recent opening its doors in Fall 2011. Her school’s partnership with the Dyslexia Institute of Indiana is described in “Best from the Best” on page 22. Collier, who was Indiana’s 2010 Elementary Principal of the Year, will use this scholarship to pursue her doctorate.

KATIE DABNEY, PRINCIPAL of Mesquite Elementary School in Tucson, Arizona, is the city’s “Woman of the Year.” Tucson Business Edge, a business publication, names the woman of the year from among 40 up-and-coming business and community leaders under the age of 40 who are recognized as “40 Under 40” recipients.

so that teachers might “share their wealth” with others has proved to be the most valuable professional development I can offer. I model that concept by covering classes for 45 minutes to an hour that frees a teacher to watch, team-teach, confer, and/or develop curriculum with a colleague. In order to move that concept forward, the gift of time on a regular basis would be a significant asset for my school.

DON STERNBERG, Principal, Wantagh Elementary School, Wantagh, New York

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

www.naesp.org

Principal ♦ March/April 2012