Snapshots

Fast Fact: Good news: 8 in 10 elementary students are engaged with school, according to the 2012 Gallup Student Poll. The bad news? That number slips to 6 in 10 in middle school.

We seek help from our talented parents. Say we need a Ga-ga pit for the playground. One of our parents is a lumber salesman—he supplies the materials; another is a great carpenter. One supplies the labor, another the materials. We also have a wonderful matching funds program with our area companies like HP, Exxon Mobile, or Honeywell, who match volunteer hours completed for schools by their employees.

—Mary Beth Gaertner, Director, Salem Lutheran School, Tomball, Texas

Research Digest

School Changes Can Boost Students’ Physical Activity

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS should be active for at least sixty minutes a day, according to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans—but less than half of 6- to 11-year-olds are. The good news is that there are changes schools can make to get kids moving in the right direction.

Research published in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine’s February 2013 issue explored policy and school shifts that can increase children’s physical activity, such as promoting walking to school or modifying playgrounds. For “Estimating Energy Expenditures for School-Based Policies and Active Living,” researchers examined 85 previous studies to estimate, on average, how many minutes of physical activity students could accumulate with these changes.

On the policy level, the biggest change would be to require daily physical education, which would add 23 minutes of physical activity to students’ days. Further, standardizing physical education curricula to boost active time and cut inactive time adds 6 more minutes.

That’s where schools come in. These changes at the school level can add up:

- Incorporating physical activity breaks during classes: 19 minutes of physical activity;
- Offering more or bolstering after-school physical activity programs: 10 minutes;
- Updating playgrounds: 6 minutes;
- Promoting walking or bicycling to school: 16 minutes; and
- Offering more play equipment at recess: 5 minutes.

Finally, the researchers found that if communities renovate parks to include more equipment for activity, children can gain another 12 minutes of physical activity.

MYTWO CENTS

When faced with budget cuts, what’s one way you’ve found alternative funding for your school’s programs?

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elementary students are engaged with school, according to the 2012 Gallup Student Poll. The bad news? That number slips to 6 in 10 in middle school.

Encourage families to support your school’s physical fitness endeavors with these two ready-to-reproduce issues of Report to Parents: “Childhood Obesity,” and “Keep Your Children Mentally and Physically Fit.” Access the Report to Parents archive at www.naesp.org/report-parents-archive.

Buzzword: Gamification

What It Means: the use of game-design elements in non-game contexts.

Why It’s Trending: Since games are already a key part of students’ worlds, gamification in school can boost engagement and critical thinking. Gamification goes beyond using video games in the classroom. It also involves using game elements—experimentation, instant feedback, and taking on new roles—to drive learning behavior.

How to Use It: Encourage teachers to try gamification in the classroom by, for instance, initiating a system in which students earn points or badges for reading optional library books, or assigning “characters” to play in science, such as Lead Detective.

Learn More: Register for NAESP’s National Conference and attend Gabe Zichermann’s session on the innovative teaching method. You can also read “Gamification in Education: What, How, Why Bother?,“ a 2011 study by Columbia University’s Joey Lee and Jessica Hammer.

Prepare to Vote!

THIS SPRING, ELIGIBLE NAESP members—active, institutional active, emeritus, and lifetime members—will elect a new president-elect as well as directors for Zones 3, 4, and 6. Online voting is quick, simple, and confidential. All you have to do is log in to access your ballot. Members will be notified when voting opens in April, and electronic ballot will be available on the NAESP website. You’ll need to log in for access to the ballot. If you have never logged in to www.naesp.org (or if it has been a while) here’s a refresher:

- Go to www.naesp.org/user/login.
- Type your “Username”—the email address NAESP has on file with your membership.
- 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.

Eligible members may request a paper ballot by calling Jennifer Shannon at 703-518-6286. Paper ballots must be received by NAESP by April 30 to be counted.

Read the March issue of Communicator to learn about the candidates’ experiences and why they want to serve NAESP.

Follow Us to Baltimore

THIS JULY, THE NAESP National Conference is coming to Baltimore, bringing together some of the most inspiring thought leaders in education. Follow us on twitter (@naesp) for the latest conference news and updates, and follow these expert speakers for inspiration, ideas, and a preview of their presentations in Baltimore:

- Michael Fullan (@MichaelFullan1) Learn about positive school change from Fullan, Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto.
- Robert J. Marzano (@roberjmarzano) Explore teacher effectiveness with this co-founder of Marzano Research Laboratories.
- Alan November (@globallearner) Dissect the Common Core with this international leader in education technology.
- Daniel Pink (@DanielPink) Discover strategies for workplace motivation and success with Pink, a bestselling author.
- Rachel’s Challenge (@RachelsChallenge) Hear the story of this powerful anti-violence, anti-bullying movement from Darrell Scott, whose daughter Rachel was killed in a school shooting.
- Adam Sáenz (@powerofateacher) Empower your teachers with wellness strategies from this psychologist and author.
- Todd C. Whitaker (@ToddWhitaker) Delve into instructional leadership with Whitaker, the leading authority on teacher and principal effectiveness.
- Gabe Zichermann (@gzicherm) Investigate gamification with this technology guru.

Visit www.naesp.org/2013 to discover more about each speaker, register, and sign up for the annual Service Day project to build a playground for a Baltimore school.

We advertise our fundraising efforts in church bulletins and college papers to broaden our base. There are so many people who don’t have children in the schools but are anxious to help because it builds a strong community.

—Gail Kinsey, Principal, Fairfax Villa Elementary School, Fairfax, Virginia

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